

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
Agenda Item

EDUCATION, CULTURE & SPORT SERVICE
Report No

Community Learning & Leisure Service – Self Evaluation Peer Review
Badenoch & Strathspey, October, 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 Badenoch & Strathspey 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 Badenoch & Strathspey.

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 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

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)

QUALITY INDICATORS VERIFIED

For the Badenoch & Strathspey “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

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

Q.I. - 5.1 - Opportunities for people in the communities

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 - Youth – Good – grade 4

The Peer Review findings support a score of 4 for Impact on Participants – Young People with more strengths than weaknesses. *It is not possible to comment on the impact on Adult Participants as it was not possible to organise a focus group.* Young people enjoyed the activities they had offered to them and felt that they had some ‘control’ over what happened. They reported to feeling valued and well supported claiming good relationships with youth workers. All young people that were met were able to give examples of how they had gained confidence and developed new skills and confidence they were very positive about their experience with Youth Workers, they also commented on the chance that residential gave them to meet new people. ICT was being used effectively and innovatively to keep contact between staff and young people. However young people were less complimentary about school experiences deeming these to be ‘oppressive’ and said that, in some instances they felt there could be more consultation over what they would like to see happen. One excluded young person was not admitted to a focus group on school premises in school time. This will need to be addressed in any future Review.

Impact on participants - Youth

All young people reported to enjoy the activities they were involved in, they were able to identify all the activities that were being offered to them and noted that none of these would be available without the input from Youth Workers.

- Young People enjoy the activities they attend.
- Most communities had some youth provision.
- They thought it was important to do things outside school and important to have things happening in their community.
- To meet new people, gain confidence, exchange ideas and help make a difference.
- Young People had learnt new social skills, how communication with new people, how to represent themselves at meetings, negotiation, compromise, valued their own contribution, how to make things happen and most importantly how to respect others.

All the young people involved in the focus groups reported to gaining confidence and interpersonal skills and could give individual examples of these. Youth Forum members said it was of real value to meet other young people and to learn tolerance and negotiation skills through residential experiences.

- Confidence, presentational skills, interpersonal skills.
- Young People said they had learned how to set up junior YCs, learned how to make changes in community life e.g. transport initiatives
- They spoke of how they had organised and took part in youth exchanges – broadening their view of the world

- The youth forum members gave the example of going to talk to the Badenoch and Strathspey Partnership, they gave a presentation and talked about the forum's work, afterwards they felt that the way young people were viewed had changed and that this was positive. They had been asked if youth forum reps could attend future meetings.

Young people really valued having places for them to go and socialise with peers they also spoke of new experiences, new activities, residential, meeting new folk and taking responsibility for organising activities and events as all things that involvement in Youth Work had enabled them to do, they were complimentary of all the opportunities that were being offered to them.

- Experience different cultures - Norway trip
- Residential experiences – a Youth Forum event at Allness being a good example.
- Taking responsibility for delivering opportunities for younger members of their communities.
- Meeting new friends, confidence to talk to new people.
- Volunteering opportunities.
- One young person talked about helping with a junior drama group in his community
- They spoke of beginning to control their own environment rather than just complain about it – take action rather than being passive
- They said they had ‘learned how to be happy and content in their community’ this transferred to other parts of their lives e.g. school
- Committee skills and how to represent themselves formally
- Organisational skills – organising tournaments
- Learned that they needed to put time into getting things done and they valued the outcome more because of their own investment e.g. new youth clubs

Young people were generous in their praise of youth work staff saying they felt valued and well supported by youth workers – completely different from relationships within school. ICT was used to maintain contact between young people and youth workers.

- Young people felt all the staff were approachable and friendly.
- Youth forum staff did things in a fun way but helped them achieve things.
- Badenoch centre staff were easy to talk to and the building had a nice atmosphere.
- Grantown staff did all they could for young people giving out mobile contact numbers.
- Staff kept in touch with young people through text and mobile phones.
- School was said to be oppressive in comparison to how they were treated by youth workers.
- Without youth workers there would have been nowhere for young people to go in Grantown.
- They felt they had excellent support from youth workers and valued relationships with YW staff

- Distinct recognition of difference between treatment by youth staff to school

Young people reported to having some say over what happened particularly at Youth Forum events and the majority of the youth provision but there were still some instances where they felt they could be consulted more.

- The youth forum members felt they set the agenda.
- Young people at Grantown, Bridge of Garten etc. all felt that they had a good rapport with staff and that they could ask for activities that would then happen.
- Young people enjoyed the activities at the Badenoch centre but would like a chance to be asked about what activities should happen in the centre.
- They said they had significant involvement in preparation for the set up of new youth clubs and trying to find solutions for changes in provision
- Lots of involvement in the planning and organising of activities.
- Should be formally consulted regarding the development, management and access to the new leisure facilities at the school – the group said they wanted to be involved in more physical activities – not enough PE in school – access to the leisure facilities in free periods etc. – ‘can we use it when we want?’

Asked what was good and not so good about youth work brought the following response:

Best Things:

Get results through working hard

Youth Voice and Youth Forums really valued – creating aspiration for younger members to become involved. Helps keep YP in the ‘communication loop’

Liked organising as well as taking part

Worst things:

The time it takes to get things going

Closure of the YMCA

Some adults difficult to work with

Lack of communication some times re: new school facilities

Impact on participants – Adult

No adult participants were able to attend focus groups – this is an issue for the Area and needs to be addressed for future Reviews.

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

The Peer Review findings support a score of 4 with more strengths than weaknesses. Management and Peer support was good and there was a strong team approach. A regular meetings structure was in place for paid and voluntary staff as well as the staff of some partner organisations. Staff felt valued, listened to with the flexibility to deliver locally relevant work, feedback was encouraged. A high level of motivation existed with low staff ‘turnover’ with staff claiming the work itself was motivating. However geography was an acknowledged problem that had to some extent been addressed by ICT. There was inadequate access to ICT and a perceived lack of clerical support for some staff. CPD was also noted as another area which needed to be improved.

Impact on Paid and Voluntary Staff – Adult

Staff felt supported in their work on a number of levels, from management, peers and the communities they worked in. One participant commented that there were at times issues about the decision making process between local and Highland wide managers which affected their work, although it was emphasised that both were supportive. There was an appreciation of the limitations of support from managers because of their workload.

The following support was identified:

- Team support – meetings structure in place for staff team, in transition to ILCs staff were supported by peers a good team spirit has been established.
- Support from Highland networks – Area Library Officers / ABE Co-ordinators / Facilities Network Group / Arts Network Group
- Support from specialists – Arts, Literacy
- Enthusiastic community support for CLL work
- Partners – UHI / SMO / Eden Court Theatre etc
- Support from the CLL manager came through structured PDP meetings twice a year and CLL management team meetings
- CLL Officer – good support from Manager, more informal than structured but valued, good support from HQ specialist staff
- All staff motivated by the work they are involved in

Staff felt they did play a role in shaping service delivery. They felt valued and listened to and as a consequence felt ownership of the service.

- Consulted and involved in the writing of the Area Service Plan
- Managers encouraged staff to give feedback

- Area forums were an opportunity for staff to give input
- Staff have flexibility over service delivery and enjoy influencing their own work within a strategic framework, can influence service delivery through Service/Area Plans and examples of good practice
- Documentation helps staff to identify links with strategic responsibilities
- Everyone accepts they are going through a period of change

All staff reported a high degree of self-motivation in their work.

- CLL Officer motivated and encouraged by Manager.
- CLL Officer and Manager value contribution of the staff team.
- Staff said they got as much support as they needed from HQ.
- Staff trained volunteers and working with them was a motivating factor. Volunteers themselves were motivated and willingly gave up their time illustrating their commitment e.g. ABE volunteers.
- All staff are highly motivated by the work with communities and individuals
- Staff training and bonding helped increase motivation.
- More than one staff member described their job in terms of a vocation.
- There was a low staff turnover and most staff remained in their jobs for many years.
- Combining practical and administrative/management work was motivating.

Positive relationships between staff were maintained in a number of ways, including face-to-face and remotely through the use of technology. Effective communication was necessary to maintain good working relationships.

- Museum staff likened themselves to a “large family” where everyone knew their role in delivering provision.
- Regular meetings helped maintain relationships between teams
- Staff questionnaires helped identify any issues staff might have. This helped to identify and resolve any concerns.
- Support and Supervision and the CPD process helped to develop relationships
- Interactions with other teams e.g. arts, museums, libraries and youth work working together /literacy projects with partners
- Network structure offered team support e.g. ABE Co-ordinators / Area Library Officers were maintained through meetings, emails, and phone calls
- Training days as a mechanism for staff bonding (although budget constraints could be an issue)
- Acceptance of geographical challenges to maintaining team/staff relationships
- Team being structured around two clusters – Aviemore/Kingussie and Grantown will provide local staff support - consolidating the ILCs will improve staff support mechanisms

Staff reported a number of ways in which they could access learning through their work, primarily through the CPD process, although the emphasis was on professional rather than personal training opportunities. Staff appreciated the reasons for this.

- Professional bodies offered learning opportunities.
- Managers supported staff in taking up learning opportunities where possible.
- Staff who attended training was sometimes asked to cascade this to other staff.
- IT training was available through Employee Development in Inverness
- Barriers to learning identified by staff were cost (fees / travel / subsistence) / distance (courses in the central belt / south of the border etc) / time / rurality
- Team training opportunities e.g. ABE staff meetings
- Area Manager – has had skills training appropriate to her needs e.g. project management CIPFA - Capital Project Management, happy with own training
- Recognition that there is no systematic method of TNA (Training Needs Analysis) or delivery – PDP (Personal/Professional Development Process) process recognised as the mechanism but not delivering systematically
- Area Officer – as someone new to the post he had taken up training as needed and been well supported in accessing this.

Impact on Paid Voluntary Staff – Youth

Staff felt that support was overall, good, particularly from colleagues and management but that problems existed with clerical support and access to ICT. Support and supervision processes were in place. A team ethos existed with volunteers and partners being included in a regular meeting structure etc.

- All the staff felt that clerical support/access to I.T and office provision was totally inadequate. They made the point that they were expected to produce LEAP and HGIOCLD type documents with no access or very limited access to IT.
- However peer and management support were deemed good with regular support and supervision. The vacant CLO post had left a gap in day to day support. They did feel supported by the CLLO.
- The workers felt that they were a team and operated as one, this included the voluntary agency staff and volunteers.
- The street work project full time member of staff used the Council's support and supervision process and attended youth team meetings along with council staff.
- Active schools co-ordinators support from both the pan highland manager and local manager was good.
- Grantown YMCA have monthly meetings with paid and voluntary staff –they feel supported by officer and management committee
- Youth Workers involved in weekly meetings.
- They were also complimentary of management support

Both paid and voluntary staff said that they felt valued at a number of levels from the people they were working with to local Management.

- The worker from Vol Org felt valued both by the Management Committee and the Highland Council (HC) link
- The street worker felt their work was valued by partners such as Police and Drugs and Alcohol Forum. The feedback from youth forum members to workers was very positive and made the staff feel valued to the extent that current changes in HC youth provisions was concerning them and they were prepared to voice this concern.
- Yes Youth Workers at all levels felt valued by communities, managers and young people.

Staff reported to recognising the need to deliver to Strategic Plans but noting local flexibility, there was an issue of not always having the resource to respond to need with funding dictating delivery. Paid and voluntary staff reported to having some scope to shape the service delivery.

- Most staff felt that although they had strategies and targets to adhere to there was still flexibility for them to define the most appropriate approaches themselves.
- There is an emphasis on consulting with the participant but the staff don't always have the freedom or resources to respond.
- Volunteers and Partners felt they were able to shape the service they provide.
- Funding opportunities dictate what service is offered.

As with the staff working with adults all paid and voluntary staff reported to feeling motivated, particularly by participant response but that, sometimes, pressure resulted from trying to deliver services with minimal staffing.

- Yes positive feed back from participants –youth forum workers
- Yes partners and volunteers felt motivated most of the time except when under pressure to run a service with the minimum of staff.

Regular staff meetings are planned and take place, these include paid and voluntary staff as well as some staff from partners. A good team work ethic exists.

- Youth Workers have regular weekly meetings
- The Voluntary Organisation staff members feel more involved in the team.

CPD was inconsistent with some staff – Active Schools – being well supported and others either not having CPD opportunities or having to source their own. Some systems had been introduced with little or no training e.g. LEAP/HGIOCLD, although this was improving. Overall this was an area which needed to improve.

- The Active Schools Co-ordinators have good provision of training opportunities but struggle to take up the opportunities due to lack of time.

- The Street work project identified training needs and then looked who could provide these.
- The youth workers felt core corporate training is available i.e. child protection But CPD was not. However one Youth Worker had been sponsored by the council to complete a BA Com Ed.
- Their introduction to HGIOCLD and LEAP was inadequate and had resulted in a lot of negativity. They did however have a greater understanding now.
- Although partners and voluntary workers felt one off training was available there was not a CPD system in place that allowed progression.

Q.I – 4.1 – Impact on the Local Community – Adequate – Grade 3

The Peer Review findings support a score of 3 with a balance between strengths and weaknesses. Community Groups reported to being supported and involved in decision making, feeling they were treated as equals in the process and stating that they felt they had acceptable levels of control of and were able to influence decisions and programmes. Representatives were positive about the role played by Highland Council staff and the support they were offered by HC. However some Partnerships didn't appear to be clearly defined, some groups recognised Council support and assistance but wouldn't have described the support as a partnership - more a working arrangement. It was reported that there were still some groups who worked in isolation – the Peer Review being the first time they had met collectively – didn't realise the value of their collective voice.

Community Group members reported being well supported by the Highland Council staff, stating that more was being achieved in partnership than could be achieved individually. There was acknowledgement of support in setting up projects, taking informed decisions, starting community projects off and offering advice and training when needed.

- Steering group for Grantown Leisure development well supported by HC. Jointly funded and managed facility for maximum community benefit.
- Approximately a dozen community groups represented at the Focus Group.
- Management groups with HC input.
- Community Projects being adopted by HC.
- Dev. Staff offer group support in terms of specific skills, making DVDs/production skills, start up support, informal training (committee skills, constituting groups – ‘support from a distance’) and fund finding.
- HC staff offer drive and enthusiasm to project work
- Tension exists between vol. staff and paid staff and suspicion about the purpose of developing vol. networks – are the Council trying to save money
- Sound Start Plus good example of CCB

Community Reps. felt they had control over joint projects and that they were able to exert influence over decision making through equal involvement in Management/Steering groups

Partners

Representatives were present from the following organisations:

**Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey
Aviemore Adult Learning Partnership (AALP)
Grantown Primary School
Clan Macpherson Museum
Badenoch Centre
Grantown YMCA**

Partners spoke positively about their relationship with Council staff and acknowledged the support given both through individuals and Service Level Agreements.

- The Badenoch Centre Manager spoke about the “exciting project” undertaken with the Council which had resulted in the Centre. The working relationship with HC staff was good. This was a two way process.
- The representative of Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey acknowledged the support of HC managers and staff (CLL and school staff)
- YMCA representative said that having a member of CLL staff on their Board had been of great benefit. The staff member had not only been supportive to the organisation but had also helped to build a good working relationship with the Council. HC CLL managers had also been supportive
- AALP manager liaised with HC CLL. The organisation also worked with ABE to develop ESOL provision.
- Wider partnerships involving HC and other partners such as Inverness College, Cairngorm National Park, and TAG (Training and Guidance) were spoken about.
- HC CLL staff also supported staff in partner organisations through their responses to phone calls and email messages.

Partners felt that they did influence service delivery in a number of ways – strategically and operationally.

- Bespoke projects to meet local needs
- Partners were equal. Roles and responsibilities were agreed.
- Partners were represented at a strategic level on the Community Partnership. They then cascaded information throughout their own organisations.
- Service Level Agreements were important between partners. However, it was reported that one partner was expected to deliver services beyond what was agreed with HC and this had the potential for causing friction and a loss of trust. This was only overcome because of the confidence that the Board of the

organisation had in the HC CLL representative who worked to resolve the situation in a satisfactory way.

- The staff and parents of Grantown Primary school worked with the CLL Arts Officer to support a music project (community capacity building).
- 50/50 split between those feeling they were being led and those who felt they were leading process with an acceptance of the value of HC staff support but still an underlying suspicion about the purpose of partnership working and vol. support.
- Most groups felt that they influenced delivery but some tension underlying the process (unsure who leads and who follows), newest groups were those with most concerns – new to partnership and process.

Partners were involved in the decision making process. They described this as democratic, where each was treated as an equal. Partners spoke about their own particular organisations structures and how this related to partnership decision making, although some Partnerships were not formalised – groups were unsure of “Partnership” description, recognised Council support and assistance but wouldn’t have described the support as a partnership – and were more a working arrangement.

- Partnerships worked together to identify and source funding
- Service Level Agreements were mutually agreed
- The roles of partners are mutually agreed
- There is a long history of partnership working in the area.

Partnerships could be formal (e.g. Service Level Agreements) or informal. Partners felt they were treated as equals and all were responsible for driving the partnership forward. Partners identified a number of organisations which they worked with. They felt that the advantage of working in a small community was that communication; personal working relationships and informal links could be established and maintained. Informal partnerships allowed partners to consult each other and seek ideas and advice as well as learning from others’ experience. However some Partnerships didn’t appear to be clearly defined, in some instances relationships are driven and led by Council staff and in others driven and led by community groups – (CLD plan not evident to all the groups)

Working partnerships included the following organisations:

- Highland Council
- Voluntary Sector
- Highland Health Board
- Careers Scotland
- Enterprise Network
- Church
- Local businesses
- Wildlife Centre

Partners felt they were making a difference and having a positive impact on their local communities. They identified funding and training as two important components in allowing them to do more through partnership working. However there were still some groups attending who worked in isolation – this was the first time they had met collectively – didn't realise the value of their collective voice.

- AALP – working with small businesses / ECDL / ESOL for inward migrant workers – to improve individuals' skills
- Through Learndirect individuals could access personal funding (ILA) / allowed more choice through extension of courses available
- Age range of participants extended
- More learning opportunities in rural areas
- Impact on children – importance of giving them a sense of pride, self-esteem, and sense of heritage
- Community ownership and identity
- Welcoming environment for learning
- Extended opportunities for training through partnership
- Partners shared information about training opportunities which led to cross-organisational participation e.g. Disclosure Scotland Training
- Support for applications for funding bids (community capacity building)

Q.I – 4.2 – Impact on the Wider Community – Good – Grade 4

Staff said they were encouraged to discuss and try new ideas and ways of working, this gave them confidence to try new ways of delivering provision, they were able to identify many examples of innovative pieces of work. Staff were aware of projects and developments both within Highland and nationally and could give examples of how they had responded to the changing needs of the communities they worked in. All staff were proud that they were making a difference and recognised the worth of partnerships. However time and resources were seen to limit the extent of new approaches and work and the delay in appointing a replacement CLLO had reduced the level of support for a while the bonus from this was that it encouraged staff to support each other more and they felt more of a 'team' as a result. In Youth Work the staff would like to see Network meetings reinstated and felt that Youth Highland could contribute more, the closure of the YMCA in Grantown had reduced provision but this was being addressed.

Staff were able to identify and relate details of a number of projects and working practices which were innovative. Some had been recognised outwith the local area, both throughout Highland and nationally.

- ESOL Survival course, developed as part of the Hi Hopes project by the ABE Co-ordinator, has been distributed widely throughout Scotland. (A copy of the course was available for facilitators to view)
- Active schools - activities, health issues especially working with adults

- Library self-issue system in the Badenoch Centre is the first of its kind in Highland. Sports and Library staff were involved in this project.
- Museums Outreach Project with the Scottish Museums Council “Inspiring Learning for All” targeted Gypsy/Travellers. It successfully engaged members of this group and resulted in loans boxes (collections of artefacts related to Gypsy/Traveller Heritage) and an exhibition in Inverness which young Gypsy/Travellers produced with the support of a specialist worker. It was an example of a community group of hard to reach people working with the museum. It resulted in better interaction between the Gypsy/Travellers and the local community.
- The museums also produced a DVD in partnership with the Cairngorm National Park and Leader+. This was a promotional tool which is now also used by the tourism sector.
- Sound Start Plus project – this was a follow on from the Sound Start Music (Scottish Executive “Music Pledge”) programme for P6 pupils in Grantown Primary School. It allows children to continue to pursue their interest in music and is supported by parents (committee), the school, and the Arts Officer working in partnership. The committee was able to access funding with the support of HC staff. This enabled them to buy more musical instruments and pay tutors. It has been nominated for a Highland Council Quality Award.
- The Badenoch Centre which is a venue for different kinds of learning – sports, library, youth and Learning Centre.
- Subsidised taxi scheme 6 month pilot scheme
- Graffiti project at Kingussie
- Street work project – Concrete Wheels and Streetlink
- Summer programme – cultural co-ordinator /SDO used community groups to access funding
- Working Youth Forum across whole area (also very good at including school/youth club Youth Voice members as one unit) there is a clear link from Youth forum to youth voice to National Park. Other agencies utilities the forum and are managing to retain their older members as a result. Learning Centres
- Youth Centre access to sports facilities in Badenoch Centre
- Highlife access to private sector pool – Aviemore Highland Resort
- New Community School – Grantown
- Talla nan Ros village hall support
- Theatre and Music project- young people as Highland promoters
- Alcohol free and licensed events in Badenoch

Staff were aware of projects and developments in their specialist areas both within other areas of Highland and nationally. They maintained this knowledge in a number of ways; through personal contacts with colleagues, professional bodies and in electronic and written form.

Examples of sources of this information were:

- Staff encouraged to look outwith Highland and the Area e.g. visit to Springburn centre when developing Badenoch Centre
- Evidence of working within Highland for solutions expertise and good practice e.g. Youth Voice/Youth Forum transport solutions – taxis
- Learning centre – comparisons with other Highland facilities supported by other visits
- Streetwork links with Lochaber
- Rural Museums Network and the Scottish Museums Council
- The Visitor Attractions Network - a lobbying group which gives museum staff feedback from the tourism sector.
- Information via email from the Reference and Information Co-ordinator at LSU
- SLIC / CILIP publications
- ABE projects / Co-ordinator meetings and exchange of area reports
- Learning Connections (national literacies strategies and practice)
- Attending conferences and seminars – local and national
- Promoters Arts Network
- Eden Court Theatre
- Subscriptions to mailing lists and e-newsletters
- Facilities Network Group – co-ordinator disseminates information
- Scottish Athletics / Scottish Football Association
- Youth voice meetings are a useful networking opportunity for staff. There is a lack of opportunity for local workers to influence the youth voice programme.
- Youth Highland was valued but could do more.
- Youth workers valued the youth forum net work meetings and would like these re-instated.

Staff reported that the work had been influenced or changed through the development of new ideas and work practices. Some changes were the result of local needs and priorities whilst others were national initiatives and strategies which they had taken on board.

- Staff acknowledged the changing / evolving nature of their work. Sometimes this change was rapid.
- The staff felt they are definitely more of a team now than in the past.
- National Standards of Community Engagement
- How Good Is Our Community Learning and Development² (*Sound Start Plus written evidence – very comprehensive*)
- The LEAP process (*supported by written evidence e.g. Summer Activities Programme / Sound Start Plus*)
- They felt that the focus on targeting exclusion was actually exclusive in itself.

All staff were able to give examples of how they had responded to the changing needs of the communities they worked in. They acknowledged the importance of being able to do this.

- The National Standards of Community Engagement is a flexible tool which enables practitioners to respond to people's needs
- Libraries in the 21st Century are very different to those of the past which mainly housed print resources. The public who don't use libraries regularly are often surprised by the range of materials and services offered when they do visit.
- Literacies are delivered through the social practices model (learner centred). This means that individual needs have to be met.
- ESOL has become important because of the number of inward migrants needing to improve their language skills for work/social purposes.
- Staff also spoke about barriers to change – time and resources.

Staff felt that what they were doing was making a difference to the local community. They felt they had more opportunities to do this through partnership working. Examples of new ways of working/initiatives were given:

- Libraries allow access to the internet and self-directed learning through the Peoples Network
- Books on Prescription initiative
- Talis Prism – accessing the catalogue and reserve books on-line from their homes
- Partners acting as Spotters and Referrers for adult literacies
- Reaching non-traditional learners through partnership working e.g. literacies priority groups / prisoners and ex-offenders / Gypsy/Travellers
- Difference literacies makes to individuals' lives – personal / family / workplace / community
- Linking Sport and Health and Well-being – GP Referral Scheme
- Improving Health through promoting physical activity / Active Schools Co-ordinators
- The Arts as a community engagement tool
- Building confidence and skills in sessional staff – demonstrating crafts and encouraging visitors to also try new activities
- Community capacity building

QI – 5.1 – Opportunities for people in communities – Adequate – Grade 3

Opportunities for Young People, Adults and communities are adequate with a reasonable range of activities for most ages, spread geographically across the ‘patch’ as evidenced by the information provided. Young people praised the activity programmes they were offered and the fact that these took place in many of their local communities. There are limited progression opportunities, particularly for Youth Forum members. Youth Forums and residential opportunities were seen as being particularly beneficial by the young people in the focus groups. Programmes need to be more widely publicised, there is over reliance on ‘word of mouth’, staff need to find ways of publicising what is offered to those not already participating although the use of text and ICT to keep in touch with young people is innovative. There is a clear need to up date needs analysis information for the Area and to use new information to plan future work.

- Good spread of provision throughout the Spey valley – moving towards ILC structure
- Adult Learning strong in the Area
- YW good through youth centres and projects
- Limited needs assessment much based on old needs analysis information
- Awareness of needs of remote rural communities and trying to address them – intention to work with partners to try to resource
- Aim is to encourage ownership and self running of youth clubs

Local needs analysis to support programme planning. *It is difficult to comment further on Adult provision as it was not possible to meet participants of Adult learning programmes, more work will need to be done to ensure the views of learners are represented in any future reviews. One young person was prevented from joining a Focus Group because they were currently excluded from the school premises where the focus group was held, this too needs to be addressed for future out of school provision and reviews.*

QI 5.9 – Inclusion, Equality and Fairness – Good – Grade 4

On the limited time we had to review this QI we believe the work to be good with strengths outweighing weaknesses. The Area is attempting to address inequality on a number of ‘fronts’ with all ages from pricing policies for activities to targeted work with excluded groups. More generally there is a geographic spread of work across the area in an attempt to ensure opportunities are as local as possible.

- Local solutions to make the Summer Activity programme more inclusive through a socially inclusive pricing policy for summer activities – removal of highly

- priced activities from programmes – moving towards a balanced provision of general and targeted activity
- There was also enthusiastic take up of the subsidise access to facilities – 50p access!
 - Streetwork addressing disengaged YP
 - Aware of transport issues and trying to address – taxis
 - Inclusion work with migrant workers
 - Gypsy/Traveller involvement
 - Staff commented that they recognised the need to challenge behaviour and comment
 - There were examples of inclusion – a young person with additional needs being a regular member of the Badenoch Youth Group
 - Beginnings of Social Work referral system for activities
 - Understanding that motivation is as much of an issue as pure price or remoteness for some groups

QI – 8.1 – Partnership working – Weak – Grade 2

- **Whilst there was much to applaud in the Partnership work of Badenoch & Strathspey and Partners spoke highly of the Highland Council staff they worked with there were some significant flaws. Communication between HC and partner organisations was often under-developed and weak. Staff recognised that, although there were some strong and active partnerships in existence there was a need to develop more and a clear need for more formal/written agreements. A range of partnerships are in existence but only two have SLAs – Learning Centre network and YMCA. There were no formal planning and evaluation processes for partnership work which is a key weakness. Some partners commented that, in some cases, they felt they were working for HC rather than in true partnership. Partners felt they were insufficiently informed about the Peer Review Process. This had led to a fear that non-participation could affect their relationship with the Council, and even their funding. They were unclear about the role they needed to play and what was required of them in terms of preparation and hard evidence. They also felt too short notice was given. As a result at least two partner representatives were standing in for other staff members who they felt would have been more appropriate. Partnerships that needed to be developed included – NHS, Area Children’s Services Forum, MacDonald Hotels. There was general recognition of the growing importance of partnership in our service – HC doesn’t have the resources to address all needs hence we need to develop partnerships**

Representatives were present in focus groups from approaching twenty different organisations:

Partners spoke positively about their relationship with Council staff and acknowledged the support given both through individuals and Service Level Agreements.

Some illustrations of this support were:

- The Badenoch Learning Centre Manager spoke about the “exciting project” undertaken with the Council which had resulted in the Centre. The working relationship with HC staff was good. This was a two way process.
- The representative of VABS acknowledged the support of HC managers and staff (CLL and school staff)
- The YMCA representative said that having a member of CLL staff on their Board had been of great benefit. The staff member had not only been supportive to the organisation but had also helped to build a good working relationship with the Council. HC CLL managers had also been supportive
- AALP manager liaised with HC CLL. The organisation also worked with ABE to develop ESOL provision.
- Wider partnerships involving HC and other partners such as Inverness College, Cairngorm National Park, and TAG were spoken about.
- HC CLL staff also supported staff in partner organisations through their responses to phone calls and email messages.

Partners felt that they did influence service delivery in a number of ways – strategically and operationally.

- Bespoke projects to meet local needs
- Partners were equal. Roles and responsibilities were agreed.
- Partners were represented at a strategic level on the Community Partnership. They then cascaded information throughout their own organisations.
- Service Level Agreements were important between partners. However, it was reported that one partner was expected to deliver service beyond what was agreed with HC and this had the potential to cause friction and a loss of trust. This was only overcome because the Board of the organisation had confidence in the HC CLL representative who worked to resolve the situation in a satisfactory way.
- The staff and parents of Grantown Primary school worked with the CLL Arts Officer to support a music project (community capacity building).

Partners were involved in the decision making process. They described this as democratic, where each was treated as an equal. Partners spoke about how their own particular organisational structures related to partnership decision making.

- Partnerships worked together to identify and source funding
- Service Level Agreements were mutually agreed
- The roles of partners are mutually agreed
- There is a long history of partnership working in the area.

Partners identified a number of organisations which they worked with. They felt that the advantage of working in a small community was that communication; personal working relationships and informal links could be established and maintained. Informal

partnerships allowed partners to consult each other and seek ideas and advice as well as learning from others' experience.

Working partnerships included the following organisations:

- Highland Council
- Voluntary Sector
- Highland Health Board
- Careers Scotland
- Enterprise Network
- Church
- Local businesses
- Wildlife Centre

Partners felt they were making a difference and having a positive impact on their local communities. They identified funding and training as two important components in allowing them to do more through partnership working.

- AALP – working with small businesses / ECDL / ESOL for inward migrant workers – to improve individuals' skills
- Through Learndirect individuals could access personal funding (ILA) / allowed more choice through extension of courses available
- Age range of participants extended
- More learning opportunities in rural areas
- Impact on children – importance of giving them a sense of pride, self-esteem, and sense of heritage
- Community ownership and identity
- Welcoming environment for learning
- Extended opportunities for training through partnership
- Partners shared information about training opportunities which led to cross-organisational participation e.g. Disclosure Scotland Training
- Support for applications for funding bids (community capacity building)

Partners said they were proactive in all elements of CLD programme delivery and celebration.

- In the writing of applications for funding bids
- Hosting celebrations – recognising learners' / organisations achievements
- Links at local community level
- Mutual support of partners
- Recruiting volunteers – partners felt it was easier to recruit and train volunteers to actively participate in and deliver elements of CLD programmes than to have them sit on committees. This could be because of the legal responsibilities and lack of training in committee skills. This is a community capacity building issue.

- The sustainability of relying on volunteers to deliver CLD provision was also mentioned.
- HC was seen as a “vital partner”. Its support could have a “massive Impact” on provision. One partner voiced the view that the Council had a moral responsibility to support communities which went beyond statutory requirements.
 - Local community should be empowered – a statutory partner was needed to ensure this happened.

6. OBSERVATIONS

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

It is recommended that:

- The Peer Process is fully explained to partners in written form as well as through personal contact (visit / phone call). It is emphasised that this is an invitation and will not affect the partnership or funding in a negative way if they are unable to attend. The positive aspects of the Peer Review process need to be emphasised with sufficient notice given to partners in future.

There is scope for improvement in a few areas particularly:

- The ICT and clerical support needs of staff need further attention within the resources available.
- There is a need to develop new Partnerships for the area and to firm up arrangements and definitions with some existing ones. Greater use of clearly defined SLAs is recommended.
- There is a clear need to up date needs analysis information for the Area and to use new information to plan future work and programmes.
- Work with partners delivering Adult Learning opportunities is encouraged – a major omission of this Review was not being able to meet Adult Learners/participants, this is not acceptable.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1

‘The overall impression is that Badenoch & Strathspey is moving forward and generally delivering a good service. Overall, staff are working hard, are committed and enthusiastic. 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: 28th November, 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 Badenoch & Strathspey 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 Badenoch & Strathspey CLL Manager and Officer for their efforts and organisation in enabling this Peer Review to take place.

Appendix One

Badenoch & Strathspey Peer Review

Scoping Notes

The notes below are a very brief summary of scoping discussions and agreements for the Badenoch & Strathspey Peer Review:

- The Review will follow similar process to the Lochaber Peer Review and will be based on HGIOCLD2
- The Peer Review Team will be led by John O’Kane and comprise at least Helen Allan (Caithness), David Linton (Skye & Lochalsh), Pablo Mascarenhas and Barry Northedge – more staff may be added as needed in agreement with the Area.
- The Review will require the team to suggest grades for the QIs covered
- The process will be closer to an ‘in-house inspection’, this is necessitated by the transition from HGIOCLD1 to HGIOCLD2
- The QIs to be covered are:
 1. 2.1 – Impact on participants
 2. 3.1 – Impact on paid and voluntary staff
 3. 4.1 – Impact on the local community
 4. 4.2 Impact on the wider community
 5. 5.1 – Opportunities for people in the community
 6. 5.9 – Inclusion, equality and fairness
 7. 8.1 – Partnership working
- A key part of the process will be the Focus Groups in addition to the review of evidence.
- Focus Groups will be organised by Ivor/Mags to cover:
 1. Staff working with Adults (Kingussie)
 2. Staff working with Young People (Kingussie)
 3. Adult participants (x2 – Grantown & Kingussie)
 4. Young People (x2 – Grantown & Kingussie)
 5. Partners (Kingussie?)
 6. Community Group reps. (Kingussie?)
 7. Area Management Team (Kingussie?)
- There should be opportunity to visit practice built in to the programme – Ivor/Mags to arrange.
- Accommodation will be either Mags office or an adjoining office for October 25/6th – Ivor/Mags to arrange.
- Barry to attend staff meeting on Friday 6th October, 10.00am. to 1.00pm. at Kingussie to brief staff on HGIO2 and the Peer Review.
- Mags/Ivor to try to identify suitable overnight accommodation for the team on October 25th.
- Mags to lead the next Peer Review at Ross & Cromarty on December 6/7/8th.

Pre-visit Information/Documentary Evidence

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

Could the following examples of evidence be provided:

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 work plans 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 as soon as available.

Proposed timetable for peer review meetings 25th October 2006

Time	Group	Proposed venue some still to be confirmed			
9.30-10.30	Area management Staff YP Staff adult	Office by station Youth Room Ruthven Room			BN/JO'K PM/HA JS/DL
11.00 12.00	- Partners	Youth Room			JS/DL
11.30-12.30 1.30-2.30	Young People Adult participants	Grantown Town House Grantown Grammar	Grammar Town House		BN/JO'K BN/JO'K
2.30-3.30	Adult Participants	Kingussie or Aviemore	Youth Room		JS/DL
3.30-4.30	Young People	Kingussie High			PM/HA
6.30-7.30	Part time youth staff	Ruthven room Badenoch Centre	McDonald	Highland	PM/HA
7.00-8.00	Community Groups	Aviemore	Resort		BN/JO'K

Possible practice visits

25-Oct Learning centres Grantown/ Kingussie/ Aviemore may have classes on
 25-Oct 7.30pm Kingussie Youth club in Youth Room
 25-Oct 7.30pm Grantown Grammar Leisure Centre management Committee Meeting
 BN/JO'K - Barry Northedge and John O'Kane
 PM/HA - Pablo Mascarenhas and Helen Allan
 JS/DL - Julie Simmons and David Linton

Appendix Two

Review Team

David Linton - Area Libraries Officer, Skye & Lochalsh

Julie Simmons - Adult Literacies Strategy Officer, Highland

Pablo Mascarenhas - Principal Youth Officer, Highland

Helen Allan - CLL Officer, Caithness

John O'Kane - CLL Manager, Lochaber

Barry Northedge - Principal Community Learning & Development Officer, Highland

Appendix Three

Recommendations for Future Reviews

All previous recommendations are accepted and endorsed.

Scoping of future Peer Reviews should involve the full Peer Review Team if possible and should take place in the Area to be reviewed.

Supportive information should be available at the time of scoping or as soon after as is practicable with as much of this information electronic to enable this to be shared with the team.

Future Review Teams should ideally comprise six team members if meaningful reviews are to be conducted.

Larger geographic and demographic areas might require more time to be spent conducting the review.