

Report on community learning and development in Argyll and Bute Council

HM Inspectors carried out a Progress Visit to Argyll and Bute Council in January 2024. HM Inspectors identified that the local authority and their partners were making progress in the majority of areas in their community learning and development (CLD) plan. However, some improvement was required. HM Inspectors requested a report on progress on one main point for action. Argyll and Bute Council and Live Argyll submitted a report on progress in February 2025. HM Inspectors met with their staff and the CLD Partnership in April 2025 to discuss the report.

Main point for action: The CLD Partnership should develop clear outcomes for CLD, with measures of success across all partners, providing an overview of the impact of CLD across the local authority. This will help support the systematic monitoring and recording of impact and identifying trends for continuous improvement.

Overall, HM Inspectors are confident that CLD leaders now have a clearer vision for improvement. Membership of the CLD Partnership has broadened in the past year to include, for example, new third sector partners. Within the new CLD plan, outcomes are clearly defined with agreed measures of success. All improvement actions have named partners responsible for delivery against each priority. All CLD Partnership members have had the opportunity to participate in well-received quality assurance sessions, led by Argyll and Bute Council's education service. This has increased the focus on self-evaluation and partners recognise the importance of continuing to re-visit this on an ongoing basis.

Partners now have closer working relationships, collaboration has increased and communication is stronger. Enhanced communication makes it easier for third sector organisations to access the right help and support. Partners have increased understanding of each other's distinct roles and how they contribute to CLD outcomes. The strategic membership of the partnership is reflected in locality hubs. These hubs help local officers and third sector agencies to work together to deliver the CLD plan priorities, tailored to local needs. Governance arrangements have been strengthened through regular reporting to relevant committees within Argyll and Bute Council. CLD reports to the Community Services Committee, the Community Planning Partnership and within the education service. As a result, the visibility of CLD has increased and more stakeholders are aware of the priorities within the CLD plan. For example, education staff now understand better the impact of youth work in schools in helping young people achieve accredited awards.

Partners are committed to the development of approaches to gathering and consolidating data on CLD delivery. This will inform the partnership's first full-year report and provide evidence of their success against stated priorities. Data is now being used better to avoid duplication and to share resources at a local level. Although at an early stage, partners are confident that the data gathered will help them to identify any gaps in provision and inform decisions about future CLD priorities. However, the new tracking approach is not yet being used fully by the CLD partnership to filter and analyse the data. Further development of the arrangements could help the partnership to improve their approach to risk management in delivering CLD. This will help to strengthen further the governance of CLD in Argyll and Bute and inform future priorities.

What happens next?

Overall, the local authority and its CLD partners are taking appropriate steps to address the main point for action and other recommendations identified during the Progress Visit. As a result, we will make no further visits to Argyll and Bute Council and its CLD partners in connection with this inspection.

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HM Inspector
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