

Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Midlothian Council

13 December 2016

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1. Context

Community learning and development (CLD) partners within Midlothian Council and the area of Dalkeith/Woodburn, Gorebridge and Mayfield and Easthouses were inspected by Education Scotland during September and October 2016. 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?

CLD and their partners are at the heart of delivery of the three Single Midlothian Plan priorities; reducing the gap in learning outcomes, improving health outcomes and improving economic circumstances. The Council's Leadership team and Community Planning partners increasingly holistic approach to learning is having positive impacts. Positive destinations for young people leaving school are improving. A strong focus on targeting those citizens who are most disadvantaged is leading to better outcomes for young people, adults and communities. Parenting programmes are impacting positively on families and attendance at nurseries is improving. The use of trend data is resulting in more effective responses to crime and anti-social behaviour, for example youth programmes and deployment of police officers. Partners now need to ensure that as needs and resources change, they amend and review structures appropriately.

Strategic leadership of CLD is very strong. CLD partners at both strategic and local level work together very effectively. An ethos of shared endeavour is evident across partners. Effective leadership from the Chief Executive of the Council is disseminated to senior officers and other staff. CLD is at the heart of tackling inequalities and are at the centre of the delivery of Council priorities. Across partners, leaders are clear about their role in contributing to the strategic vision and aims set out by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). Strategic sub groups sitting underneath the CPP are inclusive, effective and involve a wide range of partners. This includes the third sector, faith groups and community organisations. Clear systems for reporting the outcomes of CLD activity are in place. Quarterly meetings with Heads of Service ensures that this is both robust and current. A balanced scorecard system is ensuring that that targets are being met. Partners report to stakeholders using a wide variety of methods. A simple but effective leaflet reports outcomes to the public and other stakeholders.

Leaders across the partnership empower staff to take on leadership roles. As a result staff are confident to tackle issues creatively and there is a strong sense of ownership. All Lifelong Learning and Employability (LLE) staff are given responsibility for devolved areas of leadership. Across Midlothian staff and volunteers are well supported to develop and enhance their skills. Many youth workers are progressing from volunteering to paid work and further education. Third Sector Interface provide a good range of training opportunities that contributes to

improving of service delivery. Shared training and networking is improving as a result of partnership working.

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

Partners work together effectively to share, analyse and interpret data and other intelligence. They are using this knowledge to inform working practices to improve outcomes. At a local level CLD staff and partners are using data to target those most in need. Young people who are less likely to achieve a positive destination after leaving school are supported well through a multi-agency coordination group. Partners are identifying young people at an earlier stage and are directing resources effectively. This is leading to better outcomes for individuals. Shared data helps to track young people's progress. Developing system to track skills for learning, life and work will further embed this approach. Community organisations are clear about the need not to duplicate effort in data collection. Examples include local organisations in the Mayfield/Easthouses area working together through the In It Together (IIT) group. Sharing of information and data between partners is enhancing provision. People with complex needs, poor mental health and dependency issues are appropriately targeted.

Young people and adults benefit from programmes that are improving life chances. High level targets are set at a strategic level to address health inequalities, levels of attainment and literacy and numeracy needs. Older people in a sheltered housing complex now feel more included through the use of lap tops, tablets and smart phones. They can now communicate with families and friends through social media. Research into how learners use technology is leading to re-designed programmes for adult learning. Data sharing between police and health staff is resulting in clearer referral processes. Youth agencies in collaboration with other partners are successfully developing housing options for young people. Partners now need to build on this work to sustain outcomes in the longer term.

Community groups are confident, skilled and active. They are influential in their immediate communities and across Midlothian more widely. Local people make a strong contribution to their communities through Community Action Plans that are linked well to CPP priorities. The Futures Group in Gorebridge is improving community infrastructure through the provision of a play park and access to green space. Gorebridge Parish Church is making a significant contribution to the lives of local people. The community re-cycling project, café and food-bank is helping to reduce social isolation. The Faith Partnership involving 18 faith organisations links into CPP structures to deliver services to local communities. *The Community Mediation Project* is reducing instances of domestic dispute and relationship breakdown between neighbours. Young people are also being supported to gain employment through their work with schools.

Volunteering across the communities inspected is very strong. Dalkeith Corn Exchange, Gorebridge Parish Church, Development Trusts and the *Midlothian Community Mediation Project* are some of the organisations that support volunteers to enhance community life. They are well supported by partners such as the *Midlothian Voluntary Action* and *Volunteer Midlothian*. Volunteers at the Grandparents Parenting Again group are contributing to Midlothian Kinship Care Policy. The group deliver inputs to a range of national conferences, speak directly to elected representatives and respond to new legislation. Increasing numbers of young people are gaining accreditation through Saltire Awards. As a result of Midlothian's

commitment to increase the voice of young people, many are now more active citizens in their communities. However, community organisations could helpfully explore how more young people could further contribute to local decision making.

Members of local communities feel supported and listened to by partners agencies. Partnerships across the communities inspected are strong. Community Council members work effectively with Midlothian Council to achieve their aims. The *Health Inequalities Partnership* use intelligence to plan their work, target resources and reduce barriers for individuals. Older people from the *Intergenerational Befriending Project* are gaining valuable experiences through working with younger volunteers. Through participatory budgeting, local groups are now making decisions about their local communities.

Learning across the area inspected is well planned and delivered. The needs of learners are well considered. The learning offer to excluded and disengaged young people is strong. LLE staff support young people well to secure positive outcomes through a range of programmes such as Activity Agreements. *Pathways to Success* effectively supports young people disengaged from mainstream education to gain a positive outcome. Partnership working between local schools and CLD is resulting in better outcomes for young people. Those on the PAVE 2 programme are overcoming barriers to learning. The *Friday Night Music Project* at Newbattle High School enhances young people's music skills exposing them to the wider music community. Members of the *Woodburn Problem Solving Partnership* target those young people at risk of offending. Reductions in youth crime and anti-social behaviour are now evident.

People facing multiple challenges in their lives benefit from well-planned programmes of learning. The *Spring Women's Project* is helping participants deal with issues in their lives through a well-designed programme of learning activities. Learning programmes are tailored to individual needs. A feature of the provision across Midlothian is the longevity and consistency of the support for learners. An ethos of co-production with learners is evident. Young people on the *Green Pathway* are sustaining relationships with workers that help them progress their learning. Adults with disabilities attending the *IKEA Get Ready For Retail* course are benefitting from a highly individualised programme. Many are progressing to other learning and employment. Syrian refugees are making good progress in their learning. They are now more able to communicate in English. However, there is potential for greater co-design of the curriculum with the refugees to ensure learning need are being met. Literacy and numeracy courses are learner centred and responsive to individual need. Learners are encouraged to reflect and build on their learning. Parenting and Family Learning courses are flexible and take account of learners needs. Learners clearly articulate the impact on their lives. Overall, there is scope for partners to ensure that the work they are doing closes the gap for children and other learners through the National Improvement Framework. .

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

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

- An ethos of shared endeavour.
- Strong and clear leadership across the partnership.
- Ambitious and enthusiastic staff and volunteers.
- The range of targeted learning programmes leading to life-changing impacts.

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

- Continue to develop systems to track skills for learning, life and work across partners.
- Consider how learner pathways can be sustained as resources change.

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 learning community. Partners have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement and communities are achieving very well. As a result we have ended the inspection process at this stage.

Sheila Brown
HM Inspector
13 December 2016

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	Very 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

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