Culture and Leisure Services

**Service Overview**

The majority of Cultural Services indicators fall under the remit of the Education & Children’s Service Directorate. This is an integrated service, providing a wide range of services including schools, nurseries, early intervention and targeted support for children and families, child protection as well as cultural services, sport and leisure and community learning and development. Our parks and open spaces (for which there are two measures under the Culture and Leisure Services heading) are overseen by Infrastructure Services.

The main objectives of the service are:

* To improve learning
* To ensure an inclusive culture
* To support the development of sustainable Communities
* To encourage a culture of continuous improvement that ensures that our service is high quality, efficient and responsive to people's needs

The Education and Children’s Service is the largest of Aberdeenshire Council’s services, and accounts for 56.1% of the total spend of the Council’s budget— the total Council budget being £538,838,000 in 2014/15. There are well over 100 community sports and leisure facilities, ranging from community pavilions to extensive sports hubs, 20 leisure facilities, 36 fixed libraries, 4 mobile libraries, 3 museums and visitor centres. Pop up museums have also been established.

Follow the links below to find out more:

[Sports & Leisure](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/leisure-sport-and-culture/)

[Museums](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/leisure-sport-and-culture/museums/museums-in-aberdeenshire)

[Libraries](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/libraries/)

[Parks and Open Spaces](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/communities-and-events/country-parks/country-parks)

**Highlights for 2014/15**

**Awards**

The Library and Information Service was awarded a 2015 COSLA Gold award within the “Achieving better outcomes category” for its collaborative work with the Scottish Prison Service to provide a ground breaking local library service in the new HMP & YOI Grampian in Peterhead. Building on evidence that access to reading, learning and literature contributes to reducing reoffending rates, plans were drawn up for an entirely new approach to local authority library provision within HMP Grampian as part of the construction of a new prison building.

**Active Schools**

The Active Schools programme continues to provide a range of out of school physical activity opportunities for young people across Aberdeenshire. The number of participants and events has grown over the past three years as is evidenced by the following data which shows numbers of engagements by young people in events/activities organized through Active Schools:

2012/13 192000

2013/14 205000

2014/15 236000

 which represents a 23% increase over the three years. In addition, the Active School programme has a positive impact on communities by making the best of local volunteers supporting the delivery of activities. The number of volunteers involved in this way has grown in 2014/15 to over 800 (up 36% compared with 2013/14).

**Youth Achievements**

Community Learning and Development staff have supported young people has to achieve a wide range of learning targets. Over 500 young people completed externally validated awards such as Dynamic Youth, Youth Achievement, John Muir and Duke of Edinburgh and over 300 are continuing to work towards them. In the fourth quarter of the 2014/15 alone, an additional 1137 young people achieved outcomes – a 46% increase on the quarter 3 total.

**Participation in Leisure Activities**

The number of users of sports facilities (per thousand of the population), continued to increase during 2014/15 Final quarter figures for the year were 10% increased on the same quarter in 13/14, with year to date figures being 13% higher. To achieve this, the Service assessed existing programmes to ensure that they both meet community need and continued to be innovative. In addition, it has sought to plan and deliver programmes of training courses to enable the delivery of a wider programme of activities across Aberdeenshire.

**Youth Music Initiative**

Aberdeenshire runs the 2nd largest Youth Music Initiative (YMI) programme in Scotland. Over 2014/15, there was a 25% (664) increase in young people participating in and benefitting from programmes run and organized by Aberdeenshire YMI.

**Local Learning Community Partnerships**

As part of Aberdeenshire Council’s response to the statutory “Requirements for Community Learning & Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013”, “Local Learning Community Partnerships” have been set up in each learning community in Aberdeenshire. The groups have a remit to promote local coordination, audit need and develop a local community learning plan which will support and develop community learning in the area for those who will benefit most. Community Learning and Development staff are working with the groups to facilitate the creation of their Local Learning Community Plan which is organised under the three pillars of Working with young people, Family and adult learning and Supporting community capacity building.

**Partnership working – Place Partnership with Creative Scotland**

The Council entered a Place Partnership with Creative Scotland, the national development agency for arts screen and creative industries, which was launched at an event at Finzean Village Hall in December 2014

The partnership work identified four objectives for the programme:

* Celebrate the richness and diversity in arts and culture across Aberdeenshire, both delivered by the Council but equally delivered by the independent and voluntary sector activities.
* Support the positive regeneration potential of third sector cultural providers and small arts businesses by promoting greater understanding of their strengths, and building their national profile
* Develop local, national and potentially international networks and partnerships, to support local practitioners and organisations
* Demonstrate the benefits of cultural participation in promoting health and well-being for individuals, and stronger sustainable communities

**Satisfaction Ratings**

Although LGBF Indicator C&L5a,c & d all indicate a falls in adults expressing satisfaction with Libraries, Museums and Leisure services respectively, Aberdeenshire’ s own reputation tracker, which is based on a much bigger sample size, indicates broadly stable levels of satisfaction across these areas at a much higher level. For libraries this was 96%, for Museums it was 90% and for Leisure services it was 86% in 2014/15.

You can view performance for all Cultural Services indicators by [clicking here](http://www.covalentcpm.com/CovalentWebModule/CovalentWidget?c=424&id=3102)

**What are we doing to improve?**

We are committed to using a range of self evaluative information to inform and drive our plans for improvement. We closely monitor our performance using a range of performance measures and plan and implement interventions where performance is below expectations. We regularly evaluate the quality of all aspects of our work against recognised quality frameworks, and take active steps to address performance issues identified through our own, or via external evaluations. These processes underlie the strategic planning for the improvement activities identified within our Service and Business plans. As a result of our self-evaluation using this range of evidence, include the LGBF performance measures, we have identified the following set of improvement priorities which will inform our improvement activities during 2015/16 and beyond:

1. Improve learning and teaching and the quality of the curriculum in our schools, early years and other learning establishment
2. Improve our performance and raise levels of attainment and achievement
3. Provide more flexible early years and childcare services equitably across Aberdeenshire
4. Further develop effective integrated working to ensure that children and families receive the support they need, when they need it, and as far as possible, within their local communities
5. Ensure that our learning estate is maintained and developed in order to support and facilitate our strategic objectives
6. Ensure that our business processes and procedures are effective and efficient and deliver value for money
7. Fully develop leadership capacity at all levels across the service. Invest in learning and development of our staff to build capacity and improve leadership
8. Support economic development by working with communities and by ensuring that young people are ready and able to take up positive and productive post-school destinations

Although all of the above priorities represent important drivers of our improvement activity, priorities 2, 5 and 6 are particularly relevant to addressing the performance issues highlighted by the Culture and Leisure Services LGBF performance measures for 2014/15.

Find out more about our planned improvement actions by [clicking here](http://www.covalentcpm.com/CovalentWebModule/Dashboard?c=424&i=4564215)