



**ORKNEY**  
ISLANDS COUNCIL

**Item: 10**

**Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 5 June 2024.**

**Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Orkney.**

**Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.**

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## **1. Overview**

- 1.1. During 2023, HM Inspectors developed interim arrangements to undertake Community Learning and Development progress visits in all 32 local authorities within the academic year, in a bid to support improvement and provide external assurance of the quality of Community Learning and Development provision in Scotland.
- 1.2. Through progress visits, HM Inspectors take account of the extent to which local authorities are fulfilling their statutory duties in relation to Community Learning and Development and evaluate the progress they and their partners are making to improve the quality of provision and services.
- 1.3. Evaluative grades are not issued for these interim arrangements. However, HM Inspectors make an overall judgement on the progress that the local authority and their partners are making with the Community Learning and Development plan as follows:
  - making sufficient progress and have the capacity to continue to improve; or
  - making sufficient progress in some areas, however some improvement is required; or
  - not making sufficient progress and there are important areas requiring improvement.
- 1.4. Orkney's Community Learning and Development progress visit took place in March 2024, with the report, attached as Appendix 1, published on 23 April 2024, highlighting areas of strength and aspects for development.
- 1.5. HM Inspectors are confident that the local authority and their Community Learning and Development partners are making sufficient progress and have the capacity to continue to improve and as such they will make no more visits in connection with this inspection.

- 1.6. HM Inspectors were generous in their feedback and were extremely impressed by the quality of Community Learning and Development provision in Orkney and in the fact that the self-evaluation was accurate, demonstrating the Community Learning and Development Partnership has a clear understanding of the progress made and has a focused commitment to continuous improvement.
- 1.7. Reassuringly, all areas for development had already been recognised and were being progressed by the Community Learning and Development Partnership prior to the inspection.
- 1.8. During the inspection progress visit, HM Inspectors identified the leadership and governance of Community Learning and Development across Orkney, as an area of highly effective practice which they would like to share nationally.
- 1.9. It has to be recognised that this is a tremendously positive report which recognises the hard work, dedication and commitment that is shown across the Community Learning and Development sector to work collaboratively for the benefit of learners and the community. Special thanks should go to the Community Learning and Development Partnership who have strived to ensure the effective coordination, expansion, and delivery of Community Learning and Development and Community Learning and Development values across Orkney.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. It is recommended that members of the Committee:
  - i. Scrutinise the Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report for Orkney, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, published by Education Scotland on 23 April 2024, in order to obtain assurance.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1. The progress visit of Community Learning and Development by His Majesty's Inspectors focused on two high-level questions:
  - How effective is the leadership of the local authority and their Community Learning and Development partners in improving outcomes?
  - How well does the performance of the local authority and their Community Learning and Development partners demonstrate positive impact?

- 3.2. In order to answer the two high-level questions, Inspectors focus on **five themes** across **four quality indicators** from How good is our community learning and development?
- **Leadership and Direction**
    - Governance (QI 6.1 Raising standards)
    - Capacity for improvement (QI 6.2 Securing improvement)
  - **Performance and Outcomes**
    - Analysis and use of data and other information (QI 1.1 Performance against aims and targets)
    - Success for all (QI 2.3 Improving life chances)
    - Skills for learning life and work (QI 2.3 Improving life chances)

## 4. Summary of Progress Visit Findings

4.1. The report highlights areas of strength and some aspects for development.

- **The following key strengths were identified:**
  - The strong and effective leadership and governance of Community Learning and Development, which is supported by regular monitoring of progress and high-quality reporting.
  - The shared ownership of the Community Learning and Development plan by Community Learning and Development partners represented on the Community Learning and Development Partnership working collaboratively to reduce duplication, secure improvement and provide inclusive opportunities to meet local need.
  - Planning for improvement across partners represented on the Community Learning and Development partnership is based on robust evidence which helps demonstrate the impact of the Community Learning and Development.
  - Volunteering across Orkney and the strength of community activism is strong including the work of Community Association and Developments Trusts, who are supported well by Community Learning and Development Partners to improve the lives of local communities.
  - Across the wide range of Community Learning and Development activity in youth work, adult learning, employability and community development, learners are gaining confidence, knowledge and developing key skills which are helping to improve life chances, increase opportunities and build social cohesion.

- **The following areas for development were identified:**
  - Increase learner and community voice on the Community Learning and Development Partnership, which had already been identified as an action in the current Community Learning and Development Partners Plan.
  - Streamlining of strategic plans across Orkney, to reduce duplication and improve reporting and monitoring.
  - Although, they were overwhelmed with the quantity and quality of Community Learning and Development activity taking place in Orkney, inspectors felt we may be underreporting the volume and impact of Community Learning and Development related activity taking place. HM Inspectors have suggested that Community Learning and Development strategic partners should identify ways to capture the full picture of Community Learning and Development, including the work of development trusts.
  - Whilst the development of wider accreditation opportunities for adults has been identified as an unmet need in the current Community Learning and Development Partners Plan, HM Inspectors suggest the Partnership considers ways to increase opportunities for adults to gain accreditation in the new Community Learning and Development plan.
  - Community Learning and Development partners and secondary schools should investigate ways to better track the achievements of young people.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1. The areas for improvement outlined in section 3 above, are being taken forward by Community Learning and Development partners and will be included in the new Community Learning and Development Partners Plan 2024-27 which is currently being developed.

### **For further information please contact:**

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### **Implications of Report**

1. **Financial** – There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.
2. **Legal** - Education Scotland HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) evaluate and report on, the quality of Community Learning and Development provision within local authorities, in line with The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and associated guidance for local

authorities. Following the guidance and findings from HM Inspectors will assist the Council to adhere to the Regulations.

3. **Corporate Governance:** Not applicable.
4. **Human Resources** - There are no human resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.
5. **Equalities** – Due to the overall focus of Community Learning and Development to work with people of all ages who are most disadvantaged and in need of support, there is potential for positive impacts for those facing inequalities, including socio-economic disadvantage, race, age, disability, and those who are care experienced.
6. **Island Communities Impact** – Although the report covers Community Learning and Development across the whole of Orkney, there are some potential positive impacts for the isles as the Community Learning and Development Partnership progress the identified areas for development.
7. **Links to Council Plan** This report supports and contributes to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Council Plan strategic priorities:
  - Growing our economy.
  - Strengthening our Communities.
  - Developing our Infrastructure.
  - Transforming our Council.
8. **Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan** This report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the following Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities:
  - Cost of Living.
  - Sustainable Development.
  - Local Equality.
9. **Environmental and Climate Risk** None directly related to this report.
10. **Risk** None directly related to this report.
11. **Procurement** None directly related to this report.
12. **Health and Safety** None directly related to this report.
13. **Property and Assets** None directly related to this report.
14. **Information Technology** None directly related to this report.
15. **Cost of Living** – The work of Community Learning and Development Partners to support people through current cost of living pressures, was considered as part of the inspection process.

### List of Background Papers

None.

## **Appendix**

Appendix 1 - Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report, Orkney Islands Council, 23 April 2024.

# Community Learning and Development Progress Visit Report

**Orkney Islands Council**

23 April 2024

## 1. Context

HM Inspectors visited Orkney Islands 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, 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.

## 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

Across Orkney, the leadership and governance of CLD is strong and effective. It is supported by regular monitoring of progress and high-quality reporting. Senior leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to CLD. They understand the progress that CLD partners are making and where this contributes to strategic priorities. Most CLD practitioners and partners have a strong understanding of CLD priorities and can articulate where this contributes to the Orkney Community Plan 2023-30. CLD partners, represented on the CLD Partnership, demonstrate robust governance and oversight of the CLD plan and have shared ownership of the improvement priorities. They work collaboratively to reduce duplication, secure improvement and provide inclusive opportunities to meet local need. There are a few positive examples of learner and community voices influencing CLD and associated plans. These include the Jedi Council, Youth Forum and Orkney Matters.

Planning for improvement across partners represented on the CLD partnership is based on robust evidence. Partners have strong and effective arrangements in place to measure progress against the annual CLD partners' plan. CLD partners monitor their plan on a quarterly basis using a tracker system and self-evaluation. This helps demonstrate the impact of the CLD partnership and is supporting improvement. The CLD and Employability (CLDE) service use a systematic approach to planning, monitoring and data analysis to help inform improvement. A self-evaluation and quality assurance calendar ensures there is a continued focus on securing improvement. As a result, CLDE staff, at all levels, take responsibility for leading change. They have a clear understanding of shared priorities which is helping to inform their practice.

Council staff, partners and volunteers are very well supported with professional learning opportunities at all levels. This is increasing their ability to respond and adapt well to meet local needs. Volunteering across Orkney is strong and Voluntary Action Orkney's (VAO) support is helping to embed a strong culture of giving back to communities. Community associations value highly the support they receive from the CLDE service and VAO. Similarly, support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise is increasing collaboration across Orkney's development trusts. This is helping to increase access to social activities and mitigate against the rising cost of living.

#### Areas for development

Learners and community groups are not yet full partners in CLD strategic planning and decision making. Currently, development trusts are not directly involved in the CLD Partnership or



Orkney-wide CLD decision making. The CLD Partnership should consider how best to increase the role of development trusts and other community organisations in CLD planning.

Partners are not yet clear how strategic plans all link together. Streamlining plans would help to reduce duplication and improve reporting and monitoring. This may also reduce the need for members to be represented across multiple partnerships.

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

### Areas of positive progress

The CLDE service is using a wide range of data to plan and track their outcomes. The CLDE Annual Report 2022-23 shows strong performance in most areas. Staff routinely seek feedback from learners to help plan future delivery. The CLD Partnership is starting to use data more effectively and is targeting joint resources well to drive improvement. All partners on the CLD Partnership have agreed to focus on four key areas. Although at an early stage, this approach should support partners to more effectively measure and track progress across the key areas of focus. National key performance indicators gathered for CLD Managers Scotland show strong performance in most areas. This data shows significant increases in the number of young people and adults engaged in CLD activity since 2020-21. The number of learners accessing classes at The Learning Link is almost matching pre-pandemic levels. Almost all learners are achieving one or more of their individual learning goals. CLDE staff and partners actively promote youth awards to accredit young people's learning. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of young people gaining Dynamic Youth awards in the past two years.

CLD partners work well together to provide inclusive opportunities, which is helping to remove barriers to participation. The Orkney Blide Trust works to co-design services with adults experiencing mental wellbeing challenges. As a result, services are accessible, suit member's needs, and are helping to reduce disadvantage. Parents value the support that children and young people receive through the Pupil Engagement Team at Kirkwall Grammar School. This is helping to increase attendance at school and engagement in learning. The targeted approach to develop Friday afternoon activity in Stromness and Kirkwall town centre is increasing access to a wide range of activities. Close partnership working between Police Scotland, the Pickaquoy Centre, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Action for Children, CLDE and the Youth Café is leading to better engagement with a wider range of young people. This is helping to reduce anti-social behaviour. Development trusts and community associations are increasingly delivering projects to support those most in need. Programmes are targeted well, support cohesion and are increasing learning opportunities. This is helping to strengthen communities and reduce social isolation. English for speakers of other language (ESOL) learners are gaining skills and confidence in using English through classes, one to one support and the Language Café. This is supporting them to become part of the Orkney community. The majority of ESOL learners are progressing into volunteering, further learning and employment.

Across the wide range of CLD activity, learners are gaining confidence, knowledge and developing key skills which are helping to improve life chances. Strong partnerships with schools are contributing to positive outcomes for young people. Local employability partners work effectively to support learners to transition between well-developed pathways to best suit their learning needs and respond to labour market demands. Participants have increasing self-belief, confidence. They are better able to communicate and work in a team. Adult learners are supported well to progress towards their aims. The individual support and small group work

at The Learning Link is well planned, delivered and evaluated. Learners are overcoming challenges in their lives and a majority progress into further learning, employment, self-employment or volunteering. This is life changing for the majority of participants. Across Orkney, ambitious and effective development trusts, led well by volunteer boards, are improving their communities. They are delivering a wide range of projects that address local needs. These include large scale infrastructure projects such as North Ronaldsay Development Trust's Pund Project at Trebb to develop a large community hub. As a result, they are building community cohesion, making community life more sustainable and progressing well with their ambitious plans.

### **Areas for development**

The CLD Partnership do not have a clear picture of the overall impact of CLD across Orkney. This includes work delivered by community organisations, such as development trusts with CLD aspects to their work. CLD strategic partners should consider how they can work with community organisations to identify ways to efficiently capture the full picture of CLD. This would more fully inform CLD planning, monitoring and reporting.

The opportunities for adults to gain accreditation are not sufficiently well developed. The CLD Partnership should consider ways to address this identified unmet need in the development of their new CLD plan. CLD partners and secondary schools need to track better the achievements of young people. This would support partners to ensure they can build on young people's skills across their provision. It would also support young people to fully recognise their own progress and skills.

### **3. Practice worth sharing more widely**

The leadership and governance of CLD across Orkney is strong and effective at all levels. The Chief Executive of the council and other senior leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the role and function of CLD and where this aligns with strategic priorities. They value how CLD is leading to improved outcomes for learners and communities. The role and recognition of CLD has been strengthened, including additional investment in growing the CLDE team. Senior leaders are now considering the sustainability of short-term funded work and mitigating potential negative impacts. The establishment of proactive subgroups is helping to drive improvement across the CLD partners' plan.

### **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 aspects of highly effective practice which we would like to explore further.

Robert Hynd  
HM Inspector  
23 April 2024