



North Alliance Conference 2015

Report

Inspiring, stimulating and thought provoking...were the words many delegates used to sum up the 2015 North Alliance Conference, held on 7 October in Nairn.

Conference 2015 was **bigger** and **better** than ever, with over **100 delegates** planning to attend, **2 keynote speakers**, **14 workshops** and a Dragons' Den update.

96 delegates attended Conference, representing all 7 North Alliance areas. Roughly two thirds were from statutory organisations and the remainder from the third sector. Unfortunately due to technical problems at Sumburgh airport, 10 of our colleagues from Shetland were stranded and missed the day!



Feedback has been overwhelmingly **positive**. On a scale of 1 to 10, (where 1 = not at all and 10 = very much) delegates rated the four conference outcomes as follows:

I have experienced a creative and stimulating learning environment:	8.5
I have built/enhanced my professional network:	6.5
I am more able to describe my personal and professional learning:	6.5
I have identified a spectrum of initiatives within the NA area:	7.0

'Thoroughly enjoyable conference. Well organised and fantastic speakers. The workshops which I attended were also very informative. Thank you.'

'I really enjoyed the conference today. Full of amazing ideas from dedicated professionals. Thank you!'

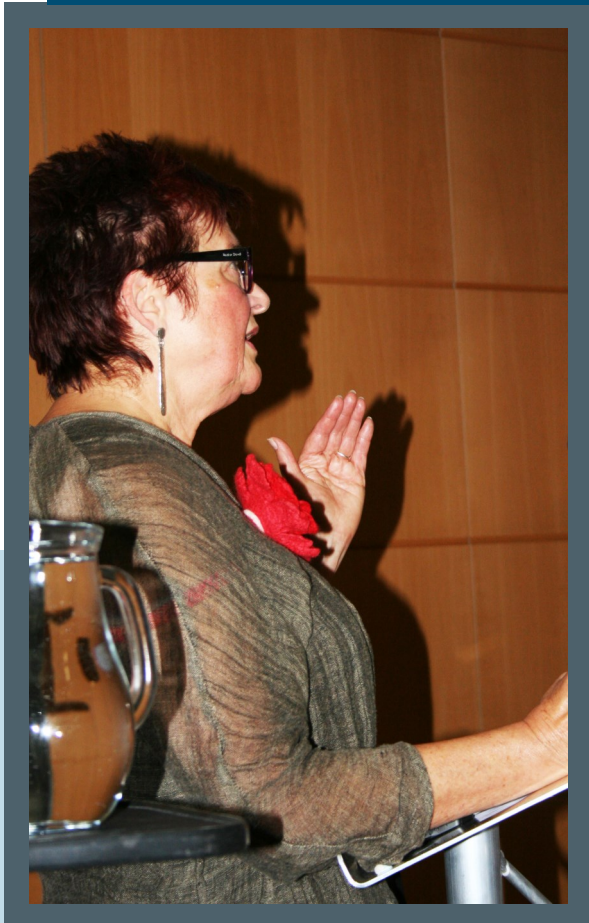
'Loved the conference. Feisty and thought provoking. Lots to reflect on!'

'Great conference – very stimulating. Well done!'

Keynote Speeches

'To have Lesley and Margaret was inspiring and thought provoking.'

The two keynote speakers, Lesley Riddoch and Margaret Ledwith were a clear hit with delegates. In her keynote speech, 'Unleashing the Power of Community', Lesley Riddoch provided a fascinating insight into the differences in the make-up and life of communities in Norway and Scotland. While Margaret Ledwith encouraged delegates to question everything in her thought provoking keynote speech on 'Reclaiming the radical agenda: Poverty as a human rights issue'.



'Keynote speakers were great and made me think a lot about big issues that structurally affect and define practice. Invigorating. Thanks.'

'Lesley was awesome. Margaret was brilliant.'

'Loved the keynote speakers.'

'Excellent speakers – very inspiring!'

Please click [here](#) for information about the speakers. Please click on the pictures for links to presentations where available.

Workshops

The 13 workshops (the 14th workshop, Karaoke for literacies, was a victim of the 'technical difficulties' in Shetland) received a great deal of positive feedback, a selection of which is shown below (full feedback has been provided to the workshop facilitators). Delegates were asked to note down what they:



Learnt



Loved



Take away and use



Didn't find useful

The majority of notes in this category related to the temperature of the rooms and the need for more time to be allocated.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act – how do we make the most of the new legislation? - Mick Doyle

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act is designed to provide a framework which will empower community bodies through the ownership of land and buildings and strengthen their voices in the decisions that matter to them. It will also support an increase in the pace and scale of public service reform by cementing the focus on achieving outcomes and improving the process of community planning. But will the legislation and accompanying guidelines deliver its vision? What can be realistically expected – of communities and of agencies working in Community Planning Partnerships? What support will communities need to properly take advantage of the legislation? And what can staff involved in community learning and development activity in a variety of sectors do to help? The workshop gave participants a chance to find out more about the main content of the new legislation and explore these issues in some detail.



*That I need to learn more about the Act and how it is being embraced
That the Act will have direct relevance to my work*



*Hearing about the opportunities the Bill may give disadvantaged communities.
The opportunity this offers if effectively utilised.*



*Need to raise awareness of this in local communities.
The encouragement to find out more about it.*

This session looked at the usefulness and limitations of holding explicit values in CLD work. What do they help with, what do they leave out, when do we remember them and what makes us forget or subvert values we actually hold dear? What conflicts arise when we try to live by our own personal and professional values, and how do we resolve or live with these?

The value of values in CLD - Chris Aldred



That I need to read more and explore values further. Not take them at face value.

It's good to feel able to question the way anything works to promote positive outcomes.



A bit of courage to challenge systems (professionally of course).

Will plan another session with our staff to open up their thinking more about this



*Made me think about my values.
The honest, thought-provoking discussions.*

Coming up through the ranks – Volunteering at Healthy Minds - Wendy Coutts

This workshop looked at the experiences of volunteers at Healthy Minds as they have worked and supported the learners over the last year. A couple are themselves in recovery from mental ill health and have progressed from participants to helpers within groups; others have come from partner agencies and have volunteered as part of community participation. The impact the SQA award in Core Skills including volunteering has had, including moving volunteers onto other agencies and potentially into paid work, was discussed. The assessment process is uncomplicated and candidates are asked to complete a question and answer sheet which make it comfortable for people who are not happy with a lot of writing. A further advantage of the award is that it is open to volunteers of all ages. Volunteers talked about their experience in gaining the award and Wendy, one of the development officers will shared her Knowledge of supporting the volunteers.



A useful way to support volunteers to achieve recognition for their efforts.

SQA Qualification for volunteering, I was unaware of this!



Volunteer's (Fiona) input from first hand experience. Clarity and honesty.

I enjoyed hearing life experiences and the value of the SQA Award for many people.



SQA potential – idea for a new project.

Knowledge and possibilities for introducing the qualification in my work place.

Men's Sheds - for men, communities & services - Jason Schroeder



Drawing on the experience from Aberdeenshire, this workshop looked at the process of setting up and running a Men's Shed, from identifying the need to looking at future potential. Engagement with the community, community planning partners and public services was discussed along with finding a suitable premises and community asset transfer, and an insight into the operation of a Shed, the benefits to the men, the community and public services provided.



Positive effects Men's Sheds have mentally, physically and emotionally for all who participate.

I learnt about the importance of male mentors and the importance of having places for men to go.



I loved Jason's enthusiasm and frankness. I enjoyed the pro-male voice – unapologetic and honest.

The impact it can have for the individual, the group and the community. Concept is attractive, keeps the skills held going, stops isolation.



Explore possibilities in my area for Men's Shed.

That these sheds actually exist and to be more aware of the problems that older men have.

Communicating vision - David Bryan

Vision is how an organisation wants the world to be. It is usually set by chief exec / chair / directors / founder of an organisation. For staff (and wider stakeholders) to be motivated to achieve this vision, they need to know the vision – what it is they are working towards achieving, even if their role in this is purely operational, or 'on the shop floor'. Experience tells us teams that understand what it is their organisation is working towards, are more likely to be successful, cohesive and happy. This workshop looked at the importance of communicating vision through an organisation, discussing ways in which it can be achieved.



*Importance of breaking tasks into simple stages.
Communication is key! Duplo rocks!*



*Loved the participatory exercise.
Remember to communicate, reiterate, explain,
share, work together - to create the vision.*



*Time to consider pre-action.
How we can use the activity in our team to help us
to realise the impact of how we communicate –
whether we do it well or not!*

Engaging with Gypsy/Travellers - Karen Quinn, Jon Davidson & Mary Drever

This workshop provided a look at the work that Aberdeen City Council are currently doing at Clinterty Travellers site, with a particular focus on the tools and methods used to engage the Travellers in the Council's educational programmes and the use of intergeneration work.



*New ways to engage with adults.
To be honest with the travelling people from the get go.*



*Seeing the way those involved enjoy their work and the
passion in the discussion.
Inspiring what can be done in my area.*



*Informed prac-
tice, more ideas
for future
engagement.
Food for thought
– potential
projects.*



GIRFEC & engagement - Fiona Herd

This workshop shared the learning from the former youth work team in Moray who are placed within Integrated Children's Services and work with children and young people using the Wellbeing Tool (Shanarri).



How things are working in other areas. Learned about GIRFEC and SHANARRI framework. Some useful things including the wellbeing wheel.



The wider discussion in this workshop – are we really getting it right and how does poverty come into play. Participatory learning style of workshop.



I must look into therapeutic photography – very powerful. How to encourage community partners to engage with SHANARRI in upcoming CLD plans.



Inspection, review & self-evaluation - Alona Murray



Got loads to go away and look at! The changes in HMIe inspections and how it will impact on my Service.



I keep up to date online but it was great to have some face to face professional dialogue. Knowledge base of facilitator/presenter but informal nature.



Information on documents to read to enhance knowledge more. I am going to take the update home to share with my team and also partners who don't see themselves as CLD.



This workshop provided a look at the role of HMI from Education Scotland in public accountability and supporting improvement. It include data from the 200 Learning Community Inspections completed in recent years, information on the evolving inspection and review models including aspect reviews and place based inspections (including the 2015/16 models), and the new and updated frameworks for self-evaluation.

Participatory drama for community development - Aileen Ackland

Forum Theatre is a powerful tool for debate and social change with communities. The method has been used by and with groups who feel excluded, such as the homeless, the disabled and asylum seekers. It can also be a useful method of reflecting on group/team dynamics or collaborative working in partnerships. Developed in Brazil by Augusto Boal, Forum Theatre can bring to life real problems that the group or community faces and explore alternative ideas of how to resolve issues. This workshop provided an opportunity to find out more about Forum Theatre and to experience some of the Forum Theatre techniques which are relevant to a variety of educational and developmental contexts.





Potential of such work for engaging young people/community etc.

The power of drama. The rehearsal of something you want to happen.



The opportunity to explore a different way of working with a fun group of people.

Being forced out of comfort zone is healthy. Very interesting background to theatre and uses.



Lots of reading – hopefully will find ways to include in my work.

Confidence

Family volunteering - Amanda Macdonald



This workshop explored family volunteering, its many benefits, and various opportunities to incorporate it into our communities. There was discussion of what makes family volunteering different (and maybe better!) than traditional youth volunteering, and a look at some of the many ways for families to volunteer together. The workshop explored how schools, communities and organisations can successfully develop and support Family Volunteering - and why they really should!



The variety of family volunteering that can be done.

Had never considered the whole family volunteering. Great concept. Overcoming lots of barriers.



Passion and knowledge and experience of presenter.

The simplicity of the plan – the capacity of the volunteers over time.



I am going to try to get my families volunteering.

Knowledge and enthusiasm.



Mindfulness for empowerment - Graeme Nixon

Mindfulness is the practice of observing our thoughts, habits of mind and reactions with an attitude of curiosity, kindness and acceptance. In this workshop Dr Graeme Nixon, who teaches on the University of Aberdeen's Masters programme in Mindfulness, allowed participants to experience a mindfulness practice and consider research into the impact of mindfulness in generating free will, autonomy and authenticity. Graeme also explored the potential of mindfulness to develop compassion and communitarian values.



What mindfulness is and how it can be used.

Youth relevance.



Wonderful stillness to end a day full of ideas.

I loved the mix of theory, discussion and the practice.



I will try to put into practice when working with young people when they are stressed.

I will be looking into finding ways to be more 'mindful' myself as well as teach/life with my pupils.



Aberdeen FC Community Trust - Wider community engagement - David Smith

Aberdeen Football Club's Partner Charity, Aberdeen FC Community Trust, was launched in June 2014 with the vision of "...providing SUPPORT and OPPORTUNITY to change lives for the better." This workshop looked at how they involve Programme Participants in the planning process of Initiatives, how they challenge stigma, and how they evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.



The success of so many projects with Aberdeen and the community.

Learnt about all the great work being done. Lots of ideas!



The whole presentation. David's enthusiasm is contagious!

Everything – seeing what you can achieve with the right 'hook' to reach the harder to reach.



IDEAS!! Lots of great community work.

Ideas for other sport clubs, not only football.



Community ownership and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act - Diane Campbell



About the fantastic route map! Asset transfer within the context of Community Empowerment bill.

More detail and information that will inform my practice.



Excellent workshop – well delivered and informative.

Enjoyed the use of props e.g. mind/road maps.



A better understanding of the Bill and what goes on to process requests made by our community.

The route map! Diane as a good contact.

This workshop highlighted Part 5 - Asset Transfer Requests, in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill. Delegates gained an understanding of the information communities must provide public bodies when applying to take on ownership of a publicly owned asset. The workshop also introduced several tools designed by the Community Ownership Support Service which help community groups understand and work through the process of asset acquisition.

Karaoke for literacies - Marc Coyne



Unfortunately this workshop was cancelled as Marc was stranded in Shetland. Here's what the workshop would have covered.....Karaoke has been used in literacies learning worldwide. It has been used with preschool children through to adult learners, ESOL students and with the elderly for reminiscence. This workshop will look at the use of karaoke as a tool within literacies to promote reading, team work, problem solving, IT, building confidence and on and on! It will share resources, research, experiences and tools to help you get started.....But don't worry, you won't have to sing.....unless of course you want to!

Alongside the learning opportunities provided by the speakers and workshop facilitators, Conference 2015 provided a chance to learn from each other, sharing practice and ideas. The Nairn Community and Arts Centre echoed to the sound of delegates catching up with friends and colleagues, old and new.

We look forward to continuing the discussions at Conference 2016!



'Good to see many friends and catch up. Good stimulating discussion. Now do it!'



'Great opportunity to network and share practice ideas.'

'Great opportunity to make connections as I'm new to CLD.'



'I loved meeting with workers from other areas, hearing their stories, sharing experiences and considering the challenges.'

Thank you to all those who helped make Conference 2015 a success - thank you to the organisers, the speakers, the fantastic team at the Nairn Community and Arts Centre and most of all to the delegates.

Photographs by Cecily Cromby

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