

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION, CULTURE & SPORT SERVICE

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Community Learning & Leisure Service – Self Evaluation Peer Review
Lochaber June, 2006

Report by Principal Community Learning and Development Officer for Highland

SUMMARY

This report sets out the background, purpose and methodology of the “Peer Review” of the Lochaber Community Learning & Leisure Service. It sets out its findings on the identified quality indicators relative to the new self evaluation framework being used for the first time in Lochaber.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Community Learning & Leisure has identified a need to conduct quality assurance monitoring to identify the veracity of self evaluation against the quality indicators of How Good Is Our Community Learning & Development 2.

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 The review is conducted in a supportive manner to verify the self evaluations of the Areas. This will evidence a process of self evaluation and monitoring, improve accuracy of evaluation and ensure the evidence supporting scores is available.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Peer Reviews are derived through a negotiated process using the HGIOCLD2 broad brush self evaluation of each Area as a starting point with all grades now based on the new ‘six point scale’.

The basis of this review was agreed with the Community Learning & Leisure Manager and Community Learning & Leisure Officer of the Area being reviewed and the Principal CLD Officer. This identified the Quality Indicators to be verified, the focus groups to be consulted and the documentary evidence to be supplied in advance of the visit. (Scoping document – Appendix One)

4. QUALITY INDICATORS VERIFIED

- 4.1 For the Lochaber “Peer Review” a number of Quality Indicators from the new Self Evaluation framework – HGIOCL&D 2 were selected to be verified through the review process.

		Key Area 2: IMPACT ON SERVICE USERS
Q.I	2.1	Impact on participants
		Key Area 3: IMPACT ON STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS
Q.I	3.1	Impact on paid and voluntary staff
		Key Area 4: IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY
Q.I.	4.1	Impact on the local community
Q.I.	4.2	Impact on the wider community

5. FINDINGS

Q.I – 2.1

The Peer Review findings support a score of 4 with participants saying they were more successful, confident and valued within their communities as a result of their involvement in CLD activities. They reported growing self-esteem, good rapport with tutor/workers and evidence of progression to further provision – they all reported to being far more actively involved within their communities.

- Young people in the focus groups were enthusiastic about their involvement in youth activities and claimed they had developed their confidence, self belief and self esteem as a result.
- They could identify a range of skills they had learned or developed and felt that these would help them in the future.
- They had become more actively involved in their communities as a result of involvement in youth activities and felt that they were now valued more by their communities as a result.
- One young person present was now back in full time Education after a period of exclusion.
- The group felt that they were achieving goals and felt that they would continue to do so.
- All were very complimentary of the staff who supported them saying that ‘*youth workers encouraged and recognised positive developments and achievements*’, respect was mutual.
- The group also felt that they were fully involved in deciding what activities/programmes they were going to be involved in and could cite many examples of where they had actively been involved in decision making.
- Adult participants were very positive and enthusiastic about their learning saying that they found it enjoyable.
- All participants felt they had gained skills and knowledge and, in some cases, this was life changing.
- Participants learnt skills which have enhanced their lives, and, in some cases, their working lives. They have been able to “stretch their boundaries”. They felt empowered.
- A tutor commented that they could take their knowledge, skills and experience gained through working with learners back into their working environment and personal lives
- Positive relationships were built between learners and tutors.
- Learners and tutors supported and encouraged each other. They recognised the supportive role of CLL staff.
- “Buddy systems” enabled learners to help each other – learning with and from peers.
- Learners felt they had gone beyond their expectations.
- Learners felt valued. They were encouraged to recognise and build on their own skills and strengths
- Participants reported that tutors were patient, supportive and recognised the importance of literacy with Learner Evaluation forms giving encouraging feedback to tutors
- Learners felt they had a say in the learning activities they took part in. Activities were negotiated to meet individual learning needs.

Q.1 – 3.1

The Peer Review findings support a score of **4**. Staff were very positive on the role they play. They felt line managers had confidence in their abilities and trusted their judgement and they felt ownership of service delivery. They felt they had a decision making role with opportunities to develop work – within budget constraints – e.g. developing youth work in libraries and exploring funding opportunities, and joint working with other team members. Staff feel motivated and believe in what they are doing which is reinforced by trust and empowerment particularly as a result of the move to the locality team structure. The key issue to address for staff was the lack of a systematic CPD programme. Adult Learning staff felt that training opportunities did exist for them but Youth Work staff reported that opportunities were limited citing the work-based degree course as one example of good practice to be built upon.

- There are good varieties of staff support structures from informal contacts through to subject specialisms and Management support.
- Staff feel supported and trusted to develop their work. All staff felt that they did have a lot of input into shaping service delivery and what they did.
- The conscious move to locality teams has created the environment for trust to develop in localities across CLL staff, encouraging more interactive working. Support from colleagues within the team was seen as important. In the case of the Streetwork project the support of other linked agencies, e.g. YAT, Careers, Barnardos was also seen as vital, as was the support of the sessional Streetwork Youth Workers.
- There was strong support for staff from management and vice versa in return from the areas.
- The PDP process exists for individual work planning, review and self development.
- Network meetings support subject specialisms and help spread good practice across Highland and further afield. Other support comes from groupings such as Library Support Unit, Area Library Officers.
- Links with HQ are not as supportive as local links due to remoteness but are still seen as a structure for operational/strategic management and information sharing.
- Staff feel trusted and have much autonomy to develop programmes to meet the needs of localities within the policy framework. Teams are ‘encouraged to think across the patch’ but there was a recognition of the difficulties in maintaining relationships due to rurality
- Staff recognise that Service delivery needs to be based upon locality/community need within remit of Operational and Service Plans.
- Staff recognise the benefits of using LEAP to plan work and link to the ‘bigger picture’. Lochaber Plans and Service Plans. All workers agreed that work plans were based on identified need and that completing LEAPs had helped workers to realise how what they did related to service plans and made them think about why they were doing some activities.
- Volunteers are valued by staff and robust procedures are in place for recruitment and vetting. Having a ‘bank’ of sessional staff is good practice and aids service delivery
- Staff are encouraged to develop partnership working on a number of levels and their work programmes influence the work of partners
- Staff feel motivated and believe in what they are doing which is reinforced by trust and empowerment built on the locality team structure.
- Work based graduate qualification process has done much to build staff confidence, skills and loyalty but the lack of a structured CPD programme needs to be addressed.
- There is a low turnover of staff. Staff are genuinely keen, enjoy their jobs and feel motivated, staff believe in what they are doing. Staff reported that they felt extremely motivated and valued and supported by colleagues. A great part of their motivation was being appreciated by the communities which used the service.

- CLD workers believe they are agents of change and believe they can change lives, they feel things happen as a result of intervention
- Staff are motivated by the work itself, the people they work with and the results they see.

Q.I – 4.1

- The Peer Review findings support a score of **3**. There are some good examples of Partnership working to increase community capacity and a number of community groups in existence. Examples of work with the Migrant Workers and Youth Forums deserve mention but, on the whole, there is still work to do if communities are to become truly empowered, many staff act as advocates for communities instead of having true community representation. On the whole staff deliver opportunities at best in conjunction with communities and often still on behalf of communities rather than communities delivering their own services. Groups reported to having limited links with partners other than the Highland Council, partnerships are often “informal” defined by action – they are not driven by the Community Learning Action Plan although at times projects coincide with it.
- Community groups reported continuing support from the Highland Council through CLD staff in particular. They also said that other Highland Council staff such as Housing Officers attended meetings if invited.
- Partners were able to identify a range of partnerships/forums where they were supported in their work by CLD staff. They were mostly extremely positive.
- Careers and Lochaber Enterprise cited examples of joint work with ABE, to assist young school leavers with basic literacy and numeric problems.
- The Migrant Workers’ Forum was a key piece of Capacity Building work where CLL staff played a supportive role in delivery of provision (ESOL / Welcome Pack).
- A group reported to having control over what happened at their Community premises, they were responsible for bookings and programme but felt that the premises were not used to potential by the community.
- In most cases the partners felt that they were able to influence service delivery to enable them to meet targets. Examples cited were the diversionary activities during the summer programme and the Streetwork programme, where the partners felt that these programmes helped them to achieve some of their targets:
 - Police – less offending by young people
 - Careers Key Worker – young people were referred to her by Streetwork Project staff.
- Partners acted as advocates for potential learners and brought to the fore local needs. They felt their voices were heard and listened to and there were opportunities to become involved in partnerships.
- Groups were very positive about the impact that the work of CLD in conjunction with them had made to communities. They stated that some areas had now become more desirable places to live in e.g. Plantation, more people spoke when out and about, they felt that local residents now had more pride in their communities and more respect for themselves, their neighbours and where they lived.
- People found it difficult to identify tangible personal impacts from the work but were able to do this with some gentle probing, stating that they were now more confident, resourceful and proud of their achievements.
- Some communities raised money to underwrite the running of activities at their premises, this was seen as a particularly pleasing achievement and beneficial in establishing dialogue with other residents whilst enabling more provision to be offered.

Q.I – 4.2

The Peer Review findings support the score of 4. There is a range of innovative practice in Lochaber both at individual/'grass-root' level and with some high level developments such as Lochaber Outdoor Capital UK. The Streetwork Project, Rural Transport and Library Learning Assistants are examples of work at the 'cutting edge' of new development. CLD has played an active and leading role in many of these developments. There is, though, less leading edge practice being adopted from other Areas, much of the new development is generated from within. The CLL manager is involved in much of the high level, innovative CLD work such as Lochaber Outdoor Capital UK. The staff accept change as part of their "business", they deem themselves to be "agents of change" and appear positive and well informed.

- There is a wide range of innovative practice being both developed and delivered in Lochaber. The majority of this is needs/community led.
- Area management encourages staff to develop new ideas and ways of working and staff are given the freedom to innovate in the best interests of their communities. Pro and re-activity are encouraged.
- Some staff reported frustration when working with other partners/agencies/professionals who did not understand what they were trying to do. Staff were unsure of how to solve this issue.
- Huge opportunity exists for community involvement and capacity building as a result of the National and International Events being promoted and run by Lochaber Outdoor Capital UK.
- In Youth Work the Streetwork Project, its' method of operating and its' management were deemed to be innovative practice.
- Another example was the system of referrals between agencies to address the needs of individuals.
- Funding from the Scottish Executive for rural transport. Used by young people to enable them to attend youth club, Primary school pupils attending arts performances, and adults to attend arts events. This has now been extended so the wider community can travel outwith the local area to access learning opportunities e.g. theatre trips to Glasgow.
- Library Learning Assistants – pupils fill in a form and are interviewed before gaining a place on the scheme. The library is supporting "young people who do not fit in" and are at risk of exclusion. It has helped individuals raise their self-esteem and improve skills. A self-evaluation form is completed. This work is voluntary and out of school hours.
- The Ardnamurchan Book Festival is now in its 3rd year and has established strong links between school and community (Community Capacity building). It is organised by the Sunart Centre Management Committee but the library is seen as a lead player.
- Staff are made aware of things that are happening in other areas and further afield from a number of sources;
 1. Good news stories in team meetings
 2. National Councils and Bodies
 3. Active Schools Co-ordinators' meetings
 4. HIARTS
 5. Youth Highland/Youth Scotland
 6. Youth Voice
 7. Internet access
 8. Journals and publications, newsletters
 9. Youth Link
 10. Limited International work opportunities
- All staff would welcome more opportunities to meet with colleagues across Highland and beyond but recognise that time and budget restrictions could be constraints.

- The staff team is now working in a much more defined way to reflect service objectives and has responded to changes by adapting operational practice. The staff are encouraged to collaborate on activities and plans.
- Change is something that staff accept, have no fear of and respond to. CLD staff see themselves as “agents of change” and claim it can be motivating.

6. **OBSERVATIONS**

- 6.1 The Review identified that the CLD work within Lochaber is generally good. Movement is in the right direction, and with some effort the identified scores could be improved further.

There is scope for improvement in a few areas particularly:

1. CPD needs to become more systematic and encompassing of the whole of CLL.
2. Community Capacity Building needs to continue to develop community activists and the communities themselves so that they can assume greater responsibility for activities, learning programmes and decision making.
3. Staff recognise the worth of gaining information from further afield and keeping up to date but this does not happen enough, there needs to be a conscious effort to look beyond Lochaber when searching for new ideas – although much of the innovative work within Lochaber needs to be ‘showcased’ at least across Highland.
4. The ‘high level’ community capacity building involved in the Lochaber Outdoor Capital UK. Project needs to be more closely linked to communities to maximise benefit – this has begun and needs to continue.
5. The PDP process needs to continue to roll out to include all staff and needs to begin to define training needs. Consideration needs to be given to the continuation of the work based qualification of staff to build on the positives of this process.

Some of the work in Lochaber needs to be shared widely across Highland:

1. The move to Locality groupings has resulted in the closer working and networking of staff with considerable benefits.
2. The Streetwork Youth Project has had a significant impact in Lochaber gaining recognition from a number of sources outwith CLD such as the Police and Health Workers.
3. The Library Learning Assistants project has worked to address exclusion and disaffection and could be replicated.
4. The referral system between agencies in Lochaber is recognised as being effective by the agencies involved and helps to direct individuals to the most appropriate destination.
5. Lochaber Outdoor Capital UK is probably unique to Lochaber but is, none-the-less, innovative offering huge potential benefits to the local communities and to the ‘image’ of the Area.
6. The Rural Transport project has had a positive effect of countering exclusion in an extremely isolated rural area.
7. The ‘Nothing to Do’ project employs a way of assessing the involvement of young people in activities and a possible way of highlighting opportunities that exist and un-noticed. Whilst this is possible to do in smaller schools it would prove difficult to replicate where numbers of pupils rise beyond 200 but could still be used to effect with year groupings.

7. **RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 'The overall impression is that Lochaber is moving forward and generally delivering a good service. There is work required to evidence the indicated scores more consistently and issues such as CPD to address. Overall, staff are working hard, are committed and enthusiastic, they are embracing new ways of working and remain supportive of Management and very positive. The recommendation is that the report is accepted as an endorsement of the scores indicated.'

Signature: A.B.Northedge

Designation: Principal Community Learning & Development Officer

Date: 25th July, 2006

Author/Ref: Mr. Barry Northedge –01463 702835

Background Papers HGIOCLD – self evaluation
Evidence supplied in advance of review visit (Appendix One)

Acknowledgements

The Review team wish to record their thanks to everyone involved in the review conducted, particularly to those individuals in focus groups who gave of their own time to contribute freely and openly.

The Team also thank the staff of Lochaber CLLS for their honest open contributions, and we wish everyone success in the various projects and improvement agendas we heard about.

The Team would finally like to thank the Lochaber CLL Manager and Officer for their efforts and organisation in enabling this Peer Review to take place sooner than anticipated and at short notice.

Appendix One

Peer Review – Lochaber – June 30th

Focus

Pre-visit Information/Documentary Evidence

A range of information and documentary evidence is sought that will need to be cross-referenced with the Lochaber Self Evaluation and the focus groups.

The QIs being covered (taken from the new HGIOCLD2) are as below:

Section 2 Impact on service users

2.1 – Impact on participants

Section 3 Impact on staff and volunteers

3.1 – Impact on paid and voluntary staff

Section 4 Impact on the community

4.1 – Impact on the local community

4.2 – Impact on the wider community

Could the following examples of evidence be provided to support the QIs above:

- The most recent publicity materials and programmes for all CLD activity (three samples from the last year – equally spaced over the period – early, mid-term and latest examples)
- Any guidance materials such as course descriptions, activity information sheets etc. (three samples from the last year – equally spaced over the period – early, mid-term and latest examples)
- Programmes/training/activities to build community capacity within communities (as much as is available for the last six months)
- A record of all community groups currently being engaged with and supported (simple list with contact names will suffice)
- Examples of agendas and minutes from meetings with named groups above (an example from the last meeting of each group)
- Examples of agendas and minutes from staff meetings with named groups (an example from the last meeting of each group)
- Any CPD records and lists of programmes from the previous year.
- Calendar of PDPs for all staff (list of dates of PDPs not PDPs themselves which should be confidential)
- Records of any monitoring and evaluation of work with community groups (a couple of examples)
- All LEAP plans and reviews for work with community groups and other projects
- Documentary evidence of examples of where the review of a plan has influenced future work (a couple of examples)
- Documentary evidence of examples of where an action point from a meeting has influenced future work (a couple of examples)
- Copies of any local plans with links to Highland and National Plans/Strategies highlighted also showing links through to individual workplans if possible.
- An up to date list of all active partners
- Records of Partnership Projects with any supporting planning documents (a couple of examples)
- SLAs for work with any partners/community groups
- Evidence of impact on individuals resulting from our work (a couple of examples).
- Examples of Health & Safety procedures and records for establishments (examples from 2 establishments will suffice)

Any other supporting papers need to be readily available on request during the visit.

It would also be of great help to provide simple maps of where to find venues for any meetings and focus groups.

The information needs to be ready to give to the Peer Review Group by Tuesday June 27th if possible but certainly no later than Wednesday June 28th.

Appendix Two

Review Team

Carol Goodfellow - Area Libraries Officer, Inverness

Julie Simmons - Adult Literacies Strategy Officer, Highland

Pablo Mascarenhas - Principal Youth Officer, Highland

Helen Allan - CLL Officer, Caithness

Ivor Souter - CLL Officer, Badenoch & Strathspey

Barry Northedge - Principal Community Learning & Development Officer, Highland

Appendix Three

Recommendations for Future Reviews

- Balance of personalities in Review Team
- All future self evaluations need to be based on the new HGIOCL&D2
- Reviewers have equal standing in team recognising need for leader to take responsibility
- Adequate briefing in advance for participants (non-staff) in focus groups
- Adapted and relevant Q's pertaining to each focus group selected:
 - Youth
 - Users
 - Partners