**1. Introduction**

The purpose of this briefing paper is to explore how the Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire (HSCNL) Community Solutions Programme’s (CS) overall approach, and the Programme’s integrated approach to Performance Management, Evaluation, Learning and Improvement (PMELI) relates to and supports the [‘Human Learning Systems’](https://www.humanlearning.systems/overview/) (HLS) approach, recently adopted by HSCNL.

**2. The Community Solutions Programme**

**2.1 Approach**

[Community Solutions](http://www.voluntaryactionnorthlanarkshire.org/article/about-community-solutions) is a successful, cross-sector health and social care investment and improvement programme for North Lanarkshire. The Programme - which was established in 2012 - aims to improve people’s health, wellbeing, quality of life and equality by investing in community-led initiatives which build community, family and individual strengths and resources - with a focus on prevention and early intervention.

The programme is supported by a strategy and investment plan which sets out the overall vision, mission, values and approach of the programme rather than a detailed plan of interventions. The interventions that are funded are informed by:

* the programme's values and context
* information on need and the views of users and carers
* evidence and learning of what works from sources beyond the programme and through the programme itself (see below)
* creative ideas from the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) and others.

The programme’s values and approach are focussed on person-centredness; community empowerment and [co-production,](https://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk/what-is-copro) where equal relationships are developed between people who use services and people who provide services – with support provided ‘**with** people’ rather than ‘to them’. The programme is organised to support involvement of people needing and receiving support and service providers in the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) and public sectors in a positive and participatory cycle of planning, delivery, evaluation, learning and continuous improvement. This approach is informed by the [Ladder of Participation](https://organizingengagement.org/models/ladder-of-citizen-participation/) and [National Community Engagement Standards](https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards)

The Programme invests strategically in the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS) through several complementary strands of work.

* Local partnership-working between the CVS and public sector through six Community Solutions Locality Consortia, to identify and respond to local needs, including development of a Local Partnership Plan and management of a Local Activity Fund which makes small funding awards to CVS organisations.
* Development and delivery of direct support and services by CVS organisations on priority, thematic issues including anticipatory care; befriending; carers’ support; community transport; hospital discharge support and more.
* Capacity-building for carers and the CVS.

**2.2 The Community Solutions Performance Management, Evaluation, Learning and Improvement (PMELI) Framework**

The previous Community Solutions Programme evaluation Framework was in place for around 10 years. In late 2022, a major review of the Programme’s evaluation Framework was conducted, and the new PMELI Framework was launched in early 2023. The PMELI Framework sets out the Programme’s approach to performance management, evaluation, learning and improvement to support funded projects and the Programme.

The Framework supports projects funded through the Programme to set up their project’s performance management and evaluation processes uses a programme-wide approach with supportive tools. Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL) supports funded projects to participate in collective, learning events and uses information from these events and each project to prepare Learning and Impact Reports for each Fund and the programme overall.

This process supports ongoing learning and improvement for:

* individual funded projects and organisations
* each CS fund
* the CS Programme as a whole
* HSCNL and community planning.

**2. The ‘Human Learning Systems’ Approach**

The [Human Learning Systems (HLS)](https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/assets/documents/hls-real-world.pdf) approach is defined as ‘purposeful activities that support human freedom and flourishing.’ HLS can support public sector services such as education, welfare provision, and healthcare and the contribution of civil society such as the work of charities and social enterprises, mutual aid groups and community development.

HLS has been developed by **Christopher Hood**, as an alternative approach to the currently dominant public management approach, ‘[New Public Management’ (NPM)](https://schoolofpoliticalscience.com/new-public-management/) which was first coined in the late 1980s and has been growing in popularity since. HLS argues that NPM takes a mechanistic, top-down managerial approach which does not reflect how outcomes are made in the real world. HLS understands that outcomes people and organisations achieve are made in a complex, messy reality. HLS defines an outcome as the pattern of results created by the combination of people and causal and contributing factors (such as the economy; level of public services; level of social support; attitudes, skills, resources) that form people’s and organisations context and create the “system” in which we all live and operate.

The HLS approach adopts a cyclical learning strategy which involves:

* learning about outcomes in context
* understanding the system outcomes are achieved or not
* experimenting with appropriate solutions to achieve the desired outcome, rather than implementing a pre-disposed strategy.

An HLS learning cycle supports change, with evaluation seen as a tool for learning and improvement, as well as a mechanism for demonstrating accountability to stakeholders. An HLS approach is about spreading learning rather than scaling up pre-disposed solutions. Learning from one context can be a useful starting point for another, but the key to HLS is the exploration within the new context, rather than implementation.

The HLS approach suggests organisations might want to use a ‘Learning Partner,’ to help organisations record and share their learning for improvement and reporting purposes. The HLS approach is about creating sharing understanding and learning together.

**3. Community Solutions Programme and HLS**

The Community Solutions Programme supports an HLS approach in the following ways.

* an understanding of the complex context and systems in which the people, organisations operate and achieve outcomes
* a value framework which supports person-centredness, co-production and learning
* creativity and a commitment to a cycle of learning and improvement at multiple levels – individuals, projects, organisations, programme and the wider system.

Prepared by Rebecca Thomson, Evaluation Officer Community Solutions Programme and Maddy Halliday, CEO, VANL, July 2023