

Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

Inverclyde Council

23 April 2024

1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Inverclyde Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during March 2024. During the visit, we talked to learners and community representatives, CLD leaders, managers, staff, and volunteers, and other key stakeholders. HM Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of local authority CLD partnerships' approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and considered progress made against identified priorities in their CLD plans.

2. Findings from the progress visit

How effective is the leadership of the local authority and their CLD partners in improving outcomes?

Areas of positive progress

Leadership of the council CLD service team is strong and effective. CLD leaders at all levels are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders highly value the contribution the council CLD service and CLD partners are making towards strategic priorities. The CLD Strategic Implementation Partnership (SIG) are responsible for the governance of CLD. SIG members work well together. Most partners understand the CLD Plan priorities. Staff know how their work contributes to the CLD plan and other strategic plans. There are clear links between the Inverclyde Outcome Improvement Plan and the CLD Plan, in particular the focus on reducing inequalities. Progress against the CLD plan is reported regularly to council committees and the Inverclyde Alliance, the community planning partnership. This supports the oversight of CLD by elected members and senior leaders.

The CLD service is a highly regarded part of the wider education service. CLD contribute well to the work to raise attainment in Inverclyde. Across the wide range of strategic partnerships that CLD contributes to, partnership working is valued and embedded. Partners are clear about the added value of working together, including making the best use of resources. Staff and volunteers have a strong understanding of each other's roles and how they can best contribute to joint work. Those who are furthest from the workforce benefit from programmes run by partners on the Local Employability Partnership. For example, Youth Hub sessions bring partners together in one venue, making it easier for learners to quickly access the support they need. Young people are listened to and supported well to share their views with decision makers. With support from CLD workers, young people run annual Clyde Conversations. These conversations enable senior leaders to have a better understanding of the issues that are important to young people.

CLD partners have a clear focus on improving outcomes for learners and communities. At all levels staff and volunteers are committed to supporting individuals and families to participate and progress. Effective use is made of feedback from participants and case studies to support partners to understand and capture progress. Partners have a shared aim to reduce the negative impact poverty has on a significant number of people living in Inverclyde. The Child Poverty Action Group use local intelligence well to reach families that need support. Effective use is made of networks to support information and exchange knowledge. CLD staff are empowered to take managed risks and be innovative within their remits. They benefit from well-developed and planned professional development opportunities. This is helping to ensure that staff have the skills necessary to support learners and communities effectively.

Areas for development

Learners are not sufficiently involved in strategic CLD planning. Existing groups and structures that support youth participation in wider policy areas may provide a route to including young people in CLD strategic planning. There is also a need to consider how adult learners can best contribute to CLD planning at all levels. CLD does not yet have a sufficiently wide representation in its strategic decision-making structures. Senior leaders should now ensure that the membership of the SIG is fully representative of CLD.

Not all partners are confident that they can demonstrate fully the difference their work is making. There is a need for partners to jointly improve their self-evaluation and self-reflection arrangements. This would support the SIG to more efficiently capture the positive impact CLD is having on learners and communities. The current CLD plan is not sufficiently measurable. CLD partners need to ensure that the CLD plan for 2024-27 has clearer intended outcomes and measures of success.

How well does the performance of the local authority and their CLD partners demonstrate positive impact?

Areas of positive progress

Partners have a strong understanding of the needs of communities across Inverclyde. They use demographic data alongside information gathered from communities very well. This supports partners to identify needs, understand change and to inform their planning. For example, effective analysis of data identified the need for enhanced substance education in schools. The resulting youth work-based pilot is already supporting positive change, such as a few young people stopping vaping. The available CLD trend data shows a largely recovering picture following the pandemic. The number of young people gaining the Duke of Edinburgh's awards is increasing with a completion rate at 50% in 2023. There are areas of work linked to key community planning and council priorities where provision is increasing. For example, the number of projects supporting food provision and growing has expanded rapidly over the last few years. Inverclyde Community Food Network support this growth across Inverclyde well. Community run projects such as The Pantry enable people to access affordable food and reduce waste. Such projects increase opportunities for residents to learn, feel included, build friendships and contribute to their communities.

CLD and wider partners, including community groups have a clear and focused approach to reducing inequalities and removing barriers to learning. They are adept at meeting the needs of those facing additional challenges in their lives including social isolation, mental health concerns and poverty. Young people attending the New Scots Youth Group are gaining skills, such as communication, which are improving their life chances. Participants are becoming more confident learners and now feel part of their communities. Staff at Your Voice are working well with partners, including the CLD service, to address inequality and reduce disadvantage. They support young people with lived experience of drug and alcohol abuse very well. This is enabling participants to progress into volunteering and employment. Those experiencing challenges such as cancer, long-Covid and dementia are supported well at the Peer Group at Your Voice. Participants are helping each other to cope with health issues, whilst building their capacity to challenge inequality.

CLD partners are supporting learners and community members of all ages to progress in their lives. The volunteers at The Shed have successfully refurbished an existing building into a well-equipped workshop with over 300 active members. This provides a wide range of learning experiences, alongside opportunities to build social networks and friendships. Partners provide a

comprehensive and well-targeted range of learning opportunities that meet the needs of learners well. Literacies, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages adult learners, have increasing confidence and are developing skills relevant to their lives and ambitions. This is enabling to participate more fully in day-to-day activities. Staff are delivering learning with appropriate support, pace and challenge. Volunteers and staff at Branchton Community Centre run well-attended activities for all ages, including youth groups, family events and community-based adult learning. Participants value the non-judgemental approach taken by staff and volunteers. They are gaining confidence and often progress onto further learning or volunteering. Participants on the Principles of Horticulture West College of Scotland course are building their knowledge alongside achieving accreditation. The majority of those that completed the first course are now volunteering in the expanding set of gardens and plants schemes run by the centre.

Areas for development

Young people's achievements and skills are not routinely captured and recognised across CLD partners and schools. Partners now need to work together to support those not achieving to participate. Learning pathways for adult learners are not sufficiently developed or clear. There is a need for SIG partners to consider how comprehensive learner pathways can be developed to support learner progression.

3. Practice worth sharing more widely

The New Scots Youth Group is providing support to young people who are new Scots, including young refugees who spoke no English on arrival in Scotland. The need for the group was identified by secondary school staff and the group was developed by youth workers. Young people attending the group are gaining skills, which are improving their life chances. Group members are more confident learners and now feel part of their communities. A few young people are progressing to become volunteers and/or are gaining qualifications. For example, learning to drive and achieving gold level Duke of Edinburgh's awards. As a result of demand, an additional drop-in New Scots Youth session has now been established.

4. What happens next?

The local authority and their CLD partners are making sufficient progress with their CLD plan and have the capacity to continue to improve. As a result, HM Inspectors will take no further action in relation to this progress visit. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of highly effective practice which we would like to explore further.

Alona Murray
HM Inspector
23 April 2024