

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	EDU/34/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Education

Date: 19 November 2025

Report Title: Community Learning and Development (CLD) Annual Report 2024-2025

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Highland Council as Education Authority has the legal responsibility for the planning and delivery of Community Learning and Development (CLD) and for ensuring that this takes place within a Community Planning context.

This report seeks to update members on the delivery of year one of the Highland Community Learning and Development Plan 2024-2027.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the progress, including key delivery achievements, made in year one of the Highland Community Learning and Development Plan 2024-2027.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - The requirements for the CLD Plan are delivered within the existing resources of the Community Planning Partnership.
- 3.2 Legal - There is a legal duty on the Highland Council to develop a three-year CLD plan.
- 3.3 Risk, Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - There are no new risks arising from this report.
- 3.4 Gaelic - The CLD team links with Gaelic CLD Officer to ensure that Gaelic requirements are met.

4. Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Overview

5.1 Legislation and Expectations

The Highland Council has a statutory duty, as set-out in [The Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#), to publish a Community Learning and Development (CLD) plan every three years describing how they will co-ordinate and secure “adequate and efficient” CLD provision with other sector partners. This report presents the progress made in year 1 of the 3-year plan (2024-2027)

- 5.2 CLD work in Scotland is guided by the [Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development 2012](#) document and underpinned in legislation through [The Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#); and supports the achievement of the following national policy goals:

- to ensure communities across Scotland – particularly those which are disadvantaged – have access to the CLD support they need;
- to strengthen coordination between the full range of CLD providers and respond appropriately to the expectations set by the CLD Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development 2012 (Scottish Government);
- to reinforce the role of communities and learners in assessment, planning and evaluation processes, enabling them to shape local CLD provision, and;
- to articulate the important role and contribution of CLD and make more visible.

- 5.3 The Context for CLD in 2024-2027 is guided by the Scottish Government [Community Learning and Development Plans: Guidance for 2024-2027](#) which emphasises that plans should be developed and reported through Community Planning Partnerships.

Plans should acknowledge the existence of the [Independent Review of Community Learning and Development](#) in the preparation and content of their 2024-2027 CLD plan. This may include things such as:

- Carrying forward much of the content of their existing 2021-2024 plans and only reflecting significant changes which have impacted communities and learners;
- Considering the level of learner and partner consultation appropriate to the level of updates made to the plans at this time.

6. Community Learning and Development Plan (CLD) Annual Report 2024-2025

6.1 Development of the Highland CLD Plan 2024-2027

In May 2024 the CLD Partnership undertook a review of all available

- Community Partnership led locality plans
- Adult Learner voice in Community Needs Analyses
- Youth voice in Youth Forums using the Place Standard tool

- Highland Youth Parliament members' voice
- CLD Operational Group members consultation and data workshop
- CLD Partnership self-evaluation

The Highland CLD Plan does not seek to outline all proposed CLD activity to be undertaken in Highland. The following priorities arrived at by partners are the focus of collaboration.

CLD Priority	CLD Outcomes
Mental Health and Wellbeing	CLD Learners experience improved mental health and wellbeing
Voice, Inclusion and Participation	CLD Learners increase their ability to influence change
Digital Inclusion	CLD learners experience increased inclusion in digital life
Employment, Volunteering and Training	CLD Learners progress towards and into economic independence where appropriate
Community Development and Resilience	CLD facilitates increased community capacity & resilience in communities most affected by inequalities
Aligning Partnership Practices	Improved partnership working through shared workforce development
Climate and Social Justice	Increased knowledge and understanding of the impact of climate change on marginalised and/or disadvantaged communities

***Appendix 1** provides a summary of the progress made against the priorities in Year 1 of the CLD Plan 2024-2027.

6.2 How the plan is delivered

The ambitions set out in the plan are delivered through the 9 Community Partnership CLD delivery partners. The Highland CLD governance structures provide an opportunity for partners to come together to plan, deliver and evaluate CLD provision using the strategic priorities as a framework.

6.3 Key CLD Partnership Achievements in Year One of the CLD Plan 2024-2027

- **Mental Health & Wellbeing**
 - Black Isle Youth Development holistic approach to Mental Health & Wellbeing where Youth Work and School are at the heart of the community and the community is at the heart of the school.
- **Voice, Inclusion & Participation**
 - Celebrates the "Sharing Food, Sharing Languages" Refugee Festival which brought together new Scots and host communities to promote diversity, cross-cultural understanding and connect people through shared interests and passions.
- **Digital Inclusion**
 - Red Chair Highland demonstrates how tackling digital exclusion has an empowering effect on individuals that has changed lives, created

opportunities and strengthened communities across Highland as testament to the power of collaboration, dedication and innovation in the digital space.

- **Employment, Volunteering and Training**
 - 295 young people supported through mentoring into positive destinations that included employment, apprenticeships, further/higher education, achieving a qualification or setting up their own social enterprise.
- **Community Development & Resilience**
 - New Start Highland celebrates its 25th year with the construction of Scotland's first Training and Reuse Village in Inverness. The expected 40 new trainee and employment opportunities will help to support people who experience crisis including poverty, homelessness, mental health issues, social isolation and long-term unemployment.
- **Aligning Partnership Practices / Workforce Development**
 - 13 additional Highland Council staff achieved Community Learning Accredited Awards as a result of the successful CLD Standards Council Developmental Approval process for 3 Awards accredited at SCQF Level 6 for Youth work, Adult Learning and Teaching ESOL.
- **Climate and Social Justice**
 - High Life Highland's award-winning Countryside Rangers make lives better for 97% of people who engage with their environmental service through community-based learning in nature. Enjoy reading the [report](#) about Highland's Green Libraries and a giant Blue Whale!

7. Next Steps

- 7.1
 - The CLD Strategic Group will continue to support the operational delivery partners in addressing the outstanding issues in the 2024 HMle progress visit report to ensure continuous improvement for the CLD Partnership.
 - The CLD Strategic Group will continue to provide direction for the operational delivery partners to implement the new CLD governance throughout the period of the 2024-2027 CLD Plan
 - The CLD Strategic Group will continue to build a strong Partnership to support the delivery of CLD actions for Year 2 of the Highland CLD plan 2024-2027 as previously approved by members.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 7 November 2025

Author: Mark Richardson, Principal Adult Learning and Youth Work Manager,

Background Papers: n/a

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Community Learning and Development (CLD) Annual Report 2024-25



Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas
Dealbhadh
Coimhearsnachd
na Gàidhealtachd

Community Learning and Development (CLD) Annual Report 2024-25



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Introduction

Welcome to the CLD Annual Report 2024-2025. This report provides information and insight into CLD activity across Highland during year 1 of the Highland CLD Plan 2024-2027 <https://highlandcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CLD-Plan-2024-2027.pdf> CLD continues to be a key professional discipline which contributes to the overarching work of Community Planning Partners to reduce inequalities. This takes place through the provision, coordination and development of: Adult Learning, Youth Work and Community Development.

CLD is an educational practice. This is reflected in the statutory setting for the profession being rooted in the Education Scotland Act (1980) and CLD Regulations Scotland (2013). In the last year The Highland Council (THC), as the responsible organisation for CLD in the area, insourced the Adult Learning and Youth Work teams that had been employed by High Life Highland (HLH) since its inception in 2011. This has been a significant improvement action which is enabling closer working between CLD staff and colleagues in schools and employability as a single, Education and Learning service.

With over 100 individual staff coming on board as THC employees on 01/12/2024 the successful completion of this work was both a challenge and a key achievement in year 2 for both THC and HLH. However, the most potent achievements in CLD remain at the point where learners and front-line practitioners (including volunteers) meet each other and learn together. This is where learning changes lives and improves life chances for the better. This report aims to provide a reflective summary of that work over the last year: what we did, why we did it, how it's progressing and what we plan to do next.

Step Forward Wick Youth Journey to London

Young people, supported by youth workers, set out to raise enough money to take a trip to London. Most of them had never been on holiday, travelled to a city, flown on a plane, or used the likes of the underground or sleeper trains. They organised events, raising £13,000 in total. The experience exposed them individually to many firsts, including flying, theatre visits, and using escalators.

Above: Building confidence through new experiences.



Key Achievements

Service Delivery: Key measures 2024-2025

The Highland Council Community Learning Team – Service KPIs - (Adult Learning and Youth Work)



104,196 meaningful contacts with lifelong learners in communities



203,096 learning hours taken up by adults and young people across Highland



1,235 qualifications gained by learners in the community (with over 400 SCQF accredited)



28 different SQA Awards offered including; employability / volunteering / wellbeing / ESOL



Over 150 partner organisations worked across 29 Associated School Groups.

Key Achievements – Practice Spotlight 1: CLD supporting Asylum Seekers and Refugees

“Sharing Food, Sharing Languages” was an event organised by the The Highland Council Adult Learning in partnership with migrant and refugee learning communities. The event took place at Eden Court, Inverness on 22 June from 12pm-2pm and was part of Refugee Week Scotland; the largest arts and culture festival, celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary.

The event brought together over 200 people from New Scots and host Communities to celebrate “milestones”, the theme for this year’s event. The key purpose was to promote diversity and cross- cultural understanding and connect people through shared interests and passions. It also provided a platform to ensure marginalised communities could be express themselves through art.

Learners were able to showcase their diverse skills, expertise, history and culture. Voices were heard and represented through stories, song, and poetry. Participants were invited to take part in creative workshops including Ukrainian embroidery and the art of writing different scripts. There were unique language tasters led by native speakers of Pashto, Dari, Arabic, Ukrainian and Turkish and a multicultural Storytime for families. Wonderful performances from Cheryl Heggie’s Highland dancers and Mriya Ukrainian Children’s Choir, from Aberdeen, created a rich immersive cultural experience. To top it all off, there were delicious traditional dishes to try from Ukraine, Eritrea, South Sudan and Afghanistan.

Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive: *“Amazing event, good for the soul, thank you.”* (adult learner).

“The children and musicians from Ukraine played old Ukrainian songs and they were very professional. At the end my mum enjoyed speaking with two other Ukrainians her own age. I met some people from my country and enjoyed it” (adult learner)



Key Achievements: *Service Developments*

THC Youth Work and Adult Learning made significant quality assurance improvements this year. These included:

The Highland Council Community Learning Team – Service Development



Improved Workforce Development: CLD Standards Council Approval for our practitioner qualifications in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), Youth Work and Adult Learning.



14 Community Learning Needs analyses in place: co-produced with learners and other stakeholders. This work applied Education Scotland training received in the previous year.



Over 500 young people completed a Place Planning Tool consultation in partnership with THC Place Planning Team – the results have been used in the development of Place Plans since.



Highland Adult Learning Development Group – published their first joint newsletter marking progress in their development and readiness now for shared planning and evaluation of adult learning ahead.

Key Achievements – Practice Spotlight 2: CLD Standards Council Approval for Staff / Practitioner Qualifications

The Highland Council Adult and Youth Service received CLD Standards Council developmental approval for 3 in-house SCQF Level 6 qualifications.

1. SQA National Progression Award in Youth Work (SCQF level 6)
2. SQA Professional Development Award: Introduction to Tutoring ESOL (SCQF level 6)
3. SQA Professional Development Award: Adult Learning in Scotland: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)

Education Committee Chair, Cllr John Finlayson said: *“The Highland Council is delighted to be the first local authority in Scotland to receive CLD Standard Council developmental approval for learning opportunities at SCQF level 6. “Retention, development and expanding our local skilled ‘Workforce for the Future’ portfolio aligns with the Council’s Our Future Highland Delivery Plan”*

What does this mean for CLD career pathways in Highland?

The CLD Standards Council endorsement of the 3 qualifications, offers an opportunity for people to begin a career in Community Learning & Development (CLD), to develop and grow our own workforce across Highland, opening a pathway towards a professional CLD qualification. It is hoped that this opportunity builds on and strengthens the work of CLD in Highland and the essential role that CLD practitioners contribute across our Highland communities. Feedback from the CLD Standards Council, as the awarding professional body, included:

- *We commend the obvious value that Highland Council has placed on learning and the dedicated investment of this learning which is being provided to staff and volunteers.*
- *The support on offer to all levels of staff & volunteers to access the learning and development opportunities with the aim of broadening the offer to the third-sector partners is inspiring.*



- **15 staff / volunteers completing SQA National Progression Award in Youth Work (SCQF level 6)**
- **10 staff / volunteers completing SQA Professional Development Award: Adult Learning in Scotland: An Introduction (SCQF level 6)**
- **8 staff / volunteers completing SQA Professional Development Award: Introduction to Tutoring ESOL (SCQF level 6)**
- **Next steps – support other organisations to access these training opportunities to develop sector capacity.**

The Highland Council Community Development

Community Asset Transfers – 5 full applications received during 2024-25 (2 supported / 3 still to be determined). 5 applications were approved which had been received prior to 2024 – [Community asset transfer | Community asset transfer | The Highland Council](#)

Area Place Plans – one of the main areas of activity during 2024-25, 8 plans were finalised and adopted, after working with communities in a range of settings including workshops, focus groups, attendance at others' events and on-line. These plans indicate to funders and service providers where the communities wish investment made and services delivered.

Community Regeneration Fund – working hard to encourage and enable communities to develop their projects, the CRF team disbursed grant funding across Highland communities of £979,645 (revenue) and £444,790 (capital)

Playparks – the amenities team has played a leading role in working with communities across Highland to identify the most appropriate play provision for their area. In the South Highland area around 25 playparks were discussed with communities to best understand their needs and for those communities to choose the equipment most wanted / suitable. *See Case Study on Whin Park.*

Key Achievements: Practice Spotlight 3: Whin Park – Play Provision in Practice

Whin Park Play Area is a much loved play park in Inverness. Although well used, the equipment was beginning to show signs of wear and it was becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to repair. A funding package was put together which saw around £500,000 of investment go into the site.

To make sure the equipment and the area was what the communities and users were wanting, a large-scale consultation was undertaken using face to face sessions and questionnaires. Ultimately there was a Highland wide vote with 2,817 taking part. As a result of this close working with communities the new interactive play equipment can be enjoyed by all ages and abilities. Inclusivity is key part of the Council's Playpark Strategy and this new equipment provides an excellent offering whilst ensuring that play is for all.

The redeveloped park opened in April 2025 with new features including: an interactive Nessie, Legend Seeker Playship, swing area, climbing birds' nest, an adventure mound with tube slide, scramble net and interactive arch. The Sona dance and play arch is an audio-based piece of equipment made for the outdoors which utilises the latest technology and a range of games to encourage children to be more active outdoors.



Key Achievements: Highland CLD Partners

The key role of CLD Partners in the 3rd Sector



Youth Highland now support over 160 member organisations of the Highland Voluntary Youth Network

Find out more here: <https://youthhighland.org.uk/Article/6>



Highland Third Sector Interface developed and launched The Highland Volunteer Academy .

Find out more here: <https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/volunteer-academy>



Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund 2025 Year 4 – 47 projects awarded £714,076 funding.

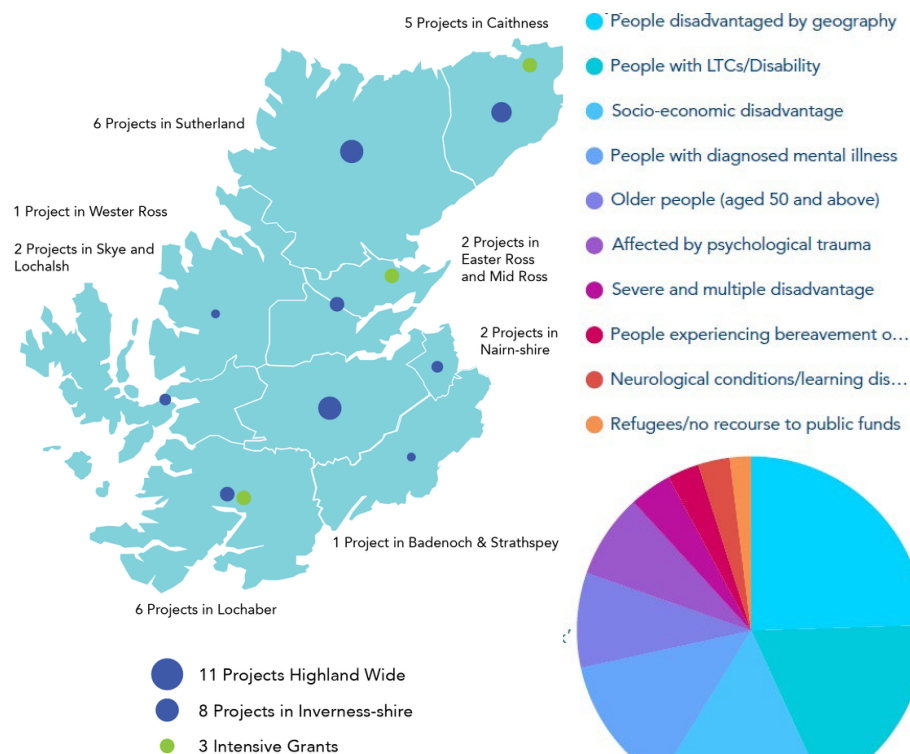
To find out more: see following case study

Key Achievements: Practice Spotlight 4: Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (2024).

Established in 2021, the Scottish Government Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund (CMH&WF) has been a valuable funding asset to communities in Highland over the past 4 years with 284 separate grants being awarded to 260 organisations, with a total investment exceeding £3,088,000. The grants have supported a wide range of activities for adults aged 16 and above, showcasing various approaches to enhance community wellbeing, build capacity and resilience within the sector and prevent individuals from reaching crisis point. In **2024-25**, out of the 123 applications received totalling £2,264,251, **47 projects were awarded £714,076** funding. This year the grants were made up of:

- **Small Grants (up to £10k) totalling £282,341**
- **Large Grants (up to £50k) totalling £368,841**
- **Capacity Grants (£20k) totalling £62,892**

Area	Total per Area
Badenoch & Strathspey	£6,802
Skye & Lochalsh	£51,066
Caithness	£63,851
Inverness-shire	£137,784
Lochaber	£115,619
Sutherland	£50,525
East Ross / Mid Ross	£80,401
Nairnshire	£29,470
Wester Ross	£10,000
Highland-Wide	£168,556



The full report can be accessed here: [Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund Year 4 Report](#)

A short break from words – case studies of CLD projects by many partners can be found at the below link:

[Community Participation | Highland Community Planning Partnership](#) **Summary Analysis and Evaluation of 2024-2025**



A review of the 2024 – 2027 CLD Plan, delivery and governance has increased efficiency for the coming year(s). CLD governance has been streamlined with delivery groups for Adult Learning, Youth Work and Community Development now directly reporting to the CLD Strategic group. This improves the CLD governance by increasing an operational delivery focus that is rooted more clearly in, and reports more directly on, the CLD plan itself.

The insourcing of Adult Learning and Youth Work functions from HLH was a significant undertaking and inevitably pulled on various resources in both organisations to achieve. However, the investment has already increased shared planning and evaluation within a unified Education and Learning service. An example of this is agreements between schools and CLD about a consistent, partnership based, learning offer and level of service. This is further supported by the findings of Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD). The full findings can be viewed at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/learning-life-report-independent-review-community-learning-development-cld/>

HMle CLD Inspection is broadly positive with 2 improvement items required – The full report can be viewed for reference at: <https://education.gov.scot/inspection-and-review/find-an-inspection-report/find-an-inspection-report/details?id=5304> .

- 1. Relationships between a few youth work providers should be developed and improved to address current issues and support the planned Youth Work Providers Network.*
- 2. Joint self-evaluation across CLD partners should be further developed to include opportunities to involve partner agencies in the development of the new CLD Plan.*

After evaluating the required written progress report from Highland in June 2025, HMle confirmed that they wish to see further improvement in these 2 areas and will review progress again in February 26.

The number of learners engaging with CLD provision is stable at pre-covid levels with over 200 adult learners and 1,800 young people typically engaging on a weekly basis. Additionally, a large body of CLD work is delivered by the third sector with both THC funded and unfunded partners. CLD partners represent this work where possible through case and impact studies. To see more click on the link to view our library / archive of CLD work [Community Participation | Highland Community Planning Partnership](#) Providing an accurate indicator of participation in CLD across all sectors remains challenging due to the variety and nature of a multitude of funding sources and organisational settings.

Communicating what CLD is and why it's important to wider audiences is challenging. The diversity and dispersal of CLD practice remains a strength and a weakness. It supports reach, innovation and flexibility at the same time as inhibiting complete mapping / reporting of contribution, quality assurance and shared stakeholder understanding of CLD. The THC Adult Learning team have made positive developments in the use of

learner led video testimony to support improved communication and direct voice for learners. This could develop further across CLD partners to increase CLD awareness. An example can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyFLL28jDzQ>

The role of Third Sector partners in delivering CLD remains vital with partners providing learning and capacity building projects across the region with communities, both of geography and interest. Cross sector partnerships between statutory and voluntary providers in the field of Youth Work, require further improvement, as reflected by HMIE recent inspection findings. The development of Pan Highland and Associated School Groups based youth work networks is now taking place as a priority: improvement work has commenced and will continue throughout 2025-26 academic session and CLD plan year 2.

Unmet need – Certain pressing issues require a revisiting of CLD priorities in year 2 of the plan delivery – practitioner and learner feedback suggests that a cumulative set of socio-economic pressures are creating more need for CLD interventions to support more people to experience a basic level of wellbeing and the benefits of financial independence. These include: Poverty, Cost of living, Food insecurity, Social media, Exploitation, Grooming, Rural depopulation, Discrimination, Connectivity, and Transport. There is a case for greater acknowledgement of CLD family learning as a distinct and growing field of practice that offers intergenerational impact and therefore efficiency and an opportunity to contribute towards the goals of ending the cycle of poverty. Nationally, a crisis in the provision of ESOL is recognised and live with COSLA recently surveying schools and CLD on the problem recently. The tension between equity of access to CLD and higher levels of need in communities with poorer outcomes is ever present.

“Through embroidery, we carry our culture, our grief, and our hope.”



“Embroidery in Ukraine is not just decoration; it is a language. Every region has its own symbols, colours, and stories passed down through generations. It’s how we remember who we are.” Nadiia Yatchenko

Forward Planning and Strategic Direction

Three overarching national outcomes for CLD have been articulated for the sector by the CLD Managers Scotland group:

- CLD Outcome 1: CLD participants have increased skills and knowledge
- CLD Outcome 2: CLD participants have improved mental health and wellbeing
- CLD Outcome 3: Community groups have strengthened their capacity to address their own priorities and make decisions about their own communities

In year 2 of the Highland CLD Plan (2025-2026) these three existing national priorities will be considered by CLD governance groups along with current regional data. The groups themselves (Adult Learning, Youth Work and Community Development) will use relevant data in this context to co-create and deliver a shared programme of work which will, in turn, lead to improved joint evaluation in the CLD in Highland. Reporting will be directly linked to the CLD Strategic group on a quarterly basis.

CLD will continue, through the above framework, to contribute to the THC “Our Future Highland” administration programme 2022-2027. In particular CLD work is a key tool in creating the outcomes of a “Fair and Caring Highland and “Resilient and Sustainable Communities”.

Mini case study



[Lochview Rural Training centre](#) is a charity based on a croft near Lairg with acres of land, farm animals and machinery, growing areas, a polytunnel and a learning cabin. They create meaningful land-based activities and training to any individual or group of students in a relaxed, happy atmosphere. Lochview Rural Training believe in the therapeutic value of working outdoors and being around animals, which has been shown to reduce stress, resulting in better physical and mental wellbeing.

“During my time at Loch View, I've had the opportunity to gain valuable experience as a volunteer that I would not have found elsewhere.” Alex

Conclusion

Year 1 of the 2024 – 2027 CLD Plan was a period of significant structural change. However, the continuity of front-line provision for communities, by HLH and THC staff and partners, was maintained throughout. This confirms a shared commitment among all providers to the first of the CLD code of 12 ethics:

Primary client – “Our primary client (our ‘constituent’) is the individual, group or community with whom we engage. We will ensure that the interests of the constituents we work with are at the centre of everything we do in our work. We will not seek to advance ourselves, our organisations or others, personally, politically or professionally, at the expense of our constituents.” (CLD Standards Council – 2017)

A sizable **“thank you”** goes out to all the front-line informal educators who provide the CLD learning opportunities needed. Everything else we do in CLD remains in service of those learning encounters in communities, as this is where positive change through learning takes place, whether at individual, family or community level.

CLD in Highland is at a positive and pivotal moment as we lean into year 2 of the 2024 – 2027 CLD Plan delivery.

The foundations for the required improvements in partnership working and shared evaluation are now in place. The updated governance and delivery groups are ready to enable these improvements to take root and grow.

A more equitable set of conditions for the CLD community of practice, across sectors, are now in place to drive positive partnership working across all three CLD field disciplines. This will include a collaborative approach to increasing overall sector resource.

The distinct educational approach of CLD continues to be an important part of the CPP-wide efforts to reduce inequalities in Highland and we now look forward to the work of delivering the CLD Plan year 2025-26.