

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	14 June 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Learning in Scotland's Communities
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Provide information on the outcome of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education's (HMI's) evaluation of the effectiveness of work in learning communities to improve outcomes for learners and communities, drawn from inspection activities across Scotland.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that very positive outcomes from HMIE's evaluation of the effectiveness of work in learning communities to improve outcomes for learners and communities that feature in the Learning in Scotland's Communities report be noted.
- (2) that the HMIE's findings in 5 South Lanarkshire Learning Communities be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. From September 2008, HMIE made a significant change in its arrangements for inspecting CLD. HMIE introduced inspections of learning communities within the geographical areas surrounding non-denominational secondary schools. The secondary school and its learning community were inspected at the same time, and there was an overlap in the membership of the inspection teams. In denominational secondary schools, teams also considered the community dimension in their inspection work. This approach to inspecting learning communities includes looking at activities and their impacts from the perspective of the learner, irrespective of which agency is active in the provision. This has placed a greater emphasis on the quality of partnership activities in communities across the range of institutions and agencies that play a part in supporting people to achieve, and in making communities better places to live.
- 3.2. Since September 2008 HMIE have reported on the inspections of 91 learning communities across the 32 local authorities in Scotland. The approach focused attention on the inter-relationships between the learning and development of children and young people, and the contexts within which they grow up at home and in their communities. It identified examples of effective practice where schools are making good use of community resources to enhance learning in school, and where young

people and staff are making significant contributions to the communities in which they are located.

- 3.3. In March 2011, HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) published a report which sets out findings from their work in learning communities since September 2008. HMIE intended that the report would stimulate debate and serve as a basis for action to improve outcomes for learners and communities further. HMIE define a learning community as follows:

“A learning community seeks to address the learning needs of its locality through partnership. It uses the strengths of institutions, public, private and voluntary services, and community groups to enable children, young people and adults to achieve to their full potential. Learning communities use learning as a way to build community capacity, and to promote social cohesion, social inclusion, regeneration and economic development.”

In practical terms, therefore, a learning community is the group of partners who work together to support learning and development within a locality. In South Lanarkshire, Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners play a key role in each locality.

4. Findings of HMIE Inspectors across Scotland

- 4.1. HMIE note the contribution made by Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners to a range of key developments:

4.1.1. *Curriculum for Excellence*

The report suggests that CLD partners have, over many years, contributed to young people's opportunities and achievements outside school. They often contribute to learning within schools, particularly in relation to young people with more challenging behaviour and more widely to personal, social and health education. Schools have been increasingly building stronger partnerships with community providers to extend and enhance opportunities for learning and achievement in and out of school as part of their implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

4.1.2. *Skills for Scotland*

The report notes that adults returning to learning are more likely to be experiencing inequalities of various kinds such as health and income, or living in our more disadvantaged communities. The Skills for Scotland strategy recognised the role of CLD in the post-compulsory learning landscape.

4.1.3. *Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)*

GIRFEC is founded on a child-centred approach. The report notes that, through implementing a GIRFEC practice approach, services aim to improve a broad range of outcomes for children and young people. GIRFEC applies to all those working across children's and young people's services. It also relates to adult services that have an impact on children and young people. CLD staff and their partners are engaged in supporting this work, providing more integrated and responsive services that can make a significant difference to children and their families.

4.1.4. *Community capacity building in challenging economic times*

HMIE also note that the contribution of communities themselves to improving outcomes for children, young people and adults has never been so important. As resources for public services are expected to diminish over an extended period, so demand for services is expected to increase. Building community capacity to deliver

or co-produce services is one potential approach to meeting this challenge. HMIE found from learning community inspections that most learning communities are active and vibrant, with community and voluntary groups making important contributions to community life. They noted seeing a greater contribution from young people and schools to their communities. School leaders are thinking more broadly about young people's learning experiences and the contributions they can make to their communities, for example by encouraging higher levels of volunteering.

4.1.5. *Inequalities*

HMIE note in the report that research describes a clear relationship between wealth inequality and health and social problems. From inspections of learning communities HMIE find that CLD partners often work well with the most disadvantaged parts of our communities. They note that most local authority CLD services take a targeted approach to their work to ensure that they are meeting priority needs. Increasingly, significant aspects of their work are focused on improving the employability and employment prospects of young people and adults. Because of its work with people in these groups and the impact that work can have, CLD has an important role in tackling inequalities in Scotland.

4.1.6. *Outcomes-based approach to planning and evaluation*

HMIE have also noted that as a result of Single Outcome Agreements, by which Community Planning Partnerships gather information about performance and improvements being achieved in communities, there is now a stronger drive towards better self-evaluation, and on needs-led, outcomes-focused planning and service delivery. Even earlier than this, since 2000, such an approach has helped improve planning and evaluation for CLD in Scotland, but HMIE found in their inspections that CLD partnerships need to improve how they demonstrate the outcomes of their work and show how they are improving over time. Also, the principles of outcomes-focused planning and evaluation now need to be applied across a wider range of partners.

4.2. HMIE evaluations

In learning community inspections HMIE looked at the impact of partners in raising achievement for young people and adults and the achievements of community groups and organisations. These evaluations focus on how well learners are included and participating and how well they are achieving, attaining and progressing. HMIE found that

- in 72 of 91 inspections the impact on young people was evaluated as good or better.
- in 74 of 91 inspections the impact on adults was evaluated as good or better.
- in 75 of 91 inspections the impact on the community was evaluated as good or better.

Whilst the impacts of CLD are generally very positive, HMIE found that the extent to which providers are able to provide clear evidence of outcomes is less well developed.

- In only 32 of 91 inspections 'improvements in performance' was evaluated as good or better.
- In only 32 of 91 inspections 'improving services' was evaluated as good or better.

4.3. Features of effective practice:

HMIE identified the following features of effective practice across Scotland:

- CLD providers have developed and use important skills and experience that support young people to achieve, including, in the best practice, those with additional support needs.
- Opportunities for accredited achievement are developing well and are helping to provide opportunities for all.
- Schools and early years centres are becoming increasingly active in working with partners to support learning for parents and carers.
- Increasing numbers of secondary schools are active in supporting young people to engage with their communities. CLD providers are important partners in supporting this development.
- In a few examples, CLD partnerships are well focused on achieving significant outcomes and demonstrating, through effective self-evaluation, how well these are being achieved.

4.4. Areas for improvement

HMIE identified the following areas for improvement across Scotland:

- More schools, CLD providers and a range of others now need to work together under the common purpose and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence to enable all children and young people achieve all that they can.
- Community practitioners and teachers need to learn together so that they develop a shared understanding about their roles and responsibilities in successfully implementing Curriculum for Excellence, particularly in relation to the experiences and outcomes, achievement and assessment.
- Community providers, working with early years centres and schools, should continue to build the confidence of parents to engage as learners themselves and to support their children's learning.
- Volunteering and other motivating learning activities now need to be developed further across partnerships, to provide all children and young people with rich learning experiences in both the school and community that extend their skills and develop their attributes and so help them prepare for life and work.
- Schools, centres and all of those involved in CLD need to work more closely together to deliver improved outcomes through joint planning and self-evaluation.
- Partnerships within learning communities need to improve their capacity to measure outcomes across the full range of their impacts and to work across partners in doing this.

5. HMIE Findings in South Lanarkshire

- 5.1. As part of the programme of inspections of learning communities, HMIE inspected five learning communities in South Lanarkshire: the learning communities surrounding Stonelaw High School, Hamilton Grammar School, Uddingston Grammar School, Strathaven Academy and Lesmahagow High School.

- 5.2. The inspection reports relating to these learning communities were published between November 2008 and January 2010. The reports were the subject of separate reports to the Education Resources Committee and subsequently the East Kilbride and Clydesdale Area committees.
- 5.3. A summary of the performance in each of the Community Learning reports against the quality indicators is provided below. The evaluation across South Lanarkshire compare favourably with the position reported across Scotland by HMIE. Members might particularly like to note the “Excellent” evaluation achieved in Hamilton Grammar for Impact on Young People, one of only four achieved across Scotland; also that partners across South Lanarkshire improved their performance in Improving Services steadily, starting with an evaluation of “Satisfactory” in the first inspection and achieving a “Very Good” in the fifth. This is due to the CLD partnership focussing particularly on self-evaluation and continuous improvement.

Quality Indicator	Stonelaw High	Hamilton Grammar	Uddingston Grammar	Strathaven Academy	Lesmahagow High School
Improvements in performance	good	good	good	good	good
Impact on young people	very good	excellent	very good	very good	very good
Impact on adults	good	good	good	very good	good
Impact of capacity building on communities	good	very good	satisfactory	very good	good
Improving Services	satisfactory	good	good	good	very good

- 5.4. HMIE noted a range of strengths in the South Lanarkshire learning communities which included:
- referral and responsiveness in adult learning provision
 - innovative and enterprising practice which is having a strong impact on young people
 - effective Home School Partnership
 - strong emphasis on inclusion in all aspects of work
 - confidence of communities and the influence of community groups on local and wider decision making
 - celebration of learners’ achievements
 - High levels of community activity through a range of local groups including arts, festivals and sports
 - Commitment from all partners to continuous improvement.

HMIE described the good practice found in the Strathaven Academy learning community in the appendix of their national report (Appendix 1).

- 5.5. Areas for improvement identified by HMIE were incorporated into the partners CLD improvement planning.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. None

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. None

8. Other Implications

8.1. None

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. There is no requirement to carry out an impact assessment in terms of the proposals contained within this report. Consultation is an ongoing part of the work of CLD partners in South Lanarkshire.

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24 May 2011

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values

- Raise educational attainment for all
- Increase involvement in lifelong learning
- Support the local economy by providing the right conditions for growth, improving skills and employability
- Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

Previous References

- Clydesdale Area Committee of 23 March 2010
- East Kilbride Area Committee of 24 February 2010
- Education Resources Committee of 7 July 2009

List of Background Papers

- Learning in Scotland's Communities (HMIE March 2011)

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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Strathaven Academy in its community

Why the work is done

Strathaven Academy's vision is to make a major contribution to an aspirational learning community - a community where young people and their families are nurtured and challenged to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills that allow them to contribute more effectively to the area in which they learn, live and work. The school strives to provide a broad and varied range of opportunities for young people and adults to flourish and grow. The school works well with many providers, organisations, businesses, individuals, families and South Lanarkshire Council. It provides a broad and varied range of opportunities for young people and their families to achieve, and to help to make Strathaven a great place to live and work. This case study picks up three areas from the range of partnership activities that contribute to youth and adult learning and community capacity building.

What the work involves and how it links to Curriculum for Excellence

South Lanarkshire Council's Home School Partnership (HSP) initiative supports and challenges young people and their families to grow and develop together. Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing are the key areas for development. This partnership offers programmes that engage parents to learn English and mathematics alongside their children. It enables them to address parental concerns such as alcohol and drugs, internet safety and healthy lifestyles. They have recently introduced a confidence building programme for parents, *Steps to Excellence*.

Young people within Strathaven Academy engage in important learning experiences through community programmes, such as Sportworx, Danceworx, Youth Achievement Awards, ASDAN, Sports Leader, and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Many young people undertake voluntary work as part of their programme and often continue this beyond the achievement of the award. These programmes enable young people to develop attributes as responsible citizens and effective contributors to their community.

Young people are also encouraged to participate responsibly by volunteering for a range of activities. These include school committees, Parent Council, Parent Teacher Association, Strathaven Community Council, Strathaven Town Group, Adam's Community Trust, as well as the local youth forum and the Scottish Youth Parliament.

What difference does the work make?

Through HSP programmes parents use their knowledge to support their children in completing homework together. Their confidence as parents of teenagers is increased and they are better able to support their sons and daughters through the challenges of growing up.

Community and volunteering programmes require young people to use their new skills to take initiatives, to lead and participate in activities in local primary schools, youth clubs, sports groups, uniformed groups and many other settings.

Through participation in decision-making bodies young people develop the confidence to consult with others and work in partnership to identify needs and actions to secure improvement.