

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
Agenda Item

EDUCATION, CULTURE & SPORT SERVICE
Report No

Community Learning & Leisure Service – Self-evaluation Peer Review
Skye & Lochalsh Peer Review April 2007.

Report by the Peer Review Team.

SUMMARY

This report sets out the background, purpose and methodology for the “Peer Review” of the Skye & Lochalsh Community Learning & Leisure Service. It sets out its findings on the identified quality indicators relative to the new self-evaluation framework (HGIOCLD2) being used for the first time in Skye & Lochalsh.

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

The review is conducted in a supportive manner to verify/moderate the self-evaluations of 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

Peer Reviews are arrived at 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, Community Learning & Leisure Officer and team of the Area being reviewed and the Principal Community Learning & Development 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.

QUALITY INDICATORS VERIFIED

For the Skye & Lochalsh “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

Key Area 5: How Good Is Our Delivery of Key Processes

Q.I. - 5.9 - Inclusion, equality and fairness

Key Area 8: Partnerships and Resources

Q.I. - 8.1 - Partnership working

Findings

Q.I – 2.1 - Impact on participants

Skye & Lochalsh self-evaluation:

Overall Self Evaluation Grade: 4

Statement to Support Grade

The CLL team have graded this QI at level 4 as the supporting evidence suggests that in many areas of the service a good number of participants are becoming more confident and successful in their individual learning. The team believe that the strengths clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. However, the team also recognises that improvement in some areas is still required but with the level of resources and staff, many of whom are on part-time contracts, we are still focused on this area for development and feel that we have achieved more than expected.

Q.I – 2.1 - Impact on participants - Youth –no grade

The Peer review team met a range of Young People (YP) that spoke highly of their experience of being involved. They valued the service delivered for them and the staff that worked with them. They were confident in expressing their views and had knowledge of local planned developments that would affect them. They were keen to get involved in having an input to these developments but expressed some frustration with timescales and routes into involvement in this.

When encouraged by the peer review team they could see the potential for extending the range of activities that would offer them informal learning opportunities.

It's clear from evidence that some more structured projects with young people are taking place e.g. Red Cross, Youth Forum, DOE, Safe Festival DVD. However the team didn't meet these young people to be able to fully assess this. Therefore at this point would offer recommendations but not a grade.

Recommendations:

- HMIe will expect focus groups of young people to comprise the appropriate age i.e. 12+.

Q.I – 2.1 - Impact on participants – Adult – grade 4

The Peer Review findings support a score of 4 for Impact on Participants – Adult Learning. This is based upon the written evidence provided to the team and observing and speaking to two groups of participants.

The participants reported a high degree of satisfaction with the service they received and the resources available to them. There was evidence that individual learners were becoming more confident and successful and gaining transferable skills, including being able to give their children more support at school.

All participants had achieved their own learning goals and stated that they wanted to continue their learning. This was based upon the positive experiences they have had. For some this had been their first experience of adult learning in a community setting.

The facilitators were praised for their expertise, enthusiasm and encouragement. One group now plans to take ownership of their activities and develop it as a resource for other people in the community thus providing evidence of community capacity building. They will continue to be supported in this new venture by staff.

Participants were now acting as advocates of community learning and the CLL Service, and role models to their children.

Recommendations:

- Leap plans at the beginning of each evidence file
- Written evidence to support groups visited, including evaluations
- More promotion of the Dualchas Service

Q.I – 3.1 - Impact on Paid and Voluntary Staff

Skye & Lochalsh Self-evaluation:

Overall Self Evaluation Grade: 4

Statement to Support Grade

The CLL team have graded this QI at level 4 as the supporting evidence suggests that, in many areas of the service, our voluntary staff report a high level of confidence, motivation, commitment to and satisfaction with their work. They work well within their teams and have very effective relationships with other staff and agencies. However, the team also recognises that improvement is needed in some areas to provide greater support to volunteers and in particular further training opportunities are still required.

Q.1 – 3.1 - Impact on Paid Voluntary Staff – Youth – grade 4

Staff enjoy working in the team, they feel valued and motivated to provide a service. They are clear about the values and ethos of the CLL service. They have been involved in shaping the service through the development of a comprehensive Operational Plan. They are supported in their work - drawing that support from a variety of places. They feel their managers are supportive and quick to praise them for work well done, however they would welcome a more structured and regular supervision regime.

Staff felt the service is supportive of their training needs but a more developed training programme is required. This should be provided both at corporate, strategic and local level

Q.I – 3.1 - Impact on Paid Voluntary Staff – Adult – grade 4

The Peer Review findings support a score of 4 for Impact on paid and voluntary staff. This is based upon speaking to two focus groups, the facilitators of the learning activities visited, and the written evidence provided.

All staff reported a high degree of motivation in their work although it must be acknowledged that the current process of restructuring is having an adverse affect particularly on paid staff. Motivation was related to the satisfaction they felt in working with people in the community and providing services that had a positive impact on people's lives. They also felt that management and peer support was very important to their motivation and job satisfaction. There is a recognisable cohesion in the Team.

Volunteers felt very well supported and there was good communication links with CLL staff. Both paid and volunteer staff had opportunities to undertake training and this had impacted on service provision and their own development. It gave them increased confidence and had helped them to reflect on their practice.

The team had developed a strong working relationship and actively worked to overcome the issues of rurality such as distances between bases where colleagues worked. They maintained good communication with each other and sought advice and support when necessary.

Recommendations:

- Further exploration of opportunities for joint training opportunities with partners.

Q.I – 4.1 – Impact on the Local Community

Skye & Lochalsh Self-evaluation:

Overall Self Evaluation Grade: 4

Statement to Support Grade

The CLL team have graded this QI at level 4 as the supporting evidence suggests that the quantitative and qualitative data gathered demonstrates the extent to which community members have had an active and influential role in their local communities and contributed to the development of local services in response to local priorities. The team believe that the strengths clearly outweigh any areas for improvement; however, the team also recognises that improvement in some areas is still required. In particular physical resources are often limited which can restrict the capacity of staff and community members in addressing local priorities.

Evidence: The projects which evidence this are numbers 3, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 & 24 as per attached project summary sheet

Q.I – 4.1 – Impact on the Local Community – Grade 5

After considering the evidence and meeting a range of participants, partners and staff we feel that the Impact on the Local Community QI for Skye & Lochalsh merits a level 5 – very good.

We met confident, skilled and active community members who have influential roles in local and wider decision making at projects such as the Plockton All Weather Pitch,

Raasay Community Hall and in a Partners focus group. In the examples we saw it was clear that local services have been developed in response to community needs with community members taking the lead. In all instances a high level of support from Highland Council staff was acknowledged and greatly valued.

Productive networks and relationships with other agencies and organisations were evident for example the Local Enterprise Company (LEC) - the Highland 2007 local management group and through joint funding of projects such as the SLCVO Community Toolkit project. The Community Toolkit is a particularly good example of an initiative that has brought together a range of community groups across Skye & Lochalsh, Highland and the wider UK.

There are good examples of effective planning and management processes being supported by the Highland Council for example the Raasay Village Hall project – who have been offered training, advice and practical support.

Individuals commented upon how their confidence, skills and abilities have grown and developed as a result of the work they are involved in with CLL.

Although this section is primarily about group actions we also met individuals whose lives have been significantly improved through accessing the groups and facilities which Highland Council runs and/or supports.

4.1 Impact on the local community – Partners

The Peer Review findings support a score of 5. This is based upon speaking to a partners' focus group, attending a Management Committee and speaking to the participants, and the written evidence provided.

Partners reported a high degree of satisfaction with the support they received from Highland Council CLD staff. This support was from all levels – management and front line staff. They were able to influence service provision and felt comfortable in approaching CLD staff and flagging up any gaps they identified. They felt that support was mutual, partnerships were on an equal footing, and resources could be shared for everyone's benefit.

Partners were enthusiastic about working together and recognised the impact that was being made in the local community. CLD staff were facilitating and encouraging people to take ownership of projects such as the community facilities in the PPP Portree High School project, and the Gaelic Parents' group. This has led to new opportunities for young people and adults to acquire new skills and contribute to the life of their communities. This is having a positive impact, particularly in small rural communities.

Recommendations:

- More organised / standardised presentation of written evidence

QI 5.9 – Inclusion, Equality and Fairness

Skye & Lochalsh Self-evaluation:

Overall Self Evaluation Grade: 4

Statement to Support Grade

The CLL team have graded this QI at level 4 as the supporting evidence suggests that in many cases staff have been effective in engaging groups and individuals that are traditionally hard to reach and, as an example, the DoE and Summer Diversionary projects have provided learning opportunities that have helped some young people overcome barriers to access and participation. The team also recognises that improvement is needed in some areas to comply more effectively with the process and delivery of inclusion, equality and fairness.

Evidence : The projects which evidence this are numbers 1, 14, 25, 26, 27 & 28 as per attached project summary sheet

QI 5.9 – Inclusion, Equality and Fairness– Grade 4

Adult Learning

The Peer Review findings support a score of 4. This is based upon speaking to staff and partner focus groups, volunteer tutors and viewing written evidence.

There is evidence that CLD staff are aware and proactively working with partners to identify and engage excluded groups. This includes people excluded through rurality, health issues, specific learning difficulties, low literacy levels and language barriers.

There were numerous examples of efforts being made to address the barriers to participation – crèches were available when necessary, outreach work such as the GP referral scheme, Heritage road shows, the Well Read scheme promoted by self-help workers and the Library Service, classes to fit work/ shift patterns (ESOL), training of volunteers such as literacies tutors and Active Sport coaches who can support provision in small rural communities.

Inclusion, equality, fairness and positive attitudes are being promoted and developed through partnership working and training opportunities, for example TAG's Ragtag and Textiles project, ITALL training including specific learning difficulties, and GP Referrals programme.

Recommendations:

- More written evidence of engagement and progression of hard to reach adult learners

Youth

The range of disciplines working with young people all accept and promote the ethos of tackling exclusion and targeting these groups and communities. The range of

partners they work with to develop this reflects an inclusive approach. There are clearly projects that have inclusion central to their design e.g. the summer diversionary programme.

Community Capacity Building

All groups visited displayed an inclusive approach, management groups were made up of people with differing ages, interests and groups from within their communities. All groups we met appeared to be open to all members of their communities.

QI – 8.1 – Partnership working

Skye & Lochalsh Self-evaluation:

Overall Self Evaluation Grade: 4

Statement to Support Grade

The CLL team have graded this QI at level 4 as the supporting evidence suggests that the team are engaged in planning, delivering, monitoring and evaluating joint projects that result in improved services in the community. The team also demonstrate or support leadership within partnership working and seek opportunities for the development of existing or new partnerships. Staff work across a number of agencies and disciplines and are aware of their role within the partnership to help meet the purpose and aims. Although the team's evaluation of partnership working is good they are also aware that the formalising process could be improved with clearer agreements, roles and remits of what is expected from all the partners involved.

Evidence: The projects which evidence this are numbers 1, 2, 4, 7, 18, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 & 35 as per attached project summary sheet

QI – 8.1 – Partnership working– Grade 5

Community Capacity Building

The Peer Review Team feel that Partnership Working in Skye & Lochalsh is strong and merits a level 5, very good. We met a range of Partners including the LEC, the Learning Centre, Schools, Community Groups, Commercial Facilities et al all of whom were clear of what they were able to achieve by working with CLL and recognised that Partnership added value to their own service delivery/projects. Partnerships had clearly defined aimed, roles and remits, they knew what they wanted to achieve and were all actively involved.

All of the Partners met or visited expressed how crucial CLL staff support had been in helping to achieve their aims, there was recognition that without this support some community projects would have failed.

A significant amount of external funding has been attracted to the Area through the good Partnership working and many new facilities and opportunities have been created for and with communities as a result.

The particular contributions of the CLL Management Team have been widely recognised by Partners and spoken of warmly, their efforts are of note.

The work clearly merits very good but could still, easily, be improved if more formal partnership agreements, e.g. SLAs and more simple documents such as LEAP type agreements are used in the future. Partners also showed considerable concern about how the re-structure of the Highland Council might impact upon the joint working.

Adult Learning

The Peer Review findings support a score of 5. This is based upon speaking to a partners' focus group, staff focus group, attending a Management Committee and speaking to the participants, and the written evidence provided.

There is evidence that partners and CLL staff work together effectively to plan, organise and deliver CLD programmes. The partnerships occur across the whole geographical area of Skye and Lochalsh, and through the full range of learning activities. These partnerships occurred within the CLL Service (e.g. Libraries / ABE, Libraries/ GP Referrals), with other Council Services (Countryside Rangers), and with external organisations. They seek new partners to work with and respond positively to overtures from other agencies wishing to engage in partnership work. There were also national and international partnerships, particularly with reference to Gaelic development work.

Partners acknowledged the support they had received, including securing funding, accessing training opportunities and resources. However, both CLD staff and partners made clear that partnerships were mutually beneficial and each brought something different to the table. Provision was greatly enhanced by partnership working. Roles, responsibilities and goals are defined at the planning stage through the LEAP process. There is good communication and networking between partners.

Although some formalised partnership agreements exist, staff are aware that there is a need to more fully document partnership working.

Recommendations:

- More formalising / fully documenting partnership agreements

Youth

The range of partners worked with was extensive. Partners were signed up to delivering a common agenda on an equal basis. It appears there are clear definitions of roles, responsibilities and resourcing, however, some form or method of formalising these arrangements would be beneficial

6. OBSERVATIONS

The Peer Review identified that the CLD work within Skye & Lochalsh is good aspiring to very good. Progress is evident with many examples of good practice and, with some effort, the identified scores could still be further improved.

The Community Capacity Work and Partnership working witnessed were particularly strong with community involvement being a significant driving force in all of the projects seen.

The Skye & Lochalsh team need to ensure that, in future, discreet Focus Groups of the key young people who have shaped the work and who are of the statutory Youth Work age range are available for Peer Reviews and Inspections. It is impossible to grade QI 2.1 without meeting such discreet groups.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Q.I – 2.1 - Impact on participants – Youth

- Needs analysis, consultation with stakeholders, and involvement of young people all should be clearly evidenced.
- More evidence of feedback from participants – evaluation, self assessment, etc. should be included in future Peer Reviews/Inspections

Q.I – 2.1 - Impact on participants – Adult

- Leap plans at the beginning of each evidence file
- Written evidence to support groups visited, including evaluations
- More promotion of the Dualchas Service

Q.I – 3.1 - Impact on Paid Voluntary Staff – Youth

- A more developed training programme is required. This should be provided both at corporate, strategic and local level
- Consider how learning opportunities can be incorporated into youth club settings.
- Staff and young people need access to information about various funding streams – local, Highland and national.
- Better and more access to training opportunities for sessional and part time staff, especially pan Highland, based on core and personal needs.

Q.I – 3.1 - Impact on Paid Voluntary Staff – Adult

- Further exploration of opportunities for joint training opportunities with partners

Q.I – 4.1 – Impact on the Local Community

- More structured and cohesive needs analysis and research of local priorities.
- A consistent approach to the joint evaluation of community projects, this needs to be led by the groups but supported by CLL.
- More organised / standardised presentation of written evidence

QI 5.9 – Inclusion, Equality and Fairness

- There was little paper evidence of Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedure in venues/groups visited
- More written evidence of engagement and progression of hard to reach adult learners

QI – 8.1 – Partnership working

- More formalising / fully documenting partnership agreements

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Background Papers HGIOCLD2 – self evaluation
Evidence supplied in advance of review visit (Appendices)

Acknowledgements

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

The Team also thank the staff of Skye & Lochalsh CLLS who made them most welcome. Staff went out of their way to ensure we were well looked after, informed and supported throughout the review, this was most appreciated by the Peer Review Team. We wish everyone success in the various projects and pieces of work we heard about.

The Team would finally like to thank the Skye & Lochalsh CLL Manager, Officer and colleagues for their efforts and organisation in enabling this Peer Review to take place.