Argyll and Bute Community Learning and Development Partnership

Annual Report 2025 -2026





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Welcome from the Chair

As Chair of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Partnership, I am pleased to present our 2025-2026 report, highlighting the progress we have made together and our priorities for the year ahead.

Throughout the past year, partners across Argyll and Bute have continued to work collaboratively to deliver high-quality learning and development opportunities that support individuals, families, and communities. Alongside progressing our planned actions, we have responded to emerging local needs, strengthened partnerships, and expanded opportunities for participation, learning, and community engagement.

Community Learning and Development is an inclusive approach that supports lifelong learning, personal development, and active citizenship for people of all ages, with a particular focus on those facing disadvantage, inequality, or barriers to participation. This report showcases the impact of our collective efforts, highlighting key achievements, outcomes, and examples of how CLD has empowered people and communities across Argyll and Bute.

Within this report, you will find our vision, values, strategic priorities, and a range of case studies demonstrating the positive difference CLD makes in people's lives. The achievements outlined reflect the dedication of our partners, staff, volunteers, and communities, and reinforce our shared commitment to creating inclusive, resilient, and thriving communities through learning and development.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on supporting lifelong learning, reducing inequalities, and enabling communities to shape their own futures. Together, we will continue to build on the strong foundations established across Argyll and Bute and work towards sustainable, positive change for all.

Paul Ashworth

Chair CLD Strategic Partnership



Our Vision and Values

Vision: "Working together to improve lives across Argyll and Bute by empowering individuals and communities to lead sustainable, fulfilling and happy lives through continuous learning, cooperative problem solving and removing barriers to engagement, health and wellbeing."

Values: The CLD Partnership has adopted the principles, values, ethics and competencies set out by the CLD Standards Council for Scotland. The principles that underpin CLD practice are:

Empowerment - increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence matters affecting them and their communities.

Participation - supporting people to take part in decision making;

Inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination - recognising some people need additional support to overcome the barriers they face.

Self – determination - supporting the right of people to make their own choices.

Partnership - ensuring resources and the range of skills and capabilities available are used effectively.

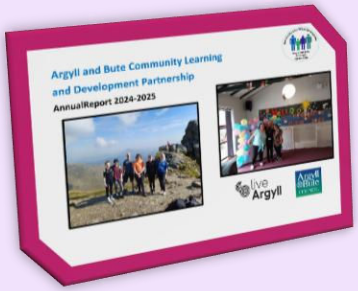


Roles and Responsibilities of the Partnership

Key Roles (Summary)

- Plan Oversight: Develop, implement, monitor, and report on the CLD Plan with risk management.
- Strategic Alignment: Ensure priorities match local and national plans; avoid duplication.
- Data-Driven Decisions: Share, analyse, and use data to identify gaps and guide planning.
- Collaboration & Resources: Promote partnership working and resource sharing.
- Operational Delivery: Set up workstream groups for effective local and operational implementation.
- Evaluation & Improvement: Regularly review the plan, responding to learner needs; foster self-evaluation.
- Communication & Profile: Highlight partnership work, celebrate successes, and engage stakeholders.
- Good Practice: Identify and share examples of effective practice.
- Quality Assurance: Support inspections and other CLD quality measures.









Performance A Year in Numbers 2025 -2026

250

Training courses accessed on the TSI online learning platform (**137** registered users)

102

Community and third sector groups supported to secure funding

270

Activities delivered by Community Development Officers with community groups

566

Adults engaging per month in learning activities and programmes

665

Community groups receiving capacity-building support

598

Young people (12-19) engaging per month in learning activities

154

Refugees and asylum seekers participating across **14** ESOL courses

70

Volunteers working across liveArgyll services

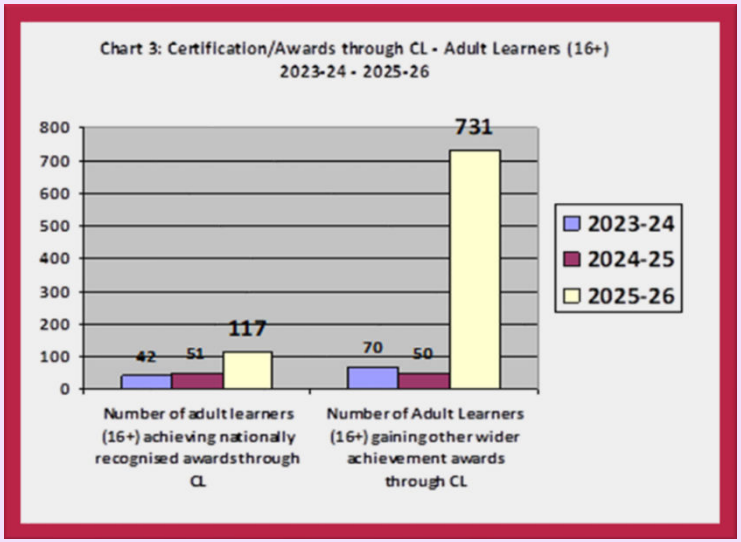
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People supported through positive destination volunteering placements and mentoring

Performance continued

Improved recording of online learning for Adult Learners

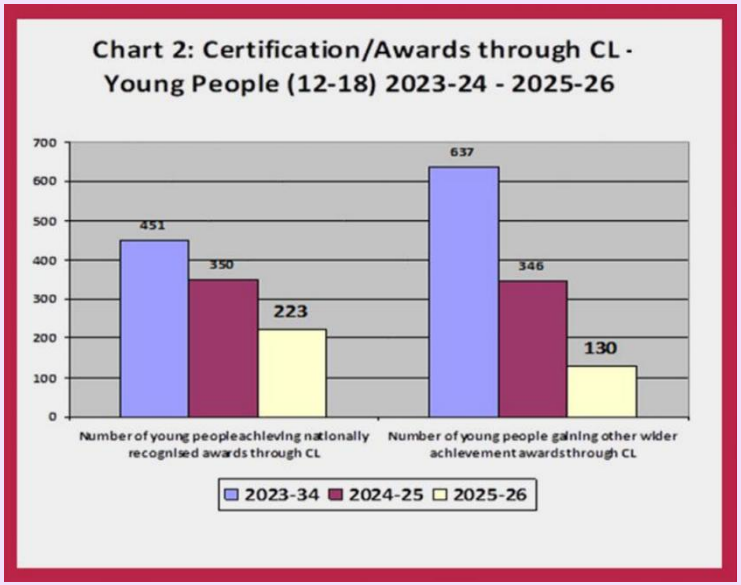
The figures demonstrate an increase in formal accreditation. This is a result of an expansion in Adult Learning pathways. Examples include new Adult Achievement Awards, Personal Development Awards in Adult Learning qualifications and SCQF Leadership Awards for Adult Learners. There has also been a significant increase in Adult Learning wider achievement certification from 2024/2025, reflecting increased engagement and improved recording of online learning activity through the new *Learn My Way* reporting system utilised by the CL Adult Learning team.



Supporting Young People to Achieve across various Award Programmes

The figures represent a decrease on previous years in accreditation and in wider achievement facilitated by Community Learning. This can be attributed to a number of factors:

- Some local Community Learning Youth Leads are part time, leading to a reduced capacity to engage with schools.
- A separate Third Sector agency has responsibility for No One Left Behind funding and CL engagement in this context is not recorded here.
- Alternative learning pathways for young people who would previously have engaged with Community Learning, such as Flexible Learning Plans.
- Some schools have been less effective than others in involving CL in 16 Plus meetings to plan pathways for young people most at risk of disengagement and not attaining a positive destination.



Partly through ongoing CL support, schools themselves have increased their capacity to offer Wider Achievement accreditation, increasing in-school engagement and attainment, and meaning smaller pupil referrals by schools to Community Learning. In some cases, schools have had the capacity to take on delivery of accreditation previously delivered by Community Learning. Although such certification is now recorded to the schools, thus increasing schools' and the Local Authority's overall attainment statistics, CL Youth Leads still support provision and assessment delivery.

FEATURE: Your Voice - Argyll and Bute Youth Action Council (ABYAC)

In November 2025, the **Argyll and Bute Youth Action Council (ABYAC)** was formally launched as a new youth-led framework for participation and civic engagement across Argyll and Bute. ABYAC was developed in direct response to feedback from young people who consistently expressed a desire for a youth voice structure that genuinely represented them, reflected their diverse local communities, and enabled them to influence the decisions that affect their lives and futures



ABYAC is a collective of local Youth Action Councils operating across various areas in Argyll and Bute bringing together young people aged 11 to 18 to identify local priorities, influence decision-making and drive positive change within their communities. The model was designed by young people themselves following previous experiences where participation opportunities were often perceived as adult-led and insufficiently responsive to youth views. As a result, ABYAC was created as a youth-friendly, youth-led approach that places power, ownership and decision-making in the hands of young people.

The establishment of ABYAC aligns closely with the principles of **Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, which states that children and young people have the right to express their views and have those views taken seriously in decisions that affect them. The launch also supports the implementation of the **UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024**, strengthening opportunities for young people to participate meaningfully in local democracy and service design.



The overarching vision of ABYAC is to create a sustainable and representative youth voice framework through which young people can:

- Influence local and strategic decision-making.
- Identify issues affecting young people in their communities.
- Develop solutions and share recommendations with decision-makers.
- Shape services, policies and opportunities that impact their lives.
- Promote inclusive participation and youth leadership.
- Strengthen trust, accountability and engagement between young people and public services.

A key feature of the model is its commitment to meaningful participation. Through locally led meetings, formal Youth Action Council sittings and Youth Voice Ambassadors, young people determine priorities, set agendas, lead discussions and decide how they engage with organisations. The model also requires participating services and decision makers to demonstrate how young people's views have been considered and acted upon, helping to reduce tokenistic consultation and build confidence in the participation process

ABYAC represents a significant step forward in youth participation across Argyll and Bute, providing a collective platform through which young people can ensure that the issues that matter most to them, their communities, opportunities, wellbeing and future aspirations are heard, understood and acted upon. Through this approach, young people are not only contributing to decision-making but are actively helping to shape the future of Argyll and Bute.



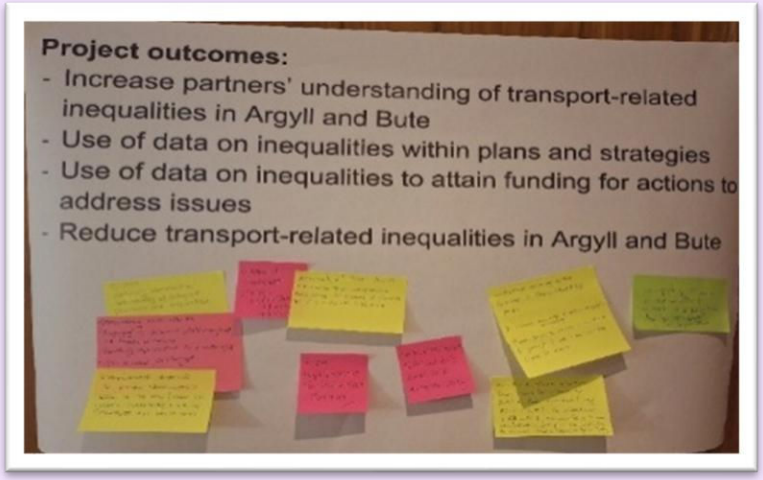
Community Planning Partnership: Developing the Priority Outcome Actions Through Community Voice and Empowerment

From community-identified priorities to community-informed action

Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership (CPP) has taken a collaborative and community-centred approach to developing the actions that will deliver the priorities set out in the Argyll and Bute Outcomes Improvement Plan (ABOIP).

The CPP Full Partnership event held in Oban in September 2024 brought together over 40 stakeholders from across community planning, public services, the third sector and local communities to discuss the three priority outcomes identified within the ABOIP: transport infrastructure, housing and community wellbeing.

Discussions focused on understanding what was already happening within communities, identifying local strengths and assets, and exploring what additional action could be taken collectively to improve outcomes. Through facilitated round-table discussions, the Community Planning and Community Development Team captured the lived experiences, ideas and insights shared by participants and used these to develop a set of draft actions for each priority outcome.





Following approval of the draft actions by the CPP Management Committee in December 2024, a further stage of engagement and action refinement was undertaken. During 2025 and early 2026, a series of face-to-face workshops, Area Community Planning Group (ACPG) discussions and online sessions provided opportunities for communities and partners to further shape, challenge and strengthen the proposed actions.

One action involved community representatives being asked what shared transport options already existed in their areas and how the CPP could help promote and support them. These discussions recognised the value of local knowledge and community-led solutions, while creating space for participants to identify barriers, opportunities and practical ideas for improving connectivity.

To ensure that as many voices as possible could contribute, an online action refinement session was held in February 2026. This session brought together partners and stakeholders to build on

the feedback received through the ACPGs. Participants explored community needs, safety considerations, volunteering opportunities, community transport links and potential digital solutions. Discussions also considered how communities could be supported to develop locally appropriate approaches to shared transport and strengthen connections between residents, services and opportunities.

Throughout the development of each priority outcome action, participants were encouraged to record their views and suggestions, ensuring that individual contributions were captured accurately and transparently. The resulting feedback was collated and used to refine the project documentation, creating a clear link between community input and final decision making.

The final actions, approved by the CPP Management Committee in March 2026, reflect not only partnership priorities but also the strengths, experiences and aspirations of communities across Argyll and Bute. The process demonstrates how meaningful engagement, co-production and community empowerment can help shape strategic action, ensuring that local people have a genuine influence on the decisions that affect their lives. The graphic below illustrates the full partnership.



CASE STUDIES

1. Community Development - ROSC- *Recovery Oriented System of Care*

Need for the project/activity

The Community Partnership and Development Team has a Service Level Agreement with the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership NHS to support the development of a Recovery-Oriented System of Care (ROSC) in Dunoon. The focus is to improve support for people recovering from alcohol and drug addiction and contribute to MAT 8, ensuring access to advocacy and support for housing, welfare and income needs.

Description

Community Development supported the establishment of a ROSC group in Dunoon. Activities included engaging local community groups, creating a Basecamp platform for communication and training opportunities, raising awareness of ROSC, building capacity across partners, supporting lived experience involvement in improvement planning, and bringing partner organisations together to share information and services.

Impact

The ROSC network has strengthened connections between agencies, community groups and people with lived experience. Members have identified and discussed local stigma and ways to address it, increased collaboration between services, and improved engagement in recovery planning. Recovery communities are more empowered to influence service improvement and local development.

Evidence

Agencies and groups actively contribute to forum discussions; groups use the Basecamp platform to promote activities and events; additional organisations and people with lived experience continue to join the network; collaborative work has developed support for recovery communities to be involved in improvement planning. Inviting Lomond Argyll Advocacy to speak about MAT standards, Oral Health team to speak about services they offer including access to dental hygiene products and “With You” to speak about the Recovery and social prescribing work they are doing.

Lessons learned?

Facilitating regular forums creates opportunities for agencies to collaborate effectively. Attending local events and using Art of Hosting techniques helps participants address complex community issues and encourages meaningful engagement.

2. Community Development - Sandbank Community Development Trust/Argyll TSI

Need for the project/activity

Sandbank Community Development Trust wanted to host a volunteer recruitment day to showcase local volunteering opportunities. Support was required to promote the event, provide a meeting space, and strengthen links between local organisations and potential volunteers.

Description

Community Development supported Sandbank Community Development Trust, TSI and Argyll and Bute Council by arranging and attending planning meetings, providing community development advice, promoting the event through local networks and bulletins, and staffing a Community Development stand on the day to offer guidance on funding and capacity building opportunities.

Impact

The event raised the profile of the Trust as an important local organisation, strengthened relationships between local anchor organisations, supported volunteer recruitment activity, and generated new enquiries from community groups requiring development support.

Evidence

The event resulted in increased engagement with local organisations, strengthened partnership working between the Trust and TSI, and led to Community Development supporting several groups with funding searches and capacity-building advice following the event.

Lessons learned?

Partnership working between the Trust, TSI and Community Development proved effective in raising awareness of local projects, building organisational visibility and creating opportunities for future collaborative initiatives.

3. Community Development - Men's Shed Oban and Helensburgh

Need for the project/activity

Growing interest in Men's Sheds across Argyll and Bute created a need to support emerging groups in Oban and Helensburgh. The groups required capacity-building support, assistance with governance and constitution development, and guidance in navigating discussions regarding the use and lease of council-owned properties.

Description

The Community Development Team worked with the emerging Men's Shed groups and the Scottish Men's Shed Association (SMSA) to establish and develop the organisations. Support included attending regular development meetings, liaising with SMSA and the Council Estates Department, supporting attendance at the Funding Connections Roadshow, assisting with grant applications, and promoting the groups through local networks and elected members and local media.

Impact

The support helped establish two new constituted community groups with operational bank accounts. Progress has been made towards securing premises through discussions with Estates, and both groups have strengthened their capacity to pursue funding and development opportunities

Evidence

Two newly constituted Men's Shed groups are now operating in Oban and Helensburgh. Both groups have submitted grant applications, continue discussions regarding long-term leases, and benefit from ongoing partnership working between Community Development, SMSA and Argyll and Bute Council Estates.

Lessons learned?

Community Development plays an important role in supporting both community groups and national partner organisations with limited local capacity. Community Development Officers provide consistent local support, facilitate communication with council departments, and help groups understand local processes around assets, leases and community development.

4. Community Development - UHI Horticulture/ESOL classes at Hermitage Park

Need for the project/activity

Local residents supported by the Argyll and Bute Resettlement Team wanted to improve their English language skills and gain practical work-related experience to support integration and employment opportunities. Learners required accessible training that combined accredited learning with hands-on experience.

Description

Community Development facilitated discussions between UHI Argyll, the Resettlement Team and other partners to develop a horticulture training programme at Hermitage Park. UHI registered learners arranged funding and provided PPE. Two 10-week accredited horticulture courses were delivered between January and June 2026, with support from Live Argyll and Friends of Hermitage Park providing facilities for learning and breaks.

Impact

The project improved learners' employability, confidence and practical skills while supporting integration into the local community. Participants developed horticultural knowledge, increased their use of English in practical settings and gained recognised qualifications to support future employment and learning opportunities.

Evidence

Twelve learners achieved SCQF-accredited horticulture qualifications. Learners increased their practical and employment-related English language skills, participated in local Remembrance events through park planting activities, and developed stronger connections to the local community. New partnership working was also established between UHI, the Resettlement Team and Community Development.

Lessons learned?

The programme demonstrated the value of strong partnership working between public services, education providers and community groups. Early collaboration enabled the college to take ownership of delivery while Community Development helped create the connections needed for success. The project highlighted how joint working can increase learning opportunities and support the integration of New Scots into local communities.

5. Community Development - *Shopper-Aide conducts Community Engagement*

Need for the project/activity

Shopper Aide came to the MAKI Area Community Planning Group in February 2025 to appeal for help in raising funding. They had not been successful in their recent funding bids and were struggling to pay their bills. The meeting referred the group to the MAKI CDO.

Description

Following an initial meeting with the group, it was agreed that Community Development support should focus on community engagement rather than business development, as the group was already receiving support from a business adviser. Liaison with the adviser helped identify gaps in support and ensured a coordinated approach.

Together, we recognised that updated community engagement would strengthen future funding applications by evidencing current local needs and priorities identified by service users, carers and residents.

To raise awareness and build community support, two "Crisis Talks" events were organised. The first, attended by 15 key stakeholders including elected members and funders, generated practical advice, volunteer recruitment opportunities and guidance on future priorities. The second attracted 45 local residents, resulting in offers of volunteering, donations and new board members.

To gather up-to-date evidence of community need, a World Café engagement event was planned and delivered. This involved designing promotional materials, engaging stakeholders, briefing volunteer facilitators and coordinating event logistics. Sixteen participants explored how older people could remain healthy, independent and connected within the local area.

The feedback gathered informed the development of a clear funding strategy, providing the group with a strong evidence base for future funding applications and service planning.

Impact

Local groups adopted Shopper Aide as their fundraising cause, e.g., Scouts supermarket bag pack. There were offers to join the Board, and they raised a lot of awareness about the services they provide, ensuring that new customers came forward to purchase laundry or cleaning services from the social enterprise side.

Finally, all the feedback from a world café consultation event allowed reflection, conversations to be held between partners, and a funding strategy to be formulated from the information provided. The engagement data itself was able to be used in funding applications and evidence that this was a group that was listening to its clientele.

Evidence

Evidence of the impact of this work includes the development of an updated funding strategy informed by direct community engagement. Local media coverage helped raise awareness of the group's situation, while news clippings, photographs from the World Café event, and community feedback demonstrated both the level of local support and the identification of current needs and priorities. These outcomes provided a strong evidence base for future funding applications and service planning.

Lessons learned?

Groups can make assumptions about their clientele and need to refresh their engagements, particularly if it's a group that may be changing interests and style as different generations move into the ageing bracket.

6. Place Based Case Study - Isle of Lismore Community Development Support

Need for the project / activity

The Isle of Lismore has an active third sector with community organisations delivering services, preserving heritage and exploring community ownership opportunities. Support was required to help local groups strengthen governance, access funding and understand community asset development processes.

Description

Community Development provided tailored support to Lismore Art Group, Lismore Community Trust and Lismore Historical Society. This included advice on constitutions, bank accounts, safeguarding requirements, funding opportunities, Supporting Communities Fund applications, community asset transfer processes and engagement with council services. Site visits and meetings helped groups explore future development opportunities and understand key requirements for progressing projects.

Impact

Local organisations increased their capacity, understanding and readiness to develop projects. Groups gained greater confidence in governance, safeguarding and funding processes, while the Community Trust developed a clearer understanding of community asset opportunities and the steps required to progress them.

Evidence

The Lismore Art Group has a clearer pathway towards becoming constituted and funding ready. Lismore Community Trust has identified next steps for progressing asset opportunities and improved its understanding of council processes and timescales. Lismore Historical Society increased its awareness of available funding opportunities and eligibility requirements. Ongoing engagement has strengthened relationships between Community Development and island organisations.

Lessons learned?

Visiting the island and working directly with local groups strengthens relationships and improves understanding of local priorities. Providing clear, practical advice and breaking complex processes into manageable stages helps communities make informed decisions and progress ideas more effectively.

7. Community Learning Services - Dalmally Cycling Awareness Project

Need for the project/activity

Concerns had been raised within the Dalmally community about young people cycling without helmets, cycling on pavements and having limited awareness of road safety. The Community Learning supported Youth Action Group identified a need for practical cycling safety education and awareness-raising activities.

Description

Community Learning Youth Services worked in partnership with Glenorchy and Innishail Community Action Group (GICAG), Active Schools, Police Scotland, Adventure Oban and Dr Bike to deliver a Cycling Awareness Day on 13 February. Held in Dalmally Community Hall, the event engaged 15 young people in a range of activities focused on bike safety, helmet awareness, bike maintenance, road safety and practical cycling skills. Lunch and refreshments were also provided.

Impact

Young people increased their awareness of cycling safety, helmet use and bike maintenance. The event brought together local partners to address a community concern and provided an enjoyable learning experience that encouraged safer cycling practices as well as improving both social connection and wellbeing.

Evidence

Fifteen young people attended the event. Paper and video evaluations showed very positive feedback, with participants expressing an interest in attending similar activities in the future. Photographs captured participation in safety sessions, bike repairs, obstacle courses and practical cycling exercises. Hall hire and catering enabled delivery of a full-day programme.

Lessons learned?

Partnership working enabled a varied and engaging programme to be delivered. Combining practical activities with safety education helped maintain interest and participation. Feedback highlighted the importance of providing enjoyable activities alongside learning opportunities.

Learner images and quotes







Photographs from the event demonstrate participation in helmet safety training, bike maintenance, obstacle course activities and group learning sessions. Feedback included: "Would like more days like this."

8. Community Learning Services - *Get Ready 4 Work*

Need for the project/activity

Conversations with partners and learners identified that many young people were struggling to gain employment. The group was aimed at learners aged 16-25 who were not in work or education, helping them gain qualifications, build confidence and develop workplace skills. The course was planned in partnership to encourage more young people to consider careers within the construction industry.

Description

Learners worked towards four employability units, achieving the Employability Group Award at SCQF Level 4, Personal Development: Self and Work at SCQF Level 4 and Problem Solving at SCQF Level 4. Completion of all units also contributes to the Steps to Work Group Award at SCQF Level 4. Learners could work towards the Bronze Youth Award, gain Saltire Award volunteering hours and, for those interested in construction careers, receive support to gain their CSCS card. Alternative progression routes such as the InspireAlba "Spark Your Purpose" programme were available for others.

Impact

Brogan, one of our young people, enjoyed working as part of a team and became increasingly confident in speaking within the group. He reported feeling comfortable in the learning environment and more motivated to participate than he had been at school. Being treated with respect and given responsibility encouraged him to engage fully. By the end of the two-week programme, he was surprised by how much he had achieved and felt proud of his accomplishments.

Evidence

SCQF Level 4 Employability Award; SCQF Level 4 Problem Solving Award; SCQF Level 4 Personal Development: Self and Work Award.

Lessons learned?

Brogan thrived in this environment and benefited from short breaks between tasks. He demonstrated strong leadership skills during practical activities, worked effectively as part of a team and showed increasing confidence in contributing to group discussions. Completing his CV at the end of the programme helped him recognise the extent of his achievements and growth.

Learner quotes

"I've done more here in 2 weeks than I have in a whole year at school."
"It's not that hard, good fun and I really enjoyed it."
"It was good working with different people and being part of a new group."
"This was far better than doing it at school as I wouldn't have done as much in school because I mess around."
"I was confident sharing my skills outside."
"I felt comfortable joining in and speaking in the group, I don't do this at school."

9. Community Learning Services - Cowal Youth - GIVE and Intergenerational Programmes

Need for the project/activity

Youth Work Cowal aims to create meaningful opportunities for young people to engage with their local community, develop empathy, and build positive relationships across generations. Intergenerational activities help reduce social isolation among older adults while providing young people with opportunities to develop communication skills, confidence, respect, and a greater understanding of the experiences of older generations.

Description

As part of the Easter 2025 GIVE Programme, young people visited residents at Ardnahien Care Home for a Tea and Bingo afternoon. During the visit, the group celebrated resident Jessie's recent 100th birthday by presenting her with a card and bouquet of flowers. The young people also spent time getting to know other residents, including Kath, aged 103, who shared stories of her childhood growing up in Glasgow before moving to Dunoon. Using their mobile phones and online resources, the young people were able to show Kath historical photographs of the East End of Glasgow, helping to spark memories and encourage conversation.

In September 2025, Youth Work Cowal partnered with Active Schools and Dunoon Grammar School PE Department to deliver an intergenerational Highland Games themed afternoon for Ardnahien Care Home residents participating in an area-wide Care Home Games competition. Led by Senior Sports Leaders from the PE Department, residents took part in activities including welly wanging, curling, caber toss, bowls, and haggis hurling. Residents competed in teams wearing specially designed team t-shirts created by Dunoon Grammar School pupils.

Impact

The activities created valuable opportunities for young people and older adults to connect in a positive and meaningful way. Young people developed confidence, communication skills, and greater understanding of older generations through conversations and shared experiences.

For residents, the visits provided social interaction, enjoyment, and the opportunity to share personal stories and memories. The use of technology by young people helped residents reconnect with important places and experiences from their past, creating moments of joy and reminiscence.

The Highland Games event promoted physical activity, teamwork, and friendly competition while challenging stereotypes around ageing. Both young people and residents benefited from the positive relationships developed through participation.

Evidence

- Young people successfully engaged with care home residents through planned intergenerational activities.
- Residents actively participated in Tea and Bingo sessions and the Highland Games competition.
- Young people demonstrated empathy and curiosity by spending time listening to residents' life stories.
- Technology was used creatively to support reminiscence and conversation with residents.
- The Highland Games event involved partnership working between Youth Work Cowal, Active Schools, Dunoon Grammar School PE Department, and Ardnahien Care Home.
- Feedback from participants highlighted the enjoyment, laughter, and positive social interaction experienced throughout both activities.
- Residents and young people demonstrated strong engagement and enthusiasm during all activities.

Lessons learned?

Intergenerational work continues to have significant benefits for both young people and older adults. Creating informal opportunities for conversation allows meaningful relationships to develop naturally and helps break down barriers between generations.

Simple activities such as sharing stories, playing games, and using technology together can create powerful learning experiences and promote mutual understanding. Strong partnership working between youth services, schools, and care homes is key to delivering successful intergenerational projects.

Images / learner quotes





"I enjoyed meeting the residents and hearing their stories. It was nice to make them smile and learn about their lives."

"I enjoyed hearing the residents' stories and learning what life was like when they were younger."

"It was great seeing everyone having fun together and helping bring back happy memories."

"The Highland Games were brilliant. It was nice working with the residents and seeing how competitive they were!"

10.Community Learning Services - *Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) Support*

Need for the project/activity

Dunoon and the wider Cowal area are rural communities where access to employment, training, and further education opportunities can be limited. For adults with literacy and numeracy challenges, these barriers can significantly reduce opportunities for work, lifelong learning, and active participation in community life.

Community Learning Services also receive referrals from mental health services, highlighting the strong link between low literacy and numeracy skills and reduced confidence, social isolation, and poorer mental wellbeing. Many learners have experienced negative educational experiences in the past and require tailored support to overcome barriers and reach their full potential.

Description

During 2025, Community Learning Services secured funding to deliver Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) support across Dunoon and Cowal. The programme provided both one-to-one tuition and small group learning opportunities, enabling adults to improve their skills in reading, writing, communication, and numeracy.

Learning was tailored to individual needs and goals, supporting learners to build confidence at their own pace. One-to-one support was particularly valuable for learners who had experienced difficulties in education, employment, or everyday life as a result of low literacy levels. This approach created a safe and supportive environment where learners could discuss challenges openly and develop the skills required to progress.

Impact

The programme delivered a range of positive outcomes for individuals and the wider community:

- Improved employment prospects through the development of essential literacy, numeracy, and workplace skills.
- Increased confidence, self-esteem, and personal resilience.
- Enhanced financial capability, including budgeting, understanding bills, and managing household finances.
- Greater ability for parents and carers to support their children's learning and education.
- Reduced social isolation by connecting learners with local services, learning opportunities, and peer support networks.
- Increased participation in community life and strengthened access to citizenship opportunities.
- Improved mental wellbeing through increased confidence, achievement, and independence.

Many learners reported significant personal growth and an improved quality of life as a result of engaging with the programme.

Evidence

- Attendance and engagement records.
- Learner feedback and personal testimonies.
- Achievement of SQA qualifications.
- Portfolios of learner work demonstrating progression and skills development.
- Referrals and feedback from partner agencies.

Lessons learned?

Learners with literacy challenges often benefit most from confidential one-to-one support, particularly during the early stages of engagement. Many participants have experienced negative educational, workplace, or life experiences that have affected their confidence and willingness to seek help.

Providing a safe, non-judgemental learning environment is critical to building trust and supporting progression. The programme demonstrated that personalised support, delivered at a pace appropriate to the learner, leads to greater engagement, improved wellbeing, and more sustainable outcomes.

Learner quotes

"This is the most significant piece of learning and discovery that I have experienced in my life. It's taken until now, at the age of 69, to access the learning support I should have had at primary school." Gordon Maclean, Dunoon

This testimonial highlights the transformational impact that adult literacy support can have, regardless of age, enabling learners to overcome long-standing barriers and achieve personal goals.

11. Community Learning - Adult Learning Digital *Inclusion Group Dunoon*

Need for the project/activity

This group was developed in direct response to feedback from learners attending our **Health Issues in the Community (HIIC)** short course. Throughout the programme, a recurring theme emerged: many older learners felt increasingly vulnerable due to the rapid pace of digital change.

Despite attending digital skills classes and making considerable efforts to learn, some learners faced physical, sensory or cognitive barriers that made it difficult to develop the level of digital independence now expected in everyday life. As more services move online, these learners found it harder to manage essential tasks, stay informed about local issues, access opportunities, and maintain contact with family and friends.

This lack of digital confidence was also contributing to increased social isolation, reduced wellbeing, and greater vulnerability to online and telephone scams. Learners told us they often felt left behind, excluded from community life, and anxious about engaging with technology.

We recognised the need for a learning environment that bridged the gap between learners' abilities and the digital skills required to remain safe, connected, informed and active members of their communities.

Description

The **Digital Inclusion Group** was established to support learners who find it difficult to make progress in traditional digital skills classes. Rather than focusing solely on technical skills, the group provides a supportive and welcoming space where learners can develop confidence, seek advice, and reduce the social isolation that often accompanies digital exclusion.

The group meets weekly and explores a range of themes and issues that are relevant to learners' lives and communities. Sessions are delivered at a pace that suits individual needs and provide practical support with topics including:

- Smartphone basics and everyday use
- Accessibility features for people with visual or hearing impairments
- Online safety and scam awareness
- Online shopping and consumer confidence
- Social media and digital communication
- Accessing local information, services and community activities online

Learners also benefit from partnership contributions from organisations including Police Scotland and Dunoon Community Development Trust, strengthening community connections and ensuring access to accurate, relevant information.

Participants know they have a trusted place to return to each week where they can receive patient support with new digital challenges in an environment that is understanding, inclusive and non-judgemental.

Impact

The most significant impact of the Digital Inclusion Group has been a noticeable improvement in learners' wellbeing, confidence and sense of belonging.

Learners consistently report feeling less anxious about technology and more confident managing day-to-day digital tasks. Having access to regular, reliable support reduces stress and provides reassurance that help is available whenever new challenges arise.

The group's scam awareness sessions have been particularly successful. Learners have developed a much greater understanding of common scams and are now actively applying this knowledge in everyday situations. This has increased confidence, reduced fear of technology, and enabled learners to engage more safely with digital services.

The group has also strengthened learners' connections to their local communities. Through support to access local information, online consultations and community engagement opportunities, participants are becoming more informed and more involved in local decision-making processes.

Overall, the project has:

- Reduced social isolation.
- Improved mental wellbeing.
- Increased digital confidence and resilience.
- Enhanced community participation.

- Improved awareness of online safety.
- Helped learners remain connected, informed and engaged.

Evidence

The impact of the group can be seen through both participation data and learner outcomes.

Community participation and civic engagement

- All learners completed an online impact assessment relating to local services.
- Four learners participated in the ALDI consultation after completing an online survey.
- One learner attended a local Community Council meeting.
- One learner contacted local MPs, MSPs and Councillors regarding concerns about proposed changes to Telecare alarm services.

Digital confidence and online safety

- Six learners report feeling confident identifying online scams and regularly share information about recent scam attempts with the group.
- All learners can independently access the What's on Dunoon website to find information on local events, activities and clubs.
- All learners have attended at least one local event they discovered online, including activities such as the Dunoon on the Move walk at Benmore Gardens.

Learning and progression

- Group session records demonstrate consistent attendance and engagement.
- Learners have completed digital learning activities through the Learn My Way platform.
- All learners have completed at least one Health Interventions in the Community short course, including *The Social Model of Health*.

Lessons learned?

This project has highlighted the importance of continuing to advocate for learners experiencing physical, sensory or cognitive decline who may find it increasingly difficult to keep pace with accelerating digital change.

As services increasingly adopt a "digital first" approach, alternatives for people who cannot achieve full digital independence are becoming more limited. We have learned that some learners require ongoing support rather than short-term interventions and benefit greatly from having a consistent, welcoming environment where they can return whenever they need assistance.

The project has reinforced the importance of relationship-based Community Learning and Development practice. Alongside practical digital support, learners need practitioners who can advocate on their behalf, challenge barriers to participation and ensure that services remain accessible to those who may never achieve complete digital independence.

Perhaps most importantly, we have learned that digital inclusion is about far more than technology. It is about confidence, connection, participation, wellbeing and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to remain an active citizen within their community.

learner quotes

"This is the first opportunity to learn about scamming I've had."

"I liked how this was done. If you read something when you're learning you forget it, but when you discuss it, you remember it. We are allowed to talk and ask questions, so I think that's why I'm remembering everything."

"I just feel more confident about using the phone now because I feel safer. I'm happier to hang up the phone when I don't know someone. Before, I would speak to them because I was scared of being rude."

"I used to worry about being rude, but now I've been given permission to hang up or not even answer my phone."

The Digital Inclusion Group demonstrates how community-based learning can address far more than a skills deficit. By combining digital support, community engagement, peer learning and wellbeing outcomes, the project has helped some of the most vulnerable learners remain connected, informed and involved in community life. The group provides an essential safety net for adults who may never become fully digitally independent, but who still have the right to participate fully in society.

The programme demonstrates how targeted community-based learning interventions can remove barriers, improve outcomes and increase opportunities for people who may otherwise struggle to access employment, education and training opportunities.

A Year in Pictures



















Looking Ahead: Strengthening Impact and Shaping Future Delivery

As the CLD Partnership moves forward, our focus remains on ensuring that Community Learning and Development continues to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of people and communities across Argyll and Bute. Through ongoing reflection, evidence-based planning, and partnership working, we will continue to strengthen the quality, reach, and impact of CLD services.

Regular monitoring of progress against the CLD Action Plan will enable partners to identify successes, address emerging challenges, and respond flexibly to changing local priorities. Progress updates will continue to be shared with Argyll and Bute Council, the Community Planning Partnership, and wider stakeholders, supporting accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Self-evaluation will remain central to our approach. The *How Good Is Our Community Learning and Development? (HGIOCLD)* framework will continue to support partners in assessing performance, identifying areas for development, and celebrating effective practice. Professional learning and development opportunities will also be available throughout 2025-2026, enabling staff and partners to enhance their skills, share learning, and contribute to high-quality CLD provision across the area.

Priorities for 2025-2026

- Further strengthen our ability to measure outcomes and demonstrate the difference CLD makes to individuals, groups, and communities.
- Use evidence, data, and self-evaluation findings to inform planning and drive service improvement.
- Embed HGIOCLD approaches within performance monitoring and reporting arrangements to support consistency and accountability.
- Increase opportunities for communities to influence decision-making and help shape local CLD priorities.
- Enhance engagement with community organisations, learners, young people, volunteers, and underrepresented groups to ensure a wider range of voices are heard and support inclusive lifelong learning opportunities that contribute to community resilience, wellbeing, employability, and active citizenship.
- Continue to develop strong partnership working that maximises resources, shares expertise, and delivers positive outcomes across Argyll and Bute.

Through these actions, the Partnership will continue to build on existing strengths, reduce inequalities, and create opportunities for people and communities to learn, thrive, and achieve their full potential.

Key Partners



























