

Measuring development trust **impact**

A summary report by Education Scotland
& Development Trusts Association Scotland



DEVELOPMENT
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the community-led regeneration network

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This is a co-authored summary report of a time-limited collaboration between **Education Scotland**, the quality and improvement service for education in Scotland, and **Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS)**, the national membership organisation for development trusts in Scotland.

The pilot project involved an Education Scotland team conducting separate week-long reviews of six individual DTAS development trust members between the period of March and November 2016. The individual reports from these six reviews are available on the Education Scotland website (see page 5).



1. Context	1
2. How have the trusts impacted on the lives of the people they work with?	1
3. How have the trusts impacted on their local economy?	2
4. How have the trusts improved outcomes through partnership working?	3
5. Overall summary	4
6. The review process	4
7. Policy implications	4
8. Future action & Useful links	5



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1 Context

Development Trusts are community led organisations which utilise a combination of enterprise, creativity and voluntary effort to address local need and pro-actively drive forward local regeneration processes.

In doing so they will often employ staff, own assets, operate businesses, run services and other activities. The development trust approach is holistic in nature, operating across economic, social, cultural and environmental spheres of community life, and is characterised by a commitment to enterprise and to establishing meaningful partnerships. A 2016 Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS) survey of 220 development trusts found that collectively they employ over 750 people, have a combined turnover of £50.3 million (of which 42% is generated through trading activity) and own assets valued at £90 million.

The growth of development trusts in Scotland, both numerically and in scale and range of operation over recent years, has been a largely organic phenomena. However, as this development trust network has expanded and matured, a recurring concern is how they can best capture and demonstrate the 'impact' of their activity. This issue emerged as the priority concern at a members consultation within the 2015 DTAS Annual Conference, the national body for development trusts. This was the catalyst for discussions and a subsequent collaboration between DTAS & Education Scotland.

During 2016, Education Scotland, undertook reviews of six development trusts. DTAS identified a representative sample of members operating across different types of communities, and those organisations were offered the opportunity to be the subject of an Education Scotland Review. All six organisations approached enthusiastically volunteered to be part of a review process. These were Auchinleck Community Development Initiative (Ayrshire), Cranhill Development Trust (Glasgow),

Healthy n Happy Community Development Trust (Lanarkshire), Huntly and District Development Trust (Aberdeenshire), Inverclyde Community Development Trust (Inverclyde), and Mull & Iona Community Trust (Argyll and Bute).

Each of the six development trusts operate in areas affected by either rural isolation or multiple deprivation. These communities face particular economic and social challenges, such as the loss or a lack of services, high levels of unemployment and health inequalities. Each of the participating organisations is different in terms of their size, date of establishment and the range of the work they do. However, development trusts all share some important key features such as being responsive to local needs and seeking to improve the lives and livelihoods of local people.

2 How have the trusts impacted on the lives of the people they work with?

All six development trusts reviewed share a person-centred approach and are building the capacity of individuals, groups and communities.

They are helping to improve people's health and wellbeing in a variety of ways. For example, several trusts are helping young people and adults to be more active through walking, cycling or gardening. A range of projects are also tackling social isolation and helping to address mental health issues. Healthy n Happy was first established as a Healthy Living Centre and they have maintained a focus on tackling mental health issues. They are helping people become more resilient, confident and able to regain more control over their lives. The Musical Minds project in Mull and Iona supports older people living with dementia or Parkinson's disease, people suffering from a stroke or those experiencing social isolation. Learners are gaining therapeutic benefits to their health, wellbeing and self-esteem and this helps to maintain their dignity.

A few of the development trusts reviewed have a particular focus on working with families and are helping to build community cohesion. In Cranhill, outreach work is helping to break down barriers between communities. Families enjoy learning together in the year-round family and parent learning programmes run with partners. Parents reflected positively on how they interact with their children and enhance their skills during the sessions.

Each of the development trusts is providing opportunities for people to gain a range of new skills including crafts, bike maintenance, horticulture and english for speakers of other languages. Most of the trusts have a focus on helping people into employment. A few have developed their own employability programmes in response to clearly identified local needs. Clients of the Support to Engage Programme in Auchinleck are very well supported in their journey towards employment, An effective outreach approach in local cafes and door-to-door is successfully engaging new clients and helping to break down barriers. A holistic and person-centred approach is resulting in

“ A holistic and person-centred approach is resulting in individuals making positive progress in their journey towards employments ”

individuals making positive progress in their journey towards employment. Similarly in Inverclyde, the development trust provides all five stages of the Employability Skills Pipeline with input from partners at key stages. Using a person-centred approach, local people now can articulate their skills, knowledge and aspirations and are benefiting from high quality employment support. This includes, initial engagement and assessment, literacies support, training, work placements and in-work support. Local people are gaining valuable skills, accreditation and progressing to positive destinations, including sustained employment.

All of the development trusts involve and support volunteers. In a few cases, there are a large number of volunteering opportunities.

Within most trusts, volunteering is a key element of employability work. Some volunteers are able to progress to paid employment within, and outwith, the organisation. Although the development trusts are each having a significantly positive impact on the life chances of individuals, most of the trusts would benefit from developing a fuller understanding of their overall impact. This would help them to further demonstrate, celebrate and build on their successes.

3 How have the trusts impacted on their local economy?

Although the scale of economic impact varies across the six development trusts they do share some common features.

They are providing employment opportunities, investing in local infrastructure and securing significant levels of additional funding to develop programmes and projects. Healthy n Happy, Huntly and District, Mull and Iona and Auchinleck have each secured over £1 million of investment for their local communities. Several of the trusts have a focus on renewable energy as a contribution towards sustainability. Garmony Hydro is the first community owned hydro-electric generating station on Mull and a major community asset generating both renewable electricity and additional funding for community initiatives through its Waterfall Fund. Huntly and District and Auchinleck are both making good progress towards erecting wind turbines, driven by the prospect of creating a 25 year income stream, and increased financial sustainability for their respective organisations.

All of the development trusts reviewed have built or enhanced existing buildings and as a result a few are now providing affordable space for smaller organisations. Healthy n Happy have refurbished an old church into a brand new community hub which also houses their community radio station. In Mull and Iona a new £1.5 million building houses the trust headquarters, one of its charity shops

and is providing affordable accommodation for growing local businesses. Most of the trusts have established or are developing enterprise projects. This is helping to reduce their reliance on external funding and providing a source of income to invest in local services. For example, Auchinleck Premier Landscaping is generating income through its landscaping and ground maintenance contracts in addition to providing local employment.

Trust leaders and staff are highly committed to making a difference and are ambitious for their communities

Education Scotland identified a strong ethos of respect within each of the development trusts. Trust leaders and staff are highly committed to making a difference and are ambitious for their communities. Staff and volunteers are valued and have opportunities to develop their skills and experience. In terms of governance and direction, there is no common area for development shared across each of the six trusts. This is largely because they are all at a different point in their development. As such, there is a significant opportunity for trusts across Scotland to share their skills and experience and support one another as they develop further. DTAS has a key role to play in the further facilitation of this networking.

4 How have the trusts improved outcomes through partnership working?

A key pillar of the development trust approach is a commitment to establishing and maintaining partnerships with relevant public sector, private sector and other third sector partners.

During the reviews, Education Scotland found that local people and stakeholder partners value the knowledge, expertise and skills of

staff and volunteers. Development trusts are often approached as a key source of knowledge and support. Like the organisations themselves, the culture of trust and respect extends into their partnership working. Development trusts are recognised by partners as having a key role within their community.

The range of partnership working is wide and varied and specific to the local context and work of each development trust. The trusts commonly work with other third sector organisations, local businesses and educational establishments. They work with a range of national organisations including the Forestry Commission, Police Scotland, local and national government and the NHS. Where there is a focus on employability, partnership working extends to other key partners such as Job Centre Plus and Skills Development Scotland. The trusts are supported by a range of funding partners, both large and small, including the Big Lottery.

A key pillar of the development trust approach is a commitment to establishing and maintaining partnerships

However, the range and nature of the partnerships are often complex and this can sometimes be confusing to external stakeholders. In a few cases, the development trusts would benefit from developing more formal partnership arrangements and clearer links to wider strategic outcome planning such as Community Planning Partnerships. This would help to ensure that the development trusts are consistently clear about their unique role and contribution to building stronger communities. It could also raise awareness and appreciation of this role and contribution among external stakeholders. However, it is important that closer collaboration with public sector partners is not achieved at the expense of the creativity, independence and enterprise which is the essence of the development trusts.

5 Overall summary

Key strengths

- ✓ High levels of commitment and ambition to improving lives and communities.
- ✓ Valued community anchor organisations, effective at getting things done.
- ✓ Strong ethos of partnership working leading to positive impact on people and communities.

Areas for improvement

- ↑ Ensure that strategic priorities, plans and structures are clear and keep pace with the changing needs of the organisation.

6 The review process

As part of the collaboration, representatives of Education Scotland, DTAS and the six participating development trusts met after the completion of the six reviews to reflect on the review process.

The development trust representatives complemented the skill and professionalism of the review teams in understanding the distinctiveness of development trusts and capturing a significant amount of their impact. While acknowledging the considerable time and commitment required to prepare and participate, all six development trusts felt that the review had been a useful and positive experience. All had plans to use their review report to address the issues raised. There was a general consensus across all parties that the voluntary nature of the engagement with Education Scotland was a critical factor in encouraging active buy-in from the organisations being reviewed.

Several development trusts commented on the impact which the independence, standing and reputation of Education Scotland as an organisation had on the review process in general, and the engagement of public stakeholders in particular.

7 Policy implications

As development trust activity sits at the heart of several Scottish Government policy areas, these reviews provides a timely contribution to the discussion around the implementation and future development of community-led regeneration, community empowerment, developing the social economy and local democracy policy.

Development trust activity also interfaces with Scottish Government energy (community renewables), climate change, housing and rural development policy.

There is increasing evidence that there are a range of benefits, including mental and physical health benefits from people being and feeling part of a community. Whilst more difficult to capture within a review of this nature, the role of development trusts as 'place makers' and 'community builders' is an important contribution which has the potential to directly address Scottish Government ambitions around reducing isolation and the health prevention agenda.

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8 Future action

Education Scotland made it clear from the outset that their offer to conduct these reviews of development trusts was a time limited intervention.

To provide a relevant framework for the reviews, Education Scotland created a hybrid framework drawing from existing self-evaluation frameworks, including the Place Standard.

Unlike community-based housing organisations, there is no regulatory framework for development trust activity. However, Education Scotland reviews have increased interest in the development trust movement, through DTAS, developing its own review system. A preferred model emerged namely a peer review framework that could be supported by Education Scotland.

To further explore and take forward this proposition, Education Scotland have undertaken to develop a bespoke development trust review framework. In addition Education Scotland will give further consideration to an ongoing, although much more limited involvement in developing a peer review model. For their part, DTAS will explore the resourcing of the peer element of this proposition with a range of funders.

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Education Scotland
Development Trust Reviews
<http://ow.ly/czUI309eU2L>

Development Trusts
Association Scotland
www.dtascot.org.uk

Auchinleck Community
Development Initiative
www.auchinleckcdi.co.uk

Cranhill Development Trust
www.cranhilldt.org.uk

Healthy n Happy Community
Development Trust
www.healthynhappy.org.uk

Huntly and District
Development Trust
www.huntlydevelopmenttrust.org

Inverclyde Community
Development Trust
www.the-trust.org.uk

Mull and Iona
Community Trust
www.mict.co.uk

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