Community Learning and Development (CLD) Planning

An aspect review of progress made in implementing the CLD Regulations

Transforming lives through learning

Contents

1. Introduction

In June 2012 the Scottish Government issued the *CLD Strategic Guidance*. While directed at Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and recognising the vital role played by a wide range of organisations and services, the guidance clearly identifies a lead role for local authorities 'to provide clear leadership and direction, and to drive the action needed to ensure we maximise the contribution of CLD partners in the reform of public services'.

This expectation was formalised by *The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013* ('the CLD Regulations'), which place a legal requirement on local authorities to fulfil this role. The *CLD Regulations* support the achievement of the following policy goals:

- to ensure communities across Scotland – particularly those which are disadvantaged – have access to the CLD support they need;

- to strengthen coordination between the full range of CLD providers, ensuring that CPPs, local authorities and other providers of public services respond appropriately to the expectations set by the *CLD Strategic Guidance*;

- to reinforce the role of communities and learners in the assessment, planning and evaluation processes, enabling them to shape CLD provision; and

- to make the role and contribution of CLD more visible.

The *CLD Regulations* place a duty on local authorities to secure the delivery of community learning and development in their area, working with other CLD providers and communities.

As an output of this process, the local authority must publish a plan every three years setting out:

- what action it and its partners intend to take to provide CLD over the period of the plan;
- how delivery will be coordinated by the local authority; and
- what needs have been identified but will not be met during the relevant three years.

The first plans made under this legislation were published by 1 September 2015. The CLD team in Education Scotland began to look at these plans within an aspect review. Education Scotland published an initial report on the plans shortly after their submission. Following that report HMI visited a number of authorities to look at implementation of the policy in more depth. This report outlines their findings. In September 2016, Education Scotland changed its approaches to inspection of CLD to take account of the new legislation. Education Scotland will continue to look at the implementation of the legislation and look to disseminate our findings to Ministers, policy makers, local authorities and the wider CLD sector in Scotland.

Bill Maxwell
Chief Executive
Education Scotland

2. Context

The expectation that CLD activity will be planned in partnership with all providers is far from new. In 1999, following the publication of the Scottish Executive's report *Communities: Change through Learning* (1998), the then Scottish Executive directed community education services to develop productive partnerships relating to a wide range of social, economic, health and educational needs of communities and to create Community Learning Plans. The plans were to be developed in close consultation with key partners, including community representatives. The publication of Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities (2004)[1] required CLD Strategies and action plans to be developed and delivered by community planning partners.

The *CLD Regulations* were developed to strengthen existing expectations. They build on the professional competences for CLD which include 'Know and understand the community in which we work' and 'Develop and support collaborative working'.

The 'Working with Scotland's Communities'[2] CLD Workforce Survey 2015 provided a picture of the number and range of workers and volunteers delivering CLD across Scotland. This survey enhanced understanding of the range of organisations which deliver elements of CLD provision and employ both CLD practitioners and those who use CLD methods in their work. Responses to the survey from 308 organisations from across the public and third sectors showed there were 7,482 paid workers and at least 40,000 volunteers working in CLD roles in February 2015. It built on informal feedback from the sector which suggested significant changes to the CLD workforce both within and out with local authorities. Inspection and review activities by Education Scotland, such as the Learning Community inspections from 2008 to 2015 and the reviews of Development Trusts, have also deepened the understanding of the broad range of

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[1] Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities (2004)
[2] Working with Scotland's Communities

organisations that deliver CLD across Scotland's communities. The workforce survey will be repeated in 2017 and will provide further information on changes to the CLD workforce. There will be a need for CLD partners to take this intelligence about the workforce into account when developing the next set of CLD plans.

3. Review Methodology

This review of CLD planning was focused on strategic level planning and arrangements within local authorities and community planning partnerships to implement the CLD Regulations. It did not focus principally on operational aspects of CLD delivery within local communities.

Planning for the review drew upon both an analysis of the initial round of CLD Plans previously published by Education Scotland and findings from inspection and review activity to select a representative sample of areas. It also built upon the outcomes from Shared Risk Assessment exercises across all 32 authorities in 2016 that looked at preparation for the implementation of the CLD regulations[3]. HM Inspectors also took into account the findings of the report Improving Schools-in-Scotland-An-OECD-Perspective[4]. This report noted that the requirement for a local authority to publish a three year CLD plan should include specification of how it helps to underpin Curriculum for Excellence. Amongst the findings of the OECD report was a need to focus on the quality of implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in schools and communities, and make this an evaluation priority. The report commented extensively on the need to strengthen professional leadership of Curriculum for Excellence and develop 'the middle'. The report highlighted the importance of partnership and of collegiate activity of schools, networks and communities. The report asserted that the roles of local authorities and a reinforced "middle" required more consistent capacity and expertise to successfully address inequalities in Scottish Education and make progress with closing the gap.

Based upon these sources of information and intelligence, HM Inspectors arranged visits to 11 local authorities. Two of these local authority visits were cancelled at the request of the local authorities due to particular local pressures.. The remaining nine authorities were visited by two HM Inspectors , where possible. The visits were scheduled over one day and involved a programme of meetings with senior local authority officers, representatives of community planning and CLD partner organisations, community representatives and other stakeholders. Local authorities provided a broad range of supporting documentary evidence relevant to their work on implementing the CLD Regulations.

We are grateful to the following local authorities and CLD partnerships for their participation in this review.

Angus Council, Argyll and Bute Council , East Lothian Council, Fife Council, Glasgow City Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Renfrewshire Council, Scottish Borders Council and Shetland Islands Council.

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[3] Shared Risk Assessment (SRA) is a process led by Audit Scotland involving joint work by local government scrutiny bodies to draw up proportionate and risk based scrutiny programmes and develop an annual National Scrutiny Plan. Further information can be found at: Audit Scotland
[4] Improving Schools-in-Scotland-An-OECD-Perspective

Analysis of the CLD Plans

Shortly after the publication of the CLD Plans, Education Scotland worked with key national partners[5] to examine the CLD Plans and explore the role and impact of proposed CLD provision. Their report, Community Learning and Development Plans 2015-18 - Planning for change in Scotland's communities[6], considers the distinctive nature of CLD activities and the ways in which these activities contribute to local and national objectives.

HM Inspectors also took into account a wide range of evidence from inspection activity including analysis of learning community inspections and a range of aspect reviews.

Learning community inspection reports published between 2008 and 2015 highlighted key strengths in impact on young people, adults and the community. Following the commencement of the CLD Regulations in 2014-15, these key strengths included:

- A strong focus on health and wellbeing and increasing life chances.
- Active, skilled and passionate volunteers making a difference.
- Vibrant and highly effective community organisations addressing local needs.
- Committed and effective partnerships built on strong working relationships in learning communities.
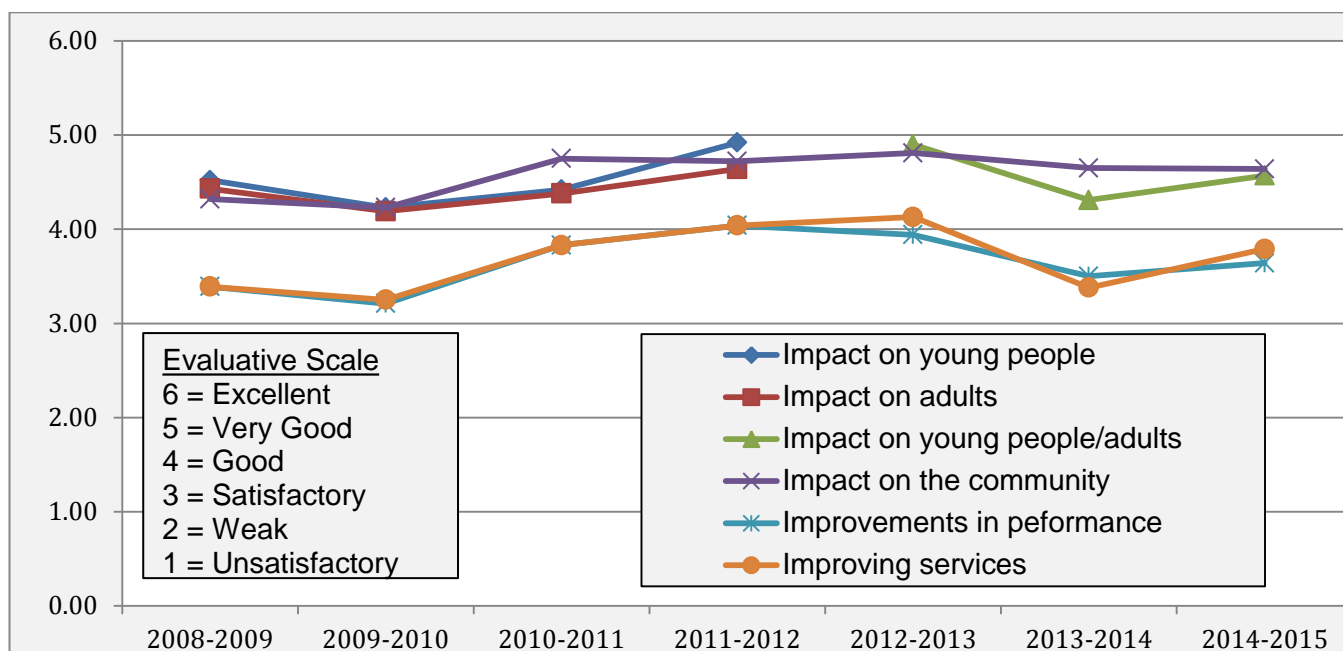
Areas for improvement were most often associated with partnership planning and self-evaluation and the ability of partners to use data effectively to measure and report performance against intended outcomes. In 2014-15, key areas of development included:

- A need for a clearer focus by partnerships on what they want to achieve and how they will implement their plans.
- Better analysis of data to inform priorities.
- Further improvement in joint self-evaluation amongst partners, particularly with schools.
- Gaps in learning opportunities in some learning communities including family and adult learning.

These reports contributed to a clear national picture of CLD practice at an operational delivery level. The graph below shows the mean average for each of the quality indicators evaluated in learning community inspections reports between 2008 and 2015. These findings show that while there are clear strengths, there are areas requiring further improvement.

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[5] The partners were (in alphabetical order): CLD Managers Scotland, CLD Standards Council for Scotland, Education Scotland, Learning Link Scotland, Scottish Community Development Centre, Youth Scotland, YouthLink Scotland

[6] Community Learning and Development Plans 2015-18 - Planning for change in Scotland's communities

Evaluative Scale
6 = Excellent
5 = Very Good
4 = Good
3 = Satisfactory
2 = Weak
1 = Unsatisfactory

- Impact on young people
- Impact on adults
- Impact on young people/adults
- Impact on the community
- Improvements in peformance
- Improving services

4. The findings from visits

4.1   How well do local authorities secure and coordinate, along with others, the provision of CLD?

A range of approaches to securing and coordinating the provision of CLD was seen during the visits. All of the authorities visited had produced CLD plans. The process of planning for CLD had been most effective in those authorities where existing partnership structures for CLD had been well developed and supported prior to the development of the regulations. A few authorities had very clear arrangements in place with appropriate links to council and community planning structures and a strong sense of direction supported by effective consideration of wider and local strategic priorities. These authorities were able to demonstrate how their plans and partnership structures integrated CLD planning within wider education, children's services and locality planning arrangements whilst retaining a strong sense of a distinct CLD role and identity.

In most authorities the CLD plans as produced were seen as a starting point with a commitment to refine priorities and develop further detail. A few of the authorities had used new online planning tools as a means to engage a wider range of partners. Some partners spoke of the need to streamline community planning priorities and formalise CLD partnership arrangements and to ensure sustainability of these partnerships. CLD partner organisations had a better understanding of CLD as a result of the regulations and the planning process.

In some authority areas, responsibilities and structures for governance and accountability for CLD within Community Planning Partnerships had not yet been made sufficiently clear. In some cases, staff spoke of a need to re-establish partnerships for lifelong learning and CLD where these had been discontinued in recent years. In a few visits undertaken, HM Inspectors found that the arrangements for coordination and planning of CLD were still at an early stage with review and restructuring of Council and Community Planning Partnership arrangements as the main factors hindering progress.

4.2 How well have local authorities worked with partners to identify need and agree priorities?

Identifying Need

In a few of the visits undertaken HM Inspectors found evidence of effective work with partners to identify need and agree partnership priorities. In those authorities partnership structures were clear and well-established and partners were fully involved in the development of the plan over a period of time. As a result, there was a strong shared sense of purpose and ownership of the plans. The range of partners involved in shared planning included the voluntary sector, faith groups, NHS, local development companies, Police Scotland, Colleges, Skills Development Scotland and various services within local councils including, for example, housing services, schools, libraries, sports and culture.

In the most effective examples there was a very clear relationship between priorities set by CLD partners and wider community planning, education and children's services priorities. These plans set out a distinct role for CLD work in communities. Robust arrangements for accountability and reporting on progress had been put in place and partners were clear on their individual roles for delivering specific aspects of the plans. There was an appropriate focus on public service reform and on addressing poverty and disadvantage in line with the CLD guidance.

In several of the visits undertaken, work with partners to identify need and agree priorities was not sufficiently effective. In some cases plans were still largely shaped by the local authority and it was unclear how other partners had contributed to setting priorities. In too many examples plans were not yet sufficiently specific, measurable or outcome focused. The arrangements for reporting on progress had not yet been put in place. In those cases, shared ownership of the planning process was weak and the distinct role of CLD in addressing community planning partners' priorities was not sufficiently clear at this point in time.

Some authorities saw this stage of the planning process as a first step and were working to develop or re-develop their partnership arrangements, refine their plans and establish clear governance arrangements. In a few cases, priorities set in plans were largely influenced by an audit of existing partners' provision of CLD with the intention to carry out a further sifting of information to arrive at an appropriately focused set of priorities. Some partners were unclear as to whether the plan should be based on a combination of all of their existing work or a more focused document concentrating only on those areas where partners could add value by working together.

Identifying unmet need

The CLD Regulations require the published plans to specify 'any need for community learning and development that will not be met during the period of the plan'. This provision incurred much debate during the consultation surrounding the development of the legislation. However, on balance this was felt to provide transparency for partners and communities who had contributed to the process, and for providers to be explicit about the depth and range of need they had identified in relation to their capacity. In dialogue with HM Inspectors undertaken during visits, 'unmet CLD need' was found to be challenging by partners. This was reflected in the desk analysis of the CLD Plans, which found that at this point in time, only seven out of 31 CLD Plans had specified unmet need in their area. Inspectors found a level of uncertainty and lack of confidence in identifying unmet need and highlighting this in plans. CLD partners were

of the view that the guidance on this aspect of the CLD Regulations could be made clearer and more helpful.

Several of the areas visited had difficulty with the notion of unmet need and were of the view that if any needs were articulated by local communities or identified by partners they would endeavour to meet them despite any issues relating to resource constraints and budget reductions. Others saw this part of the process as setting realistic and focused priorities against the partnership resources and capacity available. In these cases unmet need would include those aspects which could not be covered by the current plan due to resource constraints.

Identifying priorities and addressing barriers

In a few cases partners hoped to be able to refine their priority setting and planning arrangements in line with anticipated changes resulting from the Community Empowerment Act and revised arrangements for local outcome improvement plans. They saw these developments as opportunities to make further progress. They were of the view that it would be helpful to align planning timescales more coherently to enable an integrated approach to CLD and wider community planning processes.
Overall, there was a need for most authorities visited during this review to increase the pace of their work with partners to agree and set clear, succinct, outcome focused priorities and measurable actions.

Local authorities and their partners took a number of different approaches to identifying barriers to the adequate and efficient provision of CLD in line with the CLD Regulations. In several cases authorities and their partners considered barriers in related to poverty and disadvantage, linking this work with other aspects of community planning. Partners highlighted issues such as rurality, transport, financial exclusion and digital exclusion as factors affecting access to services. In some of the local authorities the need to address a growing demand for support for young people facing mental health and wellbeing issues was identified. Self-evaluation resulted in partners concluding that they needed to improve their capacity to address such issues.

In most cases, it was not clear how partners had considered the barriers to the adequate and efficient provision of CLD. This aspect of the CLD Regulations and associated guidance was not well understood by those engaged in leading CLD planning. In dialogue undertaken during visits staff felt that clearer guidance on requirements for this aspect of CLD planning was needed.

4.3   How well have local authorities engaged with communities in identifying need and setting priorities?

Engaging communities

Local authorities and their CLD partners took forward a range of approaches to engage and consult with communities on CLD planning, needs identification and priority setting. These included integrating consultation alongside place-based community planning initiatives, consultation events, conferences, community participatory appraisal, thematic events, meetings and use of online surveys. In several examples work was effectively integrated with related areas of community planning activity such as community engagement work aimed at addressing poverty and disadvantage, participatory budgeting and neighbourhood planning.

In some cases partners had undertaken detailed engagement with young people, adult learners and communities of interest groups such as older adults, disabilities groups and others. In some cases partners with a specific delivery focus for adult learning, youth work or supporting community organisations led on engagement for their particular area of work. This had enabled existing participants in CLD provision to influence priorities and the content of plans. However, approaches to engage those not currently involved as learners or participants in CLD provision were less successful. In several cases partners were aware of limitations in engaging successfully in shared planning and priority setting with the most disadvantaged groups including those most affected by poverty and with low levels of involvement in community based learning programmes.

HM Inspectors found that community representatives had their capacity to engage in community consultations, including around the development of CLD plans, significantly strengthened by support from CLD workers. Community representatives placed a high value on having on-going and regular opportunities to discuss their community's priorities with local based community workers.

Engagement in community planning

In some examples community representatives who spoke with HM Inspectors expressed some frustration over arrangements for engagement and consultation. Community representatives spoke of the difficulties they experienced when attempting to respond to a very wide range of community planning matters. Those who received regular community planning consultations by email felt swamped by the complexity and quantity of information. They preferred direct dialogue at local community level as a more effective means of eliciting their views.

Many community representatives felt that the strategic level planning was focused too much on the production of a document as a bureaucratic exercise and felt no genuine sense of ownership for the CLD plans. Overall, there was a need to increase levels of public awareness in CLD planning and to engage communities more fully in influencing the priorities and content of plans. There were some examples of creative and innovative approaches to engaging communities meaningfully in identifying need and sharing priorities such as the development of an online planning tool. However, much of this work was at an early stage of development. In some cases there was too much focus on the production of the document and too little on establishing a dynamic and inclusive process in which communities felt they had a real role.

4.4 What are the key challenges facing CLD partners in implementing the CLD Regulations?

Implementing the CLD Regulations in a period of change

HM Inspectors discussed with local authority officers and CLD partner organisation representatives the challenges they faced in implementing the CLD Regulations. During the discussions a number of important themes emerged. HM Inspectors found unprecedented budgetary pressures on local authorities and other partners resulting in loss of CLD delivery capacity. Organisational change and service restructuring was similarly a challenge in most authorities visited. There remains a significant challenge for those with strategic responsibility for CLD to achieve coherence across a number of competing community planning requirements. There is a need to improve the readiness of partners and CLD providers for public service reform. In some examples, those with strategic lead responsibility for CLD expressed challenges in addressing competing agendas for education services and other

community planning functions with diminishing resources. A few officers found the cycle of CLD planning unhelpful and felt that CLD planning cycles could be better aligned to work related local outcome improvement plans and the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act.

Inconsistencies of approach

However, whilst these issues are common to all local authorities, the extent to which these challenges were being addressed successfully varied significantly across the authority areas visited. In those authority areas where strategic and operational partnerships had been well established, CLD partners had a clear role in education and children's services and local and community planning. Whilst local coordination and delivery arrangements varied, with examples of established and dedicated learning community partnerships and other examples of area and locality planning structures, clarity of purpose was a common theme. In those examples there was a greater level of confidence in the distinct role of CLD staff and a higher degree of visibility for CLD partnerships.

In other cases where clear structures had not yet been put in place and where CLD planning was at an early stage, HM Inspectors found that CLD partnerships experienced uncertainties over their role and purpose. In these cases, HM Inspectors found that this lack of progress in planning, alongside other changes had affected staff morale. In some settings leaders had not yet successfully made the transition from managing a local authority service to developing CLD partnerships. In those situations there was a need for senior leaders to define clearly a distinct role for CLD as a partnership approach within the context of community planning and public service reform. Senior leaders needed to ensure that their local authorities were fully undertaking their statutory responsibility to secure with partners the provision of CLD.

In a majority of visits undertaken the CLD plans were at an early stage of development. Partners recognised that further work was needed to refine priorities, clarify arrangements for reporting on progress against outcomes and more effectively involve communities in the process of planning.

4.5   Key messages

- All local authorities visited had produced CLD plans in line with the CLD Regulations but the extent to which local authorities are fully exercising their duties to secure the provision with partners of CLD was variable across the nine local authorities visited as part of this review.

- There is a need to clarify what is meant by unmet need and produce succinct, clear guidance. In particular, the requirements related to identifying needs which would not be met within the current planning cycle was not well understood.

- There is a clear need to support and develop leadership capacity for effective CLD planning. The OECD report, *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective 2015,*[7] called for a strengthened 'middle' operating through networks and collaboratives among schools, and in and across local authorities to allow Curriculum for Excellence to reach its full potential. The need to strengthen leadership in the middle applies equally to the CLD workforce if the CLD Regulations and associated guidance is to achieve intended aspirations.

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[7] Improving Schools-in-Scotland-An-OECD-Perspective

5. Recommendations

HM Inspectors recommend that, working together local authorities and other CLD partners should:

1. Build on the development of the plans including, where necessary publishing revised plans prior to 2018. In doing so, each local authority should ensure that it is fully meeting the requirements of the CLD Regulations.

2. Provide a succinct summary of what CLD partnerships plan to change and improve in their areas.

3. Ensure that regular progress reports are produced by CLD partners to demonstrate progress against specific and measureable objectives.
4. Build on informed dialogue with participants and stakeholders in local communities to ensure the relevance of CLD priorities to their needs and aspirations.

5. Work with the Standards Council for CLD and Education Scotland's Policy and Improvement Team to improve the identity, confidence and leadership capacity of the CLD workforce.

6. What happens next?

- Education Scotland will engage with strategic CLD leaders during 2017-18 to explore approaches to unmet need, the identification of needs, strengths and barriers, and effective planning. This will be developed in discussion with the sector and will draw on identified good practice from across the country. Part of this work will include refreshing relevant guidance documents.

- Further evidence from the current cycle of CLD inspection activity will be considered. A new model of inspection was introduced from September 2016. This provides more focus on the quality of strategic leadership and progress in implementing the CLD Regulations as well as evaluating the impact of CLD planning in local communities.

- HM Inspectors will also undertake aspect reviews focused on particular aspects of CLD provision including a further review of progress with CLD planning following the publication of the next round of CLD plans from 2018.

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