

Inspection of Community Learning and Development in East Renfrewshire Council

12 June 2017

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1. Context

Community learning and development (CLD) partners within East Renfrewshire Council and the communities of Barrhead, Neilston and Uplawmoor in the Levern Valley were inspected by Education Scotland during February and March 2017. During the visit Education Scotland staff talked to children, young people, adults and community organisations. We worked closely with local CLD managers, CLD providers, partners, paid staff and volunteers. We wanted to find out the quality of the strategic leadership of CLD and the quality of CLD provision in the area. We also looked at how well paid staff and volunteers are developing their own practices and building capacity. We looked at how partners are contributing to current and evolving national policy objectives such as closing the poverty-related attainment gap; prevention; reducing social isolation; tackling health inequalities; and empowering communities.

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

The Chief Executive, Corporate Management Team and CLD Strategic Partners are clear that CLD contributes to the priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA). The CLD Strategy 2015-2018 is aligned to each of the five outcomes in the SOA. The CLD Strategy and SOA are both informed by over-lapping data sets for socio-economic needs and community infrastructure. This is helping to inform more effective targeting of resources through a sound understanding of need. The role of council CLD Managers in supporting the council and Community Planning Partnership in self-evaluation, data and planning is a significant strength in ensuring that the work of the CLD Partnership and CLD services align closely to the overall SOA strategy.

Governance of CLD is led by a CLD Partnership Steering Group consisting of representatives from the council, Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire (VAER), the Culture and Leisure Trust and the Health and Social Care Partnership. CLD, other council services and external partners also connect through a mix of strategic planning groups and workstreams. A range of partnership plans and service level agreements is helping to ensure that partners and staff are clear about their individual and collective responsibilities. For example, a strategic Partnership Agreement between secondary schools and Young Persons Services (YPS) is negotiated annually with interim reviews. YPS staff based part-time within each secondary school are integral to support for learning teams. Information gathered through extensive community engagement is clearly taken into account when decisions are made. However, the extent to which the community are active and engaging in driving improvements and taking decisions in strategic and locality planning is not always clear. Work underway to develop locally-led locality planning and a recent decision to introduce participatory budgeting has the potential to strengthen this.

A culture of self-evaluation is well-embedded within the council's CLD services and extends beyond this. For example, effective partnership approaches to self-evaluation include joint reviews between CLD and schools. Self-evaluation and planning is supported by robust management information systems that record baselines, targets and outcomes including a strong focus on achievement. Core CLD services staff make effective use of a Quality Framework to plan, monitor and evaluate their work. Quality assurance processes ensure that this planning is robust and aligns with strategic priorities and plans.

Staff are committed to improving their practice and are confident to take on leadership roles. Core CLD services staff in East Renfrewshire Council participate in a comprehensive programme of development opportunities which improve their practice. Staff are valued and enthusiastic about their work. They have a clear understanding of the impact of their work and adapt programmes to best meet needs. Staff are supported effectively to develop their leadership skills and are confident to be creative and explore new ways of working. Sessional staff are also able to access training and development opportunities. They feel valued, well supported in their roles and able to contribute to decisions. The CLD workforce, particularly part-time, sessional staff and volunteers, could benefit from further opportunities to network with each other and share reflective practice. This would enable them to continue to learn from each other, gain a fuller understanding of the wider CLD offer across the Levern Valley and increase the signposting of learners to other opportunities.

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

The council's CLD services have a sophisticated approach to the use of intelligence information. Staff make effective use of demographic data and mapping information to assess which areas in the local authority are under resourced in terms of learning opportunities. This enables them to systematically identify unmet needs. Partners are sharing information and local intelligence through a variety of strategic groups and as a result are effectively targeting their work at priority individuals and groups within the Levern Valley. However, there is a need to increase sharing and joint analysis of data at locality level with and between the full range of partners, including community organisations.

Intelligence led provision results in positive impacts for specific cohorts. For example, YPS led focused work to significantly reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy in Auchenback. Partners made effective use of data, a preventative risk matrix and co-produced new parenting programmes with young mums. As a result the teenage pregnancy rate has fallen by 60% since 2008/10. The percentage of first-time mums under 19 years old in Barrhead has fallen from 22% to 9%. Community Planning and YPS staff regularly meet or exceed the targets they have set. For example, the number of young people gaining youth awards is rising year on year. The high number of volunteers registered with VAER in the Levern Valley has doubled over the last four years rising to 1,503 in 2016/17. Anti-social behaviour by young people has reduced as a result of joint work by partners including local businesses, Police Scotland and YPS. Barrhead Library, in the Foundry, increased both the number of visits and book issues in the last year against the national downward trend. In the Levern Valley, *Bookbug* attendances have risen by over a third since 2013/14 to 8,375 in 2015/16.

Community organisations are ambitious, skilled, confident and active. The Auchenback Active Limited Board who runs the Auchenback Resource Centre (ARC) responds effectively to meet local needs. For example, the well attended Parent and Toddlers group is providing a valuable opportunity for parents and grandparents to socialise. This is helping to reduce isolation and increase social cohesion. Partnership with a local supermarket is resulting in surplus food being given free to members of the community and providing meals in the ARC community café. Regular walkabouts by board members and Councillors in the local estate now results in structural and environmental maintenance issues being addressed more quickly. The Neilston Development Trust Board contributes effectively to their own and the wider community. They are delivering infrastructure improvements, wellbeing, social inclusion and learning

programmes. Senior leaders are effective in both attracting funding and in developing income generating opportunities. The Trust plays an active role in community engagement around local development planning including working with partners on the creation of a Town Charter. Neilston and Barrhead Community Councils are also contributing to environmental improvements in partnership with others. For example, the redevelopment of the Kingston Park including the development of a skate park and boundary replacement and repairs to the War Memorial in Cowan Park. Young people in the *Youth Forum* are identifying and addressing issues such as mental health, transport and education. They are starting to influence decision making, for example through meeting with the local Member of the Scottish Parliament. As a result of their experience on the *Youth Forum*, some young people involved are running as Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.

High numbers of volunteers are increasing the quality and quantity of learning opportunities including a targeted focus on those with additional support needs (ASN). East Renfrewshire Autism Parents Action Group was formed in response to a lack of services for parents of children with autism. The group is inclusive and open to a wider range of ASN, not just those with a diagnosis of autism. Activities help young people to build friendships outwith school and parents are benefiting from peer support at meetings and through an active social media group. The *Fantastic Friends Friday* parents committee was developed in response to an identified gap in provision for young people with ASN in the 18-26 age group. The committee employs YPS staff who deliver fully inclusive, high quality provision that impacts positively on the young people including the development of a young people's committee.

Effective support from workers builds the confidence and capacity of community activists and groups. The *Barrhead Memory Lane project* aims to reduce social isolation by promoting an inclusive community for people living with dementia and their carers. Project volunteers have developed effective planning, management and evaluation skills with support from the Richmond Fellowship and East Renfrewshire's Community Planning (CP) Team. The ARC Board is well supported by community planning to access training and help to develop policies and procedures to meet their legal duties. The CP team and VAER both provide effective and valued support in response to requests from local groups. However, community organisations do not currently have sufficient regular opportunities to network and share their knowledge, skills and expertise. There is also scope to extend the use of co-production between partners, particularly between services and community organisations, to ensure the delivery of efficient and sustainable improvements. This would help to strengthen community voice at a local level and to foster a culture of equal partnership between public, private and third sector organisations.

A range of high quality work is successfully engaging and including young people and adults facing additional challenges. Targeted work with young mums is providing co-designed learning through the *Baby Love* programme. Participants are learning parenting strategies, developing play and child development skills and benefiting from a cohesive group and social media support network. Young people who are involved in high risk behaviours are engaged very effectively in the *Positive Relationships* group in a climate of mutual respect and trust. As a result the group are reducing their risks by taking better care of each other and talking through options, choices and consequences. Young people in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex group are benefiting from taking part in weekly activities with their peers in a safe environment. Support is sensitive to their needs and as a result young people are more confident, comfortable and less isolated. The Adult Learning Parent Group is effectively supporting long term unemployed parents to build in their confidence and employability skills. Learners are gaining in self-esteem, benefiting from networking and signposting to other

learning opportunities. Learners are fully involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning through individual learning plans and have clear progression routes.

Well-planned, flexible programmes are meeting individual learner needs and providing appropriate pace and challenge. The use of *Assessment is For Learning* approaches is helping to further enhance the learning offer. Staff are confident to adapt session contents to accurately reflect and respond to feedback from participants. Across learning programmes staff and volunteers support learners effectively to set and achieve personal goals. The *RespectER* programme is well-planned and evaluated. Almost all young women are clear about their next stages of learning. Several are already identifying what they want to do after leaving school. Parents and carers attending the *Bookbug* programme feel less isolated through regular social interaction with others. The programme is flexible and responsive to learner feedback, such as the development of a Sunday session that fathers attend. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners are well supported and feel valued in developing their language and literacy skills. Classes support integration and learners are progressing to Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) accredited courses. Some ESOL learners participated in the *Around the World in a Week* programme in St. John's Primary School, which promoted inclusion and cultural diversity. The programme provided learners with an appropriate level of challenge and they improved their planning, presentation and evaluation skills. A few ESOL learners have secured employment in local schools and others are engaged in volunteer placements.

Learners are supported effectively to achieve, progress, recognise and celebrate their learning. Awards ceremonies for learners are well attended and learners value the chance to share their progress and success. Opportunities for young people to gain youth awards are incorporated as a choice into the learning offer. Young people in the *EastRen Challenge* developed team working and leadership skills whilst working towards Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. This is having a positive and sustained impact on the family environment and significant improvements in educational aspiration. Young people on the *InspireER* programme are being supported into employment and education through a customised SQA award in hairdressing at Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) level five. Learners are able to take charge of their own learning and are clear about their progression routes including Modern Apprenticeships, college and employment. Participants on the *Flexible Support Project* are well supported to overcome barriers in their lives and able to progress to further training, education and employment. Learners in the *Employability and Literacy* and *Employability and Wellbeing* groups are undertaking a range of relevant and appropriate SQA qualifications at SCQF levels two and three. Progression routes for learners are effectively identified through the planning and review process and supported through the employability team.

What is the capacity of the local authority and CLD partners to further improve?

This inspection of CLD in East Renfrewshire Council found the following key strengths:

- A strong culture of self-evaluation resulting in effective targeting of resources to meet and address identified needs.
- Enthusiastic, skilled staff and volunteers who are valued highly by learners and groups.
- Well-planned learning supporting participants to progress and achieve.

We discussed with partners how they might continue to improve their work. This is what we agreed with them.

- Further develop and foster a culture of co-production with communities.

4. What happens at the end of the inspection?

The inspection team was able to rely on the high quality self-evaluation provided by the local authority. Partners have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement and communities are achieving very well. As a result we will make no further evaluative visits in connection with this inspection. During the inspection, we identified an aspect of interesting practice which we would like to explore further. We will work with the local community and education authority in order to record and share more widely the interesting practice.

Simon Ross
HM Inspector
12 June 2017

Quality indicators help CLD providers, partners and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved. You can find these quality indicators in the publication *How good is the learning and development in our community?*

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/frwk4hgiocommunitylearning.aspx>

Education Scotland evaluates four important quality indicators to help monitor the quality of community learning and development across Scotland. Here are the results for this inspection.

Improvements in performance	very good
Impact on the local community	good
Delivering the learning offer with learners	very good
Leadership and direction	very good

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgments made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Education Scotland

Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@educationscotland.gov.uk

www.education.gov.scot

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