

Aspect Inspection of Community Learning and Development in Larkhall South Lanarkshire Council

Trialling new *How Good is Our Community Learning and Development?* 2 framework and methodology

August 2006

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Introduction

Community learning and development (CLD) refers to informal learning and social development work with individuals and groups within their communities. The aim of this work is to strengthen communities through enhancing people's knowledge, skills and confidence, organisational capacity and resources. CLD makes an important contribution towards promoting lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship.

Since 2000, community learning partnerships have been established in all local authority areas in Scotland. In this way, community and voluntary organisations, local authorities, police and health boards, further and higher education institutions and enterprise and careers agencies have begun to work together to achieve positive change in communities. Underpinning this work is a commitment to achieving the social justice targets for Scotland.

Scottish Executive policy regarding CLD was outlined in May 2002 in *Community Learning and Development: the way forward*. Its contribution to community regeneration was further developed in February 2006 in *People and Place: Regeneration Policy Statement*.

The *Local Government Act 2003* established Community Planning Partnerships in all local authorities. Scottish Executive guidance on CLD was issued in February 2004 as *Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities*. This guidance sets out

how the Scottish Ministers have placed CLD at the heart of work on community planning.

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) is empowered under the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980* to inspect the further education provision of local authorities. Under the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000)* HMIE also inspects the education functions of local authorities. The scope of inspections of CLD accordingly covers the work of local authorities themselves, and the work contracted by them to community, voluntary and public sector partners.

The basis for inspections is set out in the self-evaluation framework published by HMIE in June 2006 as *How Good is Our Community Learning and Development?*². The focus of most inspections is on geographical areas within local authorities, usually areas for which there is a community learning plan. Inspections focus on the personal development of young people and adults and on activities that build community capacity.

1. Context and background

HMIE inspects the CLD functions of councils across Scotland as part of its commitment to evaluate and report on the quality of education and to help secure improvement.

With the agreement of South Lanarkshire Council, HMIE decided to pilot the revised *How Good is Our Community Learning and Development?* in November 2005. This included the use of questionnaires distributed to a sample of learners, stakeholders, partners and staff; the use of the new six point scale; the application of new quality indicators and implementation of the new inspection process which included scoping, core and proportionate phases.

Who delivers community learning services in Larkhall?

CLD in the Council area was delivered through the Community Learning Service, the Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Team, the Youth Learning Service, Active Breaks and the Home School Partnership (HSP), all part of Education Resources; and through the Regeneration Service, part of Enterprise Resources.

Over a two week period, HM Inspectors observed sessions of work on 18 occasions and carried out 32 interviews with staff, members of relevant organisations and participants in activities. Inspectors also held three focus groups with participants.

Context of the area

The area inspected covered the community of Larkhall. This included the neighbourhoods of Strutherhill, Hareleeshill, Raploch and Meadowhill. Larkhall has a population of 15,882. Local employment was concentrated in service industries and manufacturing. The Strutherhill neighbourhood suffers from high levels of social and economic disadvantage and was in the 10% most disadvantaged communities nationally.

South Lanarkshire Council had recognised this concentration of disadvantage within Larkhall. Regeneration activities within the community were part of a £64 million initiative across South Lanarkshire. Larkhall is the newest of South Lanarkshire Councils' four main areas of regeneration.

South Lanarkshire Council's Vision and the Community Plan

The Council vision is set out in *Fourcast – the South Lanarkshire four year plan 2003-2007*. The two central aims of the Council are to improve the quality of life for all its citizens and to work in a way that is responsive to the needs of its citizens. In addition, the Community Plan, *Stronger Together*, produced by the South Lanarkshire Community Planning Partnership, aims to improve the quality of life for all in South Lanarkshire by ensuring equal access to opportunities and to services that meet people's needs. Both of these strategic documents recognise that there are communities in South Lanarkshire, such as the neighbourhoods of Strutherhill and Hareleeshill in Larkhall, which significantly lag behind other, more advantaged parts of the Council area.

Larkhall – a changing community

The Strutherhill neighbourhood was undergoing urban regeneration with the demolition of older and empty housing stock. New house building for the area was scheduled to begin in summer 2006. Larkhall was being connected to the Strathclyde Passenger Transport network during the time of the inspection. The Council intended that this would enable residents of Larkhall to access wider employment opportunities in Glasgow.

2. Key Strengths

HM Inspectors identified key strengths of community learning provision in the Larkhall area of South Lanarkshire Council.

- Participants had positive experiences of learning and were well supported by all CLD staff teams.
- School staff in local primary and secondary schools had developed productive relationships with CLD staff through the HSP, Adult Literacy and *Active Breaks* programmes.
- Local community groups and organisations had been effectively supported in meeting their aims and objectives by CLD staff teams.
- The provision of guidance and vocational training was developing as a result of the key role CLD staff teams had undertaken in supporting partnership working.
- The local community were well served by highly-motivated and committed staff.

Scope of the inspection

The authority was performing well in all aspects of CLD in other parts of South Lanarkshire. Inspectors were confident that the evidence presented indicated that

participants in Larkhall were achieving appropriate outcomes. Inspectors carried out a proportionate inspection that focused on the impact of CLD engagement on adults and on improving the capacity of local communities. The inspection team also sought to evaluate how well providers were targeting socially excluded individuals and groups, such as the significant population of Gypsy travellers in Larkhall. In addition, inspectors evaluated the contribution of the service to partnership working and the effectiveness of partnerships in improving outcomes for learners and neighbourhoods in Larkhall.

3. How well does the CLD service meet the needs of stakeholders?

CLD staff teams had established very strong and supportive relationships with a range of participants that resulted in positive impacts for learners. CLD provision in the HSPs had led to an increase in parents' involvement in learning for both themselves and their children. As a result, there was a range of positive learning outcomes for parents ranging from undertaking certificated courses to involvement in the school board and the Parent Teacher Association. Work with Gypsy travellers was particularly strong and made good use of a variety of programmes and methods to engage with learners from this community. These programmes had resulted in positive learning outcomes for learners such as gaining vocational qualifications or finding employment. CLD staff worked effectively in partnership with the Town Library and Larkhall Academy to engage with older learners and promote inclusion through an effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). However, there was insufficient general community-based adult learning in Larkhall. Most adult learning opportunities were being delivered through HSP in school settings or in Adult literacy programmes. This did not address the needs of other learners and in particular male learners. There was a need to further develop the recognition of prior learning and assessment, particularly in ALN programmes. This was good overall.

CLD staff in HSP programmes had significantly improved learners' confidence and their ability to engage in learning. Parents taking part in the *Adventure Ted* family learning programme in primary schools had developed better relationships with the staff and could engage with their child's teacher where previously they did not. This increase in confidence, for example, had led a small number of individual parents to assist in the development of the school board in their local primary school. Others were currently training to be classroom assistants with a view to gaining future employment. As a result of participation in the HSP *First Aid* programme and other classes learners were now starting college and engaging in voluntary activity. Learners in the *Teenage Behaviour* course had developed more extensive support networks and were less isolated in addressing problems of teenage behaviour and family breakdown. These programmes were still at early stages of development but offered positive examples of providing parenting support for families living in disadvantaged communities in Larkhall.

CLD staff working with Gypsy travellers had significantly improved the range of learning opportunities for this group of learners. CLD staff had made use of an extensive range of methods and approaches to encourage participants from this section of the Larkhall community to enter learning. CLD staff, supported by a worker from the Gypsy

traveller community, made very effective use of schools, youth facilities and a mobile learning bus to work with learners. Staff made innovative use of multi-media and ICT to engage with learners of all ages in the Gypsy traveller community. As a result, learners could undertake a range of certificated vocational courses, the European Computer Driving Licence and literacy and numeracy programmes. There was a strong focus on equality and anti-discrimination throughout the work. This ranged across all age groups from young people who had made *We are the Gypsy Kids*, an anti-bullying DVD, to programming learning around the seasonal movements of the Gypsy traveller population.

CLD staff made good use of ICT programmes in both the Town Library and Larkhall Academy to work with older learners. Participants learned new skills such as word processing and use of databases. They had made good progress in applying these skills to personal and employment related contexts. The programmes also assisted elderly learners by countering social isolation through attending classes and using ICT to maintain contact with relatives who lived abroad. Participants in ALN programmes demonstrated significant increases in their confidence in writing and spelling, for example, they were now able to help their children with school work. Learners in the ALN programmes had recently published a collection of their creative writing. A number of learners were now progressing to employment. South Lanarkshire Council had introduced *Routes to Work South* into Larkhall. This was an agency that specialised in providing vocational skills and guidance to enable residents to find and enter employment. This was at a very early stage of development in the area. However, the range of adult learning opportunities in Larkhall was still in development. The CLD did not engage systematically with adults outwith the HSP, ALN and ICT programmes. For example, programmes focused on men, health related issues or becoming more involved in the community were in the early stages of development.

The CLD staff had good systems for assessing and recognising progress in adult learning activities. CLD staff in the Larkhall area made effective use of both local and national adult learners' awards to recognise achievements. Staff working with the Gypsy traveller community used an extensive range of tools to record progress and achievement. Participants in the *Teenage Behaviour* course were encouraged to work closely with staff to review their progress and to offer comments on the course itself. As a result of attending the course, participants noted and welcomed an increase in self-respect and a greater feeling of being in control. However, in ALN programmes the initial assessment of learning needs was under-developed. The recording of learners' literacy and numeracy needs and milestones of progress did not yet provide a clear and accurate picture to learners of their potential development and learning outcomes. Portfolios of work were not sufficiently structured to enable learners to clearly see both their short term and long term goals. The CLD staff were working to develop portable records of achievement to enable learners to progress to further learning opportunities.

4. What impact has CLD had in meeting the needs of the local community of Larkhall?

The CLD staff had begun to meet the needs of the local community. There were some useful examples where the CLD staff had effectively supported local community groups and organisations. CLD staff provided good support to the local Credit Union. The work of the HSP had led to an increased parental involvement in local school boards. This had resulted in parents learning and successfully applying skills in running committees and fundraising. There was active involvement by young people in local youth forums. CLD staff had actively supported young people from the Gypsy traveller community to be part of these forums and represent local youth. However, the work of engaging with the local community in participating in community regeneration activities was at an early stage. At the time of the inspection, the majority of regeneration work was still in preparation and had limited impact on the wider community. This was adequate overall.

CLD staff provided good levels of support to the local *ML9 Credit Union*. This included providing town centre accommodation. The *ML9 Credit Union* was providing a much needed service and was in the process of linking with another local Credit Union. The HSP and the *Universal Connections* youth projects had both enabled local people to begin to participate in community organisations. The CLD staff had actively supported young people from the Gypsy traveller community to be involved in local youth forums. One young person was now a member of the *Scottish Youth Parliament* and was actively addressing issues relevant to the travelling community. CLD staff also provided practical support such as free childcare and held meetings at times that suited people's lives. The *Gig in the Glen* music festival had actively involved young people in its development. However, the *Larkhall Community Centre Management Committee* was badly in need of support in order to increase its numbers in order to be sustainable in the future. Since this was one of the main venues for community learning in Larkhall, this needed to be addressed.

Good practice

By working with a range of partners Youth Learning Service staff had successfully coordinated and supported young people to produce a video raising environmental issues and encouraging more responsible use of the Morgan Glen. This resulted in staff organising and running a local music and dance event featuring local young people from Larkhall. In addition to learning video production techniques young people were supported and encouraged to take full responsibility for devising the programme, promotion and organisation for the performance event and to perform in it. Partner organisations made effective contributions ranging from providing assistance and expertise around health and safety risk assessments, on-site facilities, security and transport through to Strathclyde Police funding the costumes for the dance performance group. Young people fully participated in debriefing meetings with partner agencies after the event and a group of young people were actively involved in planning a similar project for 2006. As a result of participation young people reported increased self-confidence and of feeling more involved in their own community. In addition some of the young people are now applying the skills and techniques acquired with support from Larkhall Universal Connections to raise public awareness of environmental issues within Larkhall.

CLD staff actively ensured that residents from Larkhall were represented in the *South Lanarkshire Citizenship Achievement Awards*. This event was held annually to celebrate individuals' achievement across a range of fields. CLD staff worked effectively to ensure that achievements by young people appeared regularly in the local press. However, whilst the CLD staff could recognise and celebrate individual successes, the service were at the early stages of developing a systematic approach to recording and celebrating the achievements of community groups. The *Larkhall Community Engagement Strategy*, which was at an early stage of implementation, now needed to be progressed to meet community expectations following the announcement about the regeneration of the community. Outwith the HSP, there were few links between adult learning and programmes to build the skills of the local community to engage with and participate in regeneration activities.

CLD staff had held an initial community consultation in 2004. This event had resulted in the formation of the *Plans* group. There was an extensive community profile on the Strutherhill neighbourhood as part of the regeneration of the area. As part of its Community Guidance plan, South Lanarkshire had also established a *Guidance, Employment and Learning (GEL)* group in Larkhall. This brought together all the main providers of guidance, vocational training and learning. This was now beginning to have an initial impact in terms of providing more opportunities for learners to progress to further education programmes. Participants in the HSP and ALN programmes were beginning to move from adult learning to employment and involvement in community organisations but the numbers involved were still low. While it was clear that regeneration activities were still in an early stage of development, there was a need to clarify the role of the *People of Larkhall, Ashgill, Netherburn and Stonehouse (PLANS)* group to ensure that their involvement was fully effective in regeneration activities. South Lanarkshire Council had developed a range of good practice in linking regeneration and learning activities elsewhere in the authority and these approaches were now starting to be applied in Larkhall.

5. How effective is management and local leadership?

CLD staff were leading effective partnership work to address equalities issues in their work with Gypsy travellers. Staff in HSP and Active Breaks had developed productive relationships with senior staff in local primary and secondary schools. They provided effective support to both young people and their parents. The CLD staff had taken a leading role in developing partnership working to provide guidance and vocational training. This had brought together staff from a number of agencies and had resulted in the early development of more coordinated and effective work to support learners in Larkhall. The CLD service engaged with a number of partners in the delivery of services through Service Level Agreements (SLAs) although some remained to be concluded. However, the roles and deployment of all the partners were changing as a result of the new regeneration programme. As a result, many of the partnerships, such as the GEL group, were in the very early stages of formation. Communication and sharing of information between partners and CLD staff required further development. There was a lack of understanding amongst partners about their respective roles and remits. CLD and

its partners needed to undertake further work to clarify the roles and remits required to fully support effective partnership working to deliver services for the residents of Larkhall. Partnership working was adequate.

The CLD staff worked effectively with other learning providers, schools and voluntary organisations to deliver a range of learning programmes and support to the community of Larkhall. Staff and volunteers working for the CLD provided a valued service to local learners. Staff were well motivated and committed to the local community. Staff support for learners had enabled many to access new learning opportunities and achieve considerable gains in both personal and employment terms. The staff in HSP had undertaken a useful programme of joint training with other professionals on issues relating to mental health and parenting. However, there was further work required to extend and develop existing staff development programmes across all staff to focus on working in partnership. Facilities and resources were limited in Larkhall. Many buildings were drab, cramped or in a poor condition. This did not promote a positive image of adult learning to match the good work that was undertaken. In the four neighbourhoods, there were few community facilities outwith school premises. Inclusion and equality, staff development and resources were adequate.

The CLD staff had developed useful links to support the development of partnership working in Larkhall. CLD staff had worked closely with Larkhall based organisations, such as the Credit Union, as well as with voluntary organisations such as *Citizen's Advice* in Hamilton to provide services for local residents. These were having a positive impact for local people by providing access to opportunities and services that were not previously available in Larkhall. CLD staff had developed a strong and effective partnership with local businesses to deliver the *Gig in the Glen* event held in Larkhall in summer 2005. This partnership was also notable for the active involvement of young people in all aspects of planning and delivery. However, partnership work linked to regeneration activities in Larkhall was at an early stage of development. Whilst the *GEL* group had good attendance by staff from a number of agencies involved in the delivery of guidance, learning and vocational training, it was a new development and was still in the process of finalising its' action plan. Joint working between services delivering adult learning was not fully effective and staff had insufficient understanding of each others' respective roles and remits. There were few shared systems to support the movement of learners between programmes. This hindered learners' opportunities for progression.

CLD staff had used partnership working to usefully address issues of equalities. This approach had been developed to ensure the inclusion of local residents who were at risk of being excluded. CLD staff in the HSP and *Active Breaks* had developed productive partnerships with staff in local schools. As a result, they provided good additional support to young people and parents. There was an effective use of *buddies* to support the new first year pupils in Larkhall Academy. HSP and ALN staff worked effectively to ensure the involvement of parents with literacy problems in their children's education within local primary schools. CLD staff worked closely with the Gypsy traveller project to include this minority group within the wider life of Larkhall. This addressed challenging discrimination, bullying and violent attacks on young people with the production of the

We are the Gypsy Kids DVD. However, the community engagement strategy was still at an early stage of development and had yet to make an impact beyond consultation. Programmes to promote anti-sectarianism for young people were being promoted in local secondary schools. This was a good start to respond to issues of sectarianism which local residents identified as being a significant factor. Partnership work to engage with residents excluded on the grounds of disability, sexuality or ethnicity needed to be further developed.

CLD staff and volunteers provided a valued service to the residents of Larkhall. Staff and volunteers were well motivated and had high levels of understanding of the strengths of the local community as well as the challenges they faced. Staff in *Universal Connections* and *Active Breaks* working with young people had developed strong and purposeful relationships with their clients. Volunteers working in schools had undergone checks by Disclosure Scotland. Staff were supported by CLD staff through induction, group support and supervision and staff development activities. There were regular staff training events and some staff were being supported to take further professional qualifications. HSP required staff to attend a useful programme of specialist staff training on areas such as additional support needs. However, the CLD service had developed a joint training programme for staff from HSP, ALN, regeneration, *Active Breaks* and *Universal Connections*. As a result, the level of understanding by staff about other areas of work was beginning to improve. There was not yet a means to share good practice across the teams. This prevented the development of a joined up approach.

The CLD staff had a range of varied facilities in which to deliver learning. The primary and secondary schools had effective security systems to ensure the safety of children and young people. The Parents Room used for the *Teenage Behaviour* course in Larkhall Academy was comfortably furnished and created a good and relaxed learning environment. The Town Library was fully accessible and had a good range of computer equipment to support ICT classes. The *ML9 Credit Union* was located in an accessible town centre location. However, not all facilities were so well appointed. Many HSP classes took place in cramped surroundings in local primary schools and were regularly moved. There was a lack of facilities, apart from schools, in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. New community facilities were planned as part of the proposed Primary and Secondary Schools Modernisation Programmes. Larkhall Community Centre was poorly lit and promoted an image of an unwelcoming building. The building had maintenance problems relating to water leakage and damp. Given this was the main venue for adult learning in the town centre, this needed to be addressed. Promotional material for local adult learning and notice boards were of poor quality. The resources for ALN were limited and poorly catalogued. This made them inaccessible for tutors, particularly part-time tutors.

6. Conclusion: What is the CLD service's capacity for improvement?

The role of CLD staff was central to achieving many of the goals of the Council's *Fourcast Plan* and the *South Lanarkshire Community Plan*. CLD staff had developed a number of effective programmes of work on which to further build its capacity and

improve services to the community of Larkhall. However, there was further work to do to ensure that the Council met its stated goals of improving the quality of life for all its' citizens and working in a way that is responsive to the needs of its citizens. The CLD service and its partners were making a good start in addressing issues of equal access to opportunities through their programmes. These now needed to be further embedded and extended to improve the quality of life for all in Larkhall. Staff had developed some services that met people's needs in terms of education and employment but there were still important gaps in provision in extending these opportunities to a wider range of learners in Larkhall. The quality of local learning facilities required further improvement. Whilst South Lanarkshire Council had a good record of addressing disadvantage in other parts of the Council area, there was still further work to do to ensure that the community of Larkhall obtained equal access to opportunities and benefits as other parts of South Lanarkshire in terms of services that meet residents' needs in education, employment, health and housing. The CLD service had a good capacity for improvement.

Areas for improvement and main points for action

- Learners' initial assessment and the recording of their progress and outcomes should be improved to enable successful progression to other learning opportunities and employment.
- Learners in Larkhall should have access to learning resources, materials and accommodation of a consistent level of quality.
- Adult learners in Larkhall should have access to a more varied programme of community based adult learning opportunities.
- The service should implement fully the community engagement strategy and increase the involvement of local residents in regeneration activities.
- The service should develop staff development systems to further embed and support partnership working.

As a result of this inspection, HM Inspectors will return to the authority within two years of the publication of this report to assess progress against the main points for action identified in this report.

Philip Denning
HM Inspector
On behalf of HM Chief Inspector

Appendix I: Quality indicators used to evaluate community learning and development provision in South Lanarkshire

HM Inspectors use performance and quality indicators when making judgements in their inspections of community learning and development. The quality indicators used were selected from *How Good is Our Community Learning and Development?*² which was under development at the time of this inspection. These indicators have been further developed in light of consultation with the sector and a review of the pilot inspections

carried out in 2005. The final document was published in June 2006. This publication is available on the HMIE website, www.hmie.gov.uk.

In the report and this appendix we make clear the judgements made by using these word scale categories:

Excellent	Provision which is a model of its type
Very Good	Provision characterised by major strengths
Good	Provision characterised by important strengths that clearly outweigh weaknesses
Adequate	Provision characterised by strengths that just outweigh weaknesses
Weak	Provision that has some strengths but important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	Provision with major weaknesses that require immediate remedial action

CLD provision was evaluated using the following Quality Indicators:

2.1: impact of the learning experience on participants	Good
2.2: assessing and recognising progress and achievements	Good
3.1: impact on staff and volunteers	Good
4.1: impact of capacity building on the local community	Adequate
4.2: assessing and recognising community progress and achievements	Adequate
4.3; impact on the wider community	Adequate
5.8: inclusion, equality and fairness	Adequate
6.3: partnership working	Adequate
7.3: development and support of staff and volunteers leadership	Good
1.1: continuous improvement and performance against objectives	Good
10.1 Capacity for improvement	Good

How can you contact us?

If you wish to comment about community learning and development inspections

Should you wish to comment on any aspect of community learning and development inspections, you should write in the first instance to Annette Bruton HMCI, at HM Inspectorate of Education, Directorate 5, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston, EH54 6GA.

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If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 4-6 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS. You can also telephone 0870 011 5378 or e-mail enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: <http://www.scottishombudsman.org.uk/>

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