
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

25 January 2024

Audit & Scrutiny

Title: HMIE Progress Review of Community Learning and Development

Purpose: To advise Audit and Scrutiny of the outcomes of the recent Progress Review of Community Learning and Development by HMIE

Recommendation:

- a) That the Committee notes the recent Progress Review carried out by HMIE against the CLD Strategic Plan and the positive feedback from this; and
- b) That the Committee approves the actions planned as a result of the outcome of the review.
- c) That the Committee notes progress review has been presented at Cabinet in December 2023.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Education Scotland HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) evaluate and report on the quality of Community Learning and Development (CLD) provision within local authorities, in line with [The Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#) and associated guidance for local authorities. This is also in line with the evaluation and reporting which HMIE carries out on other sectors of education provision, such as schools and early years centres.

HM Inspectors have developed interim arrangements for inspection from academic year 2023-24 to support improvement and provide external assurance of the quality of CLD provision in Scotland.

HM Inspectors are undertaking progress visits (PVs) to local authorities, commencing in September 2023. During PVs, HM Inspectors will take account of the extent to which local authorities are fulfilling their statutory duties in relation to CLD. HM Inspectors will evaluate the progress local authorities and their CLD partners are making to improve the quality of provision and services.

1.2 North Ayrshire was one of the earliest progress visits undertaken, with HM Inspectors visiting in the week of 18th September 2023. The report on the findings of the visit was published on 31st October.

2. Background

- 2.1 Between 2016 and 2019, HM Inspectors undertook inspections of CLD provision in all 32 local authorities in Scotland. A summary of the inspection findings was published in January 2020. The report highlighted key strengths and aspects for improvement in the leadership and delivery of CLD provision. In March 2020, HM Inspectors recognised that local authorities and CLD partners faced challenges in adapting to the pandemic. As a result, the routine programme of inspections of CLD planning and delivery by local authorities was suspended. HM Inspectors have now resumed external evaluation of CLD in autumn 2023.
- 2.2 Progress Visits will help to provide an overview of the current quality and improvement in CLD leadership and governance across Scotland. They will also inform any future Scottish Government review of the CLD Regulations and Community Empowerment legislation and the implementation of CLD national strategies. The findings will also inform future approaches to inspection of CLD provision in Scotland.
- 2.3 The visits evaluate the effectiveness of local authority CLD partnerships' approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and consider progress made against identified priorities in their CLD plans. As with previous inspections, the starting point was the CLD plan and the local authority and partners' self-evaluation. The focus was on the following high-level questions:
- How effective is the leadership of the local authority and their CLD partners in outcomes?
 - How well does the performance of the local authority and their CLD partners demonstrate positive impact?

In answering these questions, a range of quality indicators from the CLD quality framework: How good is our community learning and development? were used and the HM Inspection team undertook a range of activities such as reviewing documentation, meeting strategic leaders and holding focus groups with partners and learners.

Progress visits are not graded using the evaluative grade scale for full inspections; however the inspection team makes an overall judgement on the progress that the local authority and their partners are making with the CLD plan and produce a statement of confidence.

The progress visit to North Ayrshire took place in the week of 18th September. A wide range of staff, partners and learners were involved in the activities which took place, and we would like to thank them once again for their support and engagement. At the end of the process the inspection team evaluated the progress locally as being of the level of the highest statement of confidence used, namely "The local authority and their CLD partners are making sufficient progress with their CLD plan and have the capacity to continue to improve."

This is testament to the robust planning and governance processes within North Ayrshire and the quality of delivery and evaluation undertaken by the Council and its CLD partners. Key areas of positive progress were identified as being:

- The value placed upon CLD across the CLS Partnership in North Ayrshire;
- Leadership of CLD in North Ayrshire: and
- Clear links from the CLD Plan to the Council Plan and the LOIP;

- A clear focus on inclusion and reducing barriers to participation;
- Effective support for learners, community activists and volunteers to gain skills that match their aims and ambitions.

In particular, the Modern Apprentice programme within Youth Services was highlighted as an example of highly effective practice and we have been asked to share this more widely as a case study, which is being developed for publication.

The process and report highlighted adult learner voice as an area for further development, and this is already being developed and will continue to be progressed. The ongoing development of the use of data in planning and of building capacity within colleagues to work with communities are the other areas of development identified. This aligns with the work already underway to continue to embed locality planning and delivery models working alongside communities within all parts of the Council and Community Planning Partnership. Next steps will be to implement a participation structure for adult learner voice, and to work with colleagues to support the ongoing development of locality planning and community empowerment.

The full report which has been published is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration.

3. Proposals

3.1 Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the recent Progress Review carried out by HMIE against the CLD Strategic Plan and the positive feedback from this; and
- b) Approve the actions planned as a result of the outcome of the review.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 None

Human Resources

4.2 None

Legal

4.3 None

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The values base of CLD work includes valuing equality of both opportunity and outcome, and challenging discriminatory practice. The work of NAC staff and partners on the CLD plan helps to address inequalities across communities and empower them to have their place within the design and delivery of services. It helps to ensure resources are targeted to those in most need and where they will make the greatest impact on outcomes, while ensuring there is also a universal offer of learning opportunities and activities. Through working with communities and with partners, the voices, needs and aspirations of the communities inform the operational delivery and

targeting of resources. It is foreseeable that the escalating cost-of-living crisis will put pressure on individuals and communities and work with the community larder network and partners who provide energy, financial and mental health advice will intensify. The delivery of the plan focuses on building capacity and optimising opportunities so that efforts to address poverty and inequalities are strengthened.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 None

Key Priorities

4.6 The activities contained within the CLD Strategic Plan 2021-2024 support the North Ayrshire Council Plan strategic aims:

- To transition to a wellbeing economy, delivering prosperity, wellbeing and resilience for local people.
- We will have active, inclusive and resilient communities.
- A Community Wealth Building Council that is efficient and accessible, maximising investment and focusing resources towards our priorities.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The activities contained within the CLD Strategic Plan 2021-2024 support the following pillars of community wealth building:

- Creating volunteering and skills development opportunities;
- Sustaining local employment through skills development;
- Advancing community enterprises, such as food pantries, community centre ownership and community sports clubs; and
- Advancing local ownership of underused land and buildings.

5. Consultation

5.1 No consultation was required for the purpose of this report.

Audrey Sutton
Executive Director of Communities and Education

For further information please contact **Rhonda Leith, Head of Service (Connected Communities)**, on **01294 324415**.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report North Ayrshire Council

Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

North Ayrshire Council

31 October 2023

1. Context

HM Inspectors visited North Ayrshire Council to undertake a community learning and development (CLD) progress visit during September 2023. 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 the 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

CLD practices and principles are embedded within the work of the North Ayrshire Council and the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). CLD is highly valued. Leadership of CLD is effective and supported by well-established reporting structures. The CLD plan reflects both council and local outcome improvement plan priorities. Staff understand their role well in delivering against CLD plan priorities. Shared aims and objectives are evident in partnership groups such as Locality Planning Partnerships (LPPs) and work is driven by council, CPP and local priorities. Senior leaders, the CLD service and partners have a clear commitment to partnership working with the communities they serve. Young people and community representatives are actively involved in a range of forums and meetings and their views are influential in shaping priorities and action plans. Third sector and community representatives are well represented across community planning structures and feel heard and valued. This supports services to understand the needs of communities. LPPs drive the delivery of CLD at area level, ensuring that services are responsive to locally identified need.

Effective evaluation and planning structures are in place. These support a continued focus on improvement at all levels. Council CLD staff review their progress against locality and North Ayrshire priorities. Staff at all levels are trusted and are empowered to make decisions about their work and undertake regular self-evaluation. This supports their capacity to reflect on their practice and work towards strong outcomes for learners and communities. The range of purposeful partnership groups, which include community members, supports the collective capacity to improve outcomes. The strong partnership between CLD and education colleagues is helping to embed the engagement and empowerment of young people in their education. Increasingly, CLD partners are coming together to discuss the impact of their work. This is helping to ensure resources are targeted appropriately on existing and emerging needs. Community organisations value the regular and useful communication they have with, and training provided by, CLD practitioners. CLD partners are effective in supporting the drawdown of significant additional funding by organisations across the local authority. North Ayrshire Council CLD has developed an effective 'grow your own' culture. This supports the service to maintain staffing levels in order to continue improving outcomes.

Areas for development

Community members are well represented on community planning structures. However, there is scope to increase the role of community members in decision making about CLD planning at a strategic level. There is a need for the council and its CLD and education partners to further consider how adult learners can contribute to and influence CLD planning. Continuing to grow and develop approaches to self-evaluation between partners would enable senior leaders to better capture and understand the impact of CLD across North Ayrshire. Senior leaders are aware of the risk of CLD practitioners being viewed as key to the delivery of most work with communities. Senior leaders within the CPP and the council now need to consider how to grow the capacity of all services to work with communities to improve sustainability.

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

Areas of positive progress

Senior leaders, managers and partners use both demographic and performance data effectively to inform the allocation of resources. For example, they identified unmet need in CLD provision for older adults when developing their 2021-24 CLD plan. Since then, they have successfully allocated and attracted funding to enhance this provision. Since the start of 2023, Discovery Award groups have been developed across the local authority. Participants are increasing their skills, contributing to their communities as volunteers, and building social networks. The CLD service has a systematic approach to the gathering of performance data. CLD service staff are supported well to undertake quarterly reviews of their individual work. These reviews help practitioners to ensure their practice is based on what learners and community members need. The high degree of trust between practitioners and organisations means partners are confident to share data. Doing so supports them in deciding which services to take forward.

CLD partners have a clear focus on inclusion and reducing barriers to participation. They work together very effectively to support individuals and families who are experiencing additional challenges, to progress and achieve. The Additional Support Needs youth group helps young people with a range of abilities and neurodiversity to socialise and develop communication and life skills. New Scots enjoy meeting, sharing food, and developing language skills together at the refugee-led Spike Wheat Scots Group. Currently, 14 community-run food larders operate across North Ayrshire. They network with each other well to support innovation and share resources. In addition to helping to address food poverty, they each provide bespoke support to individuals and families to address wider issues in their lives. In many cases this support is life changing for their members, and for some lifesaving. Ambitious community organisations and committed volunteers provide a wide range of services and programmes that support community members very effectively. They are instrumental in taking forward essential, needs-focused provision in many local areas. They support local people well on a wide range of issues including poverty, mental health, and addiction. Garnock Valley men's shed is helping to tackle social isolation and developing the skills of its members.

CLD partners are effective in supporting learners, community activists and volunteers to gain skills that match their aims and ambitions. Young people gain a wide range of skills, develop confidence, and progress towards their career aims through the CLD Modern Apprenticeship programme. Modern Apprentices (MAs) support young people from across North Ayrshire well to be heard, respected and influential, including through Joint Cabinets. At each Joint Cabinet 120 young people from schools across North Ayrshire make sure their voices are heard and their lived experience is taken into account as decisions are made. CLD service staff support

community organisations effectively to engage with local people to design services. ‘Doon The Beach’ community café is a strong example of a local partnership that has enhanced the local environment, creating a local business with employment and volunteering opportunities.

Areas for development

CLD partners should now consider how they can use the data and other information they each gather to better demonstrate their collective impact and progress over time. The CLD service should continue work to create approaches to extend data sharing, analysis, and reporting across all CLD partners. This would help to provide a clearer picture of the difference CLD is making in North Ayrshire for senior leaders, funders, staff, and volunteers. Whilst there are areas of strength within adult learning provision, overall this is less well developed and coordinated across partners than other aspects of CLD. There is now a need for partners to work together to ensure that prospective and current adult learners are clear about the programmes and pathways available to them.

3. Practice worth sharing more widely

The MA programme run by North Ayrshire CLD service has a significant impact on the young people who participate, the learners and communities they support as apprentices, and on the CLD service. Apprentices contribute to and run a wide range of CLD programmes across the local authority. They are key to the development of young people’s empowerment and involvement in influencing decisions. They are instrumental in running the Joint Cabinets between young people and elected members. Young people on the programme gain a wide range of skills and gain confidence. Whilst the staff provide clear leadership and support to the apprentices, the apprentices themselves also influence the CLD service. The input from MAs is helping the service be innovative and remain responsive to learners’ changing needs, especially for children and young people.

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
31 October 2023