

Continuing engagement of community learning and development in Aberdeen City Council

21 January 2019

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In April 2017, HM Inspectors published a [report on the inspection of community learning and development \(CLD\) in the Northfield community in Aberdeen City](#). That report set out key strengths of the learning community and areas for improvement. We visited the community again in March 2018. This report is based on a monitoring visit which was carried out in November 2018. During this visit we met with a range of staff, volunteers and partners. We focused on the areas for improvement identified as part of the continuing engagement. As a result, we were able to find out how well partners across the authority are now working together to support learners and communities to improve life chances.

1. How good is the strategic leadership of community learning and development?

Aberdeen City Council continue to undergo a period of significant restructuring. As a result, the strategic leadership of CLD continues to experience significant change. The Community Engagement Group (CEG) and Integrated Children's Services (ICS) remain responsible for the overall governance and accountability of the newly developed draft CLD plan 2018-21. The draft plan clearly outlines key priorities for CLD which are linked to national priorities and policy drivers. The CEG and ICS receive regular written reports on CLD's progress towards overarching aims including a report on 'the Early Impact of Partnership Forums' (PF). The CEG and ICS report directly to the Aberdeen Community Planning Partnership.

At a local level PF continue to have governance responsibility for local identification of need, delivery and coordination of CLD. The Referrers Group, a sub group of the Northfield PF (NPF) are developing approaches to support young people and their families. There is a continued focus on early intervention and measures are in place to extend capacity to work with younger children. Educational Social Work are working well with youth work staff based in Northfield Academy to support young people's transition. However, the NPF remains not as functional as expected. Progress against the NPF and transition sub group action plan is limited and many timelines are being superceded. Hence, local governance of CLD remains a significant area for improvement. Clearer and more robust measures are required to ensure the impact of CLD is fully captured and reported on.

NPF members remain unclear about their responsibilities relating to CLD and are not fully clear of the contribution CLD make to strategic outcomes. In particular, wider outcomes relating to adult learning and community engagement and development. The revised guidance for PF's recognise the requirement for partners to contribute to CLD inspection activity. However, it lacks guidance on its governance responsibilities for CLD at a local level. This continues to be a gap in helping to develop partners understanding and clarity of responsibilities. As a consequence, the NPF is too focused on young people. More work is required to ensure that partners are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The NPF would also benefit from wider representation to reflect the broader range of CLD services and projects in line with the Aberdeen City Council's CLD planned priorities.

The Northfield Locality Board continue to work together to address a range of issues identified in the draft Locality Plan 2017-27. This includes a focus on people, place, economy and technology. These directly link to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. Although at an early stage nominated links between the Locality Board and the NPF has potential to help improve

communication between both groups. However, there remains scope for more formal reporting across groups to improve the support and coordination of CLD. Whilst the Locality Plan for the Northfield area is well structured and makes good use of data, there is now a need to ensure that its key priorities articulate and link to the work of the NPF. In addition, baselines and targets are also required alongside details on progress made to date.

2. How good is the learning and development in this community?

No improvement areas were explored as part of this visit.

3. Does the Northfield community have a clear sense of direction?

The Northfield community does not yet have a clear sense of direction. Aberdeen City Council continues to experience a significant period of change. This impacts significantly on the governance, staffing structures and prioritisation of CLD. At a local level, the influence on decision making is limited.

4. What happens next?

As there is insufficient progress on the governance of CLD, further engagement with Aberdeen City Council on the strategic leadership of CLD is required to ensure that legislative responsibilities are fulfilled. No further scrutiny at a local level will take place.

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21 January 2019

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