

Inspection of Community Learning and Development (CLD) Services in Midlothian

Report by Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer

Report for Information

1 Recommendations

Cabinet are asked to note:

- The very positive inspection of the CLD Partnership Plan and associated work.
- The areas for development focusing on shared ownership of CLD Plans, joint self-evaluation and individual learning plans. A development action plan is being produced with partners.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to highlight the positive partnership inspection of CLD through the recent progress visit. The formal report was published on 30 April 2024.

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3 Background

3.1 Legislation and Policy

The statutory basis for Community Learning and Development (CLD) is set out under section 1 and 2 of the **Education (Scotland) Act 1980** (referred to as the 1980 Act):

Section 1 of the Act places duties on education authorities to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education and further education for their area. This includes CLD and is not age limited.

Section 2 of the Act sets out **The Requirement for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013** which allows Scottish Ministers to prescribe the standards and requirements to which every education authority must comply with when discharging their statutory functions under the **1980 Act**. The Regulations 2013 set out the requirement in relation to the process to be undertaken by education authorities in securing CLD provision. Under the Requirements, local authorities must publish a plan every 3 years containing information about the provision of CLD within their area.

The 4 CLD Regulations seek to strengthen the legislative basis for CLD by placing requirements on local authorities in relation to the auditing of need for CLD, as well as consultation and planning at a local level.

3.1.1 Regulation 1 – Citation, commencement, and interpretation

Key activities to fulfil CLD outcomes and activities set out in legislation are as follows:

Community Development/Building Community Capacity

- Enabling people to develop the confidence, understanding and skills required to influence decision making and service delivery.
- Volunteering.

Youth work/family learning and other intervention work with children, young people, and families

- Engaging with young people to support their personal, social, and educational development and have a voice.
- Family learning.

3.1.2 Regulation 2 – The process to secure CLD in the local authority area

This regulation requires the local authority to initiate, maintain and facilitate a process which ensures CLD is secured in such a way that it:

- Identifies target individuals and groups.
- Considers the needs of those target individuals and groups for CLD.
- Assesses the degree to which those needs are already being met; and identifies barriers to the adequate and efficient provision of relevant CLD.

3.1.3 Regulation 3 Duty to involve and consult:

This regulation requires the local authority to involve and consult community members who represent:

- The target individuals and groups.
- Providers of CLD within the area.

3.1.4 Regulation 4 Three-year plan:

This regulation requires the local authority to consult on and publish plans every three years containing specific information on the provision of CLD by both the local authority and its partners.

In Midlothian, this statutory function is delivered as follows:

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4295/midlothian_statutory_community_learning_and_development_plan_2021_to_2024_pdf.pdf

3.2 March 2024 Progress Inspection Partnership Visit Midlothian CLD

HM Inspectors visited Midlothian 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.

During the visit, Education Scotland spoke with learners and community representatives, CLD leaders in the public and third sectors, managers, staff, and volunteers, and other key stakeholders to determine Midlothian Council's and partner's effectiveness and areas for improvement.

The inspection team focused on answering the following two questions:

- **How effective is the leadership of the local authority and their CLD partners in improving outcomes?**
- **How well does the performance of the local authority and their CLD partners demonstrate positive impact?**

Leadership and Improving Outcomes – Positive Progress

The leadership of CLD at all levels is confident and effective. There is a clear shared vision and ambition for improving the lives of individuals and communities. The CLD Plan is closely aligned to the Single Midlothian Plan, and the two high-level plans complement each other well. The governance of CLD is clear, efficient and integrated well into both council and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) reporting structures and scrutiny arrangements. Regular and detailed reporting is ensuring that the council and strategic partners are clear about the progress they are making. Council internal reporting and governance is used well by senior leaders to analyse and scrutinise achievements against planned actions and targets. Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA) is a key and vital partner in CLD. MVA contributes effectively to the leadership, governance and delivery of CLD plan priorities. The work and

contribution of CLD to council and CPP priorities is valued highly by senior leaders and elected members. There are a range of opportunities for stakeholders, including young people and adults, to inform and influence the CLD Plan. For example, through commissioned research, consultations, focus groups and youth and community forums. There is a well-embedded culture of strong and effective partnership working. Clearly defined roles and high levels of trust between the Communities Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLLE) service, third sector and other partners is helping to ensure a collaborative and collective endeavour to improving lives. This is helping to make effective and efficient use of reducing resources by avoiding duplication and targeting resources to areas of greatest needs.

Council and CLD partners planning for improvement is based on robust evidence and underpinned by the comprehensive Profile of Midlothian. Partners focused on improving health and wellbeing and tackling poverty are improving their coordination of provision. This is helping to improve outcomes for individuals and families. The communication between council departments and the Federation of Community Councils, its sub-groups and local Community Councils is improving. This has strengthened links with the planning and roads departments, resulting in earlier engagement and improved communication with communities.

The Shaping Places Programme is building capacity and leading to improvement. The programme has directly influenced decision-making by informing changes to the Single Midlothian Plan. Staff and volunteers know their communities and learners well. Programmes and activities are adapted well to continue to meet ongoing needs.

The Local Employability Plus Partnership is a highly effective group and network of council, CLD partners and third sector organisations. Their open and collaborative approach is helping to ensure that limited funding is distributed well to local groups and organisations.

Staff and volunteers are supported well to increase their skills and knowledge. Staff are actively encouraged and supported to suggest and to lead improvements and new initiatives. Routes into employment from volunteering and career progression in CLD (CLLE) are supported well by the council. For example, from an introduction to youth work through to degree level qualifications for a few staff. The council and CLD partners, including MVA, are effective at sharing training opportunities, which is helping to widen reach and maximise the use of available resources.

Performance and Positive Impact Areas of Positive Progress

Midlothian Council and community planning partners gather and analyse a rich variety of data and other information well to demonstrate the positive impact they are making. Senior leaders are effective at driving this. They understand the story behind the data and benchmark their performance against similar CLD provision across Scotland. Overall, the council and partners are making positive progress towards achieving almost all of the high-level targets within the Single Midlothian Plan and CLD Plan. Case studies are used very well to exemplify where CLLE and partners are making a difference to the lives of individuals and communities. Overall, the majority of participation and achievements of learners are returning to pre-pandemic levels. A few measures show a significant upward trend over time. In recent years, the numbers of young people achieving a positive post school destination has significantly improved and is now consistently high. CLD partners gather and analyse data systematically to inform and deliver a multi-agency programme of diversionary youth work activity. As a result, they have significantly reduced levels of youth anti-social behaviour.

The local authority and partners are very effective at removing barriers to participation. For example, they deliver many programmes and activities free of charge, cover travel expenses and provide equipment. The online delivery of programmes, such as the mental health and wellbeing course, is making this more accessible to those that work or who have other responsibilities. A few CLD and other partners are working well with schools. This is helping to ensure the most appropriate, timely and effective support is put in place for children, young people and families that need it the most. Adjustments to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award provision is helping to remove barriers to participation, including for young people with additional support needs.

As a result, more young people are being recognised for their achievements and have increased confidence to progress to other programmes and activities, such as volunteering. Young carers attending the Croft Street Hub are supported well to study in a safe, quiet and nurturing learning environment. Adult learners are supported well to complete accredited courses based on their needs and interests. Learners value highly the support provided by CLLE staff, which is helping to maintain their interest in learning during difficult times in their lives.

Committed and well-supported volunteers are helping to improve lives and communities. For example, conversation café volunteers are helping adults learning English and become part of their community. Ageing Well volunteers are helping to reduce social isolation and keep older people physically active. Older adults involved in the Village Voices reminiscence group benefit from the social interaction and support from other group members. A few have developed friendships and now meet out with the group. The allocation of Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery Funds to 'trusted partners' is helping to ensure that resources reach those households on low incomes or impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. As a result, individuals and families are receiving much needed support and advice on financial management, food supplies and money to cover unexpected bills. Local community development trusts (CDT) positively benefit from effective support provided by the local authority and MVA. This is helping CDTs to secure assets, attract funding and develop their capacity to progress. CDT and local organisations network well to share their experience and learn from each other. They use community consultation and engagement well to inform their priorities. As a result, communities across Midlothian are benefiting from access to an increasing range of provision.

Overall, participants across a range of programmes and activities are gaining new knowledge and skills helping them to meet their aspirations and needs. For example, young people who are at risk of not achieving a positive destination are gaining skills through Croft Street Hub and Loanhead Vocational Learning Centre provision. Most of these young people are working towards a Foundation Apprenticeship or other Scottish Qualification Authority qualification. As a result, almost all are more aware of their skills, interests and career aims and are better able to progress to other learning. Adults attending the online mental health and wellbeing course are developing strategies to help them tackle stress and anxiety and learning how to support other members of their family. All of the adults participating in the No One Left Behind employability programme are developing skills, gaining qualifications and progressing to further learning, volunteering or employment. Through their engagement, a few learners have become increasingly self-aware, such as recognising challenges with their mental health. As a result, they are accessing the help and support they need to build their confidence and to progress. Digital learners, English for speakers of other languages students, literacy students and Gaelic learners are gaining skills and progressing to other learning. As a result of gaining new skills and qualifications, learners are better able to secure employment.

Across provision, the achievements of young people and adults are regularly recognised and celebrated well.

In summary

The report emphasised that “the council and partners are making positive progress towards achieving almost all of the high-level targets within the CLD Plan.

With regards to CLD for young people, areas of positive progress highlighted in the report included the following:

- The majority of participation and achievements of learners returning to pre-pandemic levels.
- A consistently high number of young people achieving a positive post school destination.
- Significantly reduced levels of youth anti-social behaviour, following the delivery of a multi-agency programme of diversionary youth work activity.
- Committed and well-supported volunteers are helping to improve lives and communities.

Midlothian’s CLD provision for adult learners also received praise in the report, with the following areas highlighted:

- Conversation café volunteers are helping adults learning English and become part of their community.
- All of the adults participating in the No One Left Behind employability programme are developing skills, gaining qualifications and progressing to further learning, volunteering or employment.
- Adults attending the online mental health and wellbeing course are developing strategies to help them tackle stress and anxiety and learning how to support other members of their family too.

Community Development Support

The report also highlighted the progress of Community Development Support in the following areas:

- Partners focused on improving health and wellbeing and tackling poverty are improving their coordination of provision.
- The communication between council departments and the Federation of Community Councils, its sub-groups and local Community Councils is improving.
- Local community development trusts (CDT) positively benefit from effective support provided by the local authority and Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA).
- The Shaping Places Programme is building capacity and leading to improvement.

The local authority and partners are very effective at removing barriers to participation. For example, they deliver many programmes and activities free of charge, cover travel expenses and provide equipment. Adjustments to the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award provision is helping to remove barriers to participation, including for young people with additional support needs.

Areas for Development:

There is not yet shared ownership of all CLD priorities or a consistent understanding of how all key stakeholders contribute fully to the CLD Plan. Whilst the close alignment between the CLD Plan and the Single Midlothian Plan is a strength, a few key stakeholders do not fully recognise how they contribute to progressing CLD Plan priorities. Joint self-evaluation is not yet systematic across collaborative work with all relevant partners, such as the health service. Senior leaders should review current self-evaluation arrangements to ensure that collective impacts and information from all key partners helps to more fully inform and influence strategic decision-making.

Across various programmes, a few learners are not aware of having an individual action plan. Key workers should ensure that all learners are clear about the progress they are making and have ownership of their individual action plan.

The full report from Education Scotland can be read in full through the following link:

<https://education.gov.scot/inspection-and-review/find-an-inspection-report/find-an-inspection-report/details?id=5306>

3.3 Next Steps

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. However the CLLE service and its CLD delivery partners will work together to produce an area for development plan and these priorities will be included within the new 3-year CLD Plan required in September 2024.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

Staff and partners time is required to support the areas for development action plan.

4.2 Digital

Not applicable.

4.3 Risk

Not applicable.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

The purpose of CLD activity is to reduce barriers to participation in building skills for learning, life and work. ICLD activity also is responsible for improving outcomes in communities and reducing unemployment.

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities

The overall CLD activity aligns with the key outcomes in the Single Midlothian Plan as indicated by this recent inspection.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☒ Holistic Working
- ☒ Hub and Spoke
- ☒ Modern
- ☒ Sustainable
- ☒ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☒ Asset-based
- ☒ Continuous Improvement
- ☒ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☒ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☒ Efficient and Modern
- ☒ Innovative and Ambitious
- ☐ None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The inspection report on the CLD and Partners Progress Visit indicates positive progress is being made in securing best value.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Many community and third sector and public sector stakeholders were included within the inspection visit through focus groups.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Positive trend data indicating improved performance was evidenced through the inspection process.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Ensuring we meet our CLD statutory duties supports improved outcomes through enhancing current preventative approaches.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Ensuring we meet our CLD statutory duties supports the ability to build sustainability into the joint work taking place through CLD activity and is one of the key themes within the existing CLD Plan.