

# Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

**Argyll and Bute Council**

27 February 2024

## 1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Argyll and Bute Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during January 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. Community Learning is managed by liveArgyll on behalf of Argyll and Bute Council. Community development is managed through the Community Planning Partnership.

## 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

In Argyll and Bute, effective leadership is in place and governance of CLD is understood well across the local authority and their partners. Aligned to six priorities, strategic and operational structures are in place to oversee the delivery of CLD. A broad range of CLD partners understand the priorities well and are clear about their areas for improvement. Partners are beginning to use effectively the CLD partnership as a forum to address gaps in provision and make decisions based on consultations and self-evaluation. Across the partners, ongoing consultations ensure that the views of local people are understood well. Young people involved in youth participation groups attend the Community Planning Partnership. This is influencing the allocation of resources to address issues that are important to young people. The consultation for the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan (ABOIP) including specifically adapted surveys for young people, received over 2,000 responses, as a result, the priorities take good account of the views of a range of stakeholders.

A strategic approach to planning the delivery of CLD services is leading to improved alignment of services to the CLD plan priorities. CLD staff plan their work through individual Project Proposals and Cluster Plans. This approach is ensuring that work is aligned to the six priorities and based on identified community need. Outcomes are clearly articulated, reviewed and reported through the management information system. CLD is also recognised and valued by the education service as a key contributor to improving life chances for young people. Local working agreements with schools ensure a consistent approach to setting objectives that support young people to achieve. These are reviewed regularly and are supporting improvement in outcomes for young people. Partners are beginning to develop ways to share professional learning and expertise to enhance the delivery of programmes. For example, the Health Issues in the Community accredited course is helping to empower local leaders to build the resilience of vulnerable learners.

#### Areas for development

The CLD Plan outcomes are not sufficiently measurable. CLD leaders should ensure that priorities in the new plan are more outcome focused with clear measures of success. There is also a need to strengthen the voice of key third sector organisations on the CLD partnership. The ABOIP and CLD plans are not sufficiently well aligned. The CLD partnership should ensure that these plans are strategically and operationally linked to avoid duplication of effort and

reporting. This will help to strengthen the relationship between community learning and community development and ensure that all partners have a shared understanding of CLD priorities. Workforce development opportunities for staff delivering CLD across the partnership are not yet fully joined up. There is an opportunity to build further on the enthusiasm of staff to share expertise and plan workforce development in a more strategic way.

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

### Areas of positive progress

An online platform for collation of reports, data and evidence is used by almost all members of the CLD Partnership. This is improving understanding of CLD and helping CLD leaders to produce evidence-based reports. CLD leaders carried out a recent refresh of their management information system and developed a suite of liveArgyll service outcomes for CLD. As a result, they now gather data more consistently and set targets for the future. Across liveArgyll there are improving trends in a few of the national CLD Key Performance Indicators, produced by Community Learning and Development Managers Scotland. The number of learners achieving accredited awards is increasing, with 205 current learners on track to achieve an accredited award. Effective referral and signposting arrangements across CLD partners are ensuring that those most in need benefit from learning programmes. Almost all learners demonstrate improved health and wellbeing outcomes and feel less isolated. Community development officers successfully use consultation arrangements to engage community organisations and understand better their needs. This is helping community organisations to grow and develop.

CLD staff and partners are working together effectively in supporting learners to access appropriate learning opportunities. There is an increasing use of community hubs for CLD partners to deliver joint programmes. This helps to link service providers with learners and communities and to remove barriers to participation. CLD staff and partners understand the geography of Argyll and Bute very well and deliver services flexibly to meet the needs of communities. Opportunities for learning are promoted effectively and shared using bulletins, websites, and traditional posters. Gaelic 'Hubs' are centred around local Gaelic champions, who promote the offer and support learners. As a result, there is increased awareness of the learning offer, including in the more remote areas and island communities. The majority of learners report positive change through learning. For example, Syrian and Ukrainian learners report increased confidence and reduced social isolation within their community. Community representatives are working successfully with local partners including Mid Argyll Youth Development Service, Moving on Mid Argyll and the Snowdrop Centre to reduce stigma associated with accessing emergency food provision. Barriers are reducing and the uptake of dignified food distribution is increasing.

Adult learners are gaining key skills for learning, life and work. Most learners engaged in community-based adult learning are successfully completing Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 3 and level 4 courses. They are confidently able to articulate what they are learning and the impact, which a few learners describe as life changing and lifesaving. A strong partnership with the education service is ensuring that youth workers and school staff value each other's contributions. Flexibility in developing accreditation pathways, through a youth work approach, is ensuring that there is a suitable offer for all young people. As a result, young people are achieving a wide range of awards including leadership awards at SCQF level 5 and 6, High 5, Dynamic Youth and Saltire Awards. The employability award is helping young people to prepare for the world of work, building their CVs and helping them prepare for

interviews. The gathering and reporting of case studies is beginning to enable partners to evidence the difference being made to learners and communities.

### Areas for development

Individual learning plans are not routinely offered to all adult learners. There is a need to ensure a consistent approach to co-producing and reviewing individual learning plans with all adult learners. This will help learners to review their learning goals, identify their next steps and enable CLD partners to report more fully on progress.

### 3. Main points 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.

### 4. What happens next?

We recognise that the local authority and their CLD partners are making sufficient progress in some areas of their CLD plan, however some improvement is required. We will ask for a report on progress on the agreed areas for improvement within one year of publication of this report. Taking account of the progress report, we will then decide what further engagement with the local authority and their CLD partners is required.

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