

Education Scotland Inspection Report: Community Learning and Development in Midlothian Council

Report by Dr Grace Vickers, Head of Education

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the Education Scotland inspection of community learning and development in Midlothian Council which was published on 13 December 2016. The inspection focused on both the strategic leadership across Midlothian and place-based delivery within the communities of Dalkeith, Woodburn, Gorebridge, Mayfield and Easthouses. A copy of the inspection report is attached as appendix one.

2 Background

2.1 Context of this Inspection

Education Scotland have the responsibility for inspecting how good the learning and development taking place within local authority areas is regardless of who is providing those learning and development opportunities. The local authority has the responsibility for co-ordinating learning and development. The CLD regulations place a responsibility on the local authority to map and coordinate improvement planning within these areas. In Midlothian we coordinate learning and development activities through the community planning partnership arrangement. The scrutiny function is carried out by the Improving Opportunities in Midlothian theme of Community Planning. Risks relating to the CLD regulations plan are contained within the Local Area Network (LAN). None are currently identified for Midlothian.

The inspection grading is given using a six point scale: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, weak and unsatisfactory. Midlothian were evaluated as Very Good in all four indicators.

Those within scope of this inspection are all those deemed to be delivering learning and development activities whether they are public sector or third sector including small community groups and religious organisations where appropriate. In Midlothian a wide group of local people, staff from across all three Council Directorates, Police, NHS, Community Councils and third sector groups were subject to scrutiny through this process.

2.2 Inspection Format

Overall the inspection team ask the following two questions:

- How good is the strategic leadership of Learning and Development?
- How good is the learning and development in this local community?

They also focus on the current and evolving policy context, for example:

- Closing the poverty-related attainment gap; prevention.
- Reducing social isolation.
- Tackling health inequalities.
- Empowering communities.

The strategic inspection took place over 2 days the 6th and 7th September 2016. The place based inspection took place over 5 days the week beginning 3rd October 2016. The inspectors requested partnership self evaluations in advance which looked at specific quality indicators relating to: improvements in performance, impact on the local community, delivering the learning offer with learners and leadership and direction. The inspectors use three main methods to inspect. These are examining self evaluations, evidence files and conducting focus groups with participants, staff, partners and volunteers. There were over 60 focus groups and approximately 400 individuals involved in the process.

2.3 Inspection Findings: How Good is the Learning and Development Very Good

The inspection team assessed the learning and development overall as very good for all four indicators: improvements in performance, impact on the local community, delivering the learning offer with learners and leadership/direction. This is the highest grade received within Midlothian for the learning and development taking place. The partnership is proud of this achievement as it has been achieved through the dedication, of staff, volunteers and local people. The inspection results are a validation of the quality of the work taking place within Midlothian.

The inspectors identified the following 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.

Detailed verbal feedback was given on each of the quality indicators and summarised in the formal inspection report. The inspectors discussed with partners how they might continue to improve their work. This is what was agreed:

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

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

It was highlighted that continued efforts will be required to ensure the provision remains as effective and has the capacity to continue to make life changing impacts due to the challenging economic circumstances we face.

3.2 Risk

We are ambitious and wish to continue to deliver high quality services with and for local people, partnership working is crucial to mitigate the financial impact on those most vulnerable.

Reduction in resources could lead to the loss of both services and staff expertise thus affecting the standard that has been achieved. This could in turn risks losing ground gained in preventive interventions that has been achieved by building the capacity of community group for self help.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☒ Community safety
- ☒ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Reducing inequalities.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

This work is core to addressing inequalities for Midlothian Community Planning Partnership.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Much of our current and future approaches for learning and development are preventative as reflected within the inspection findings.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Involving our communities and partners in designing, delivering and co-producing learning and development

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

The inspectors recognised that learning and development activities were addressing inequalities. The approach undertaken will continue to target those from identified equalities groups and ensure individual needs are proactively taken into account when supports and opportunities are developed.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The learning and development activities within the scope of the inspection are supporting individuals and communities to contribute to sustainable developments at a local level.

3.10 IT Issues

None

4 Recommendations

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- Note the content of this report.
- Recognise and celebrate the quality, range and life changing impact of the learning and development taking place.
- Support the recommended areas of action to ensure that the learning and development offered across Midlothian moves from very good to excellent, progress will be reported through existing Council and Community Planning Partnership performance reporting mechanisms.

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**Supporting papers: Hyperlink to formal Report published by Education Scotland
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http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/MidlothianCLDIns13122016_tcm4-877315.pdf