

Education and Skills Committee Inquiry: Attainment and achievement of school aged children experiencing poverty



CLD Standards Council Scotland response

Question 1: *How has your work supported the educational attainment of children and young people? What has worked well and what barriers have there been to success?*

The CLD Standards Council seeks to ensure that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners who are recognised as competent, confident and committed to equality, empowerment and life-wide learning for all. It drives high standards of professional practice in the CLD sector by the approval of courses, qualifications and professional learning, registration of practitioners and enabling professional development.

CLD professional practice, some key components of which are outlined below, requires high-level skills, knowledge and understanding. The CLD Standards Council has an essential role in growing a professional learning culture that enables the development of these competences, and in assuring standards.

The values of CLD and its methods of practice give it a clear focus on the attainment and achievement of school aged children experiencing poverty:

- CLD prioritises people who are disadvantaged, and areas where poverty is concentrated.
- A primary feature of CLD principles and methodology is to start from the interests, aspirations and needs of the people and communities we work with. This means that it can engage successfully with those that the formal education system has difficulty in engaging with.

Evidence from HMIE inspections indicates strong performance by CLD providers¹. High quality CLD practice does not provide a “quick fix” for improving the attainment and achievement of school aged children experiencing poverty, but it does provide a key part of a realistic strategy for doing this.

Specifically relevant aspects of the CLD role include:

- Youth work:
 - Raises confidence and motivation of children and young people and enables them to engage with learning.
 - Enables and supports young peoples’ achievement through awards schemes, outdoor learning, community activity, volunteering.
 - Enables and supports young peoples’ achievement and attainment in more formal curriculum areas – e.g. STEM.
- Literacy and numeracy work with young people, engaging some of those who are most excluded to engage with learning.

¹ <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/QuISECommunity%20learning%20and%20development.pdf>

- Family learning: enabling parents, particularly those who have had negative experiences of the education system themselves, to support their children to engage positively in learning, and to do so themselves.
- Adult learning that develops parents' and carers' confidence and capability to assist with young peoples' learning and promotes a learning culture.
- Adult learning/community capacity building that develops parents' and carers' confidence and capability to communicate and engage with schools.
- Community development support for communities to:
 - Develop support and learning opportunities for children and young people (e.g. through out-of-school care/clubs, school holiday provision, youth clubs and activities).
 - Engage and communicate with schools.
 - Engage effectively and assertively in partnership work to address poverty issues and improve educational provision.
- Collaboration with other, across agencies, sectors and disciplines to build the confidence and capacity of individuals and communities.

The CLD Standards Council's Approvals system supports professional learning pathways from development of CLD skills in community involvement, youth leadership or volunteer tutoring through to degree level and beyond. It provides routes into professional employment for people active in their own communities who have often previously had limited engagement with the education system.

The most obvious barrier to success on a larger scale and with greater impact is the lack of sufficient resources. This is clearly an issue shared across public services, although CLD provision has been particularly severely affected by spending reductions, in part at least as a result of its statutory basis being less robust than that of comparable services.

However a more useful way to look at barriers to success is in terms of uncertainty and lack of consistency in relation to funding and the lack of means to ensure that strong and positive policy statements at national level are translated into consistent and sustained delivery.

CLD is a value-based practice defined by a set of competences underpinned by a Code of Ethics, not a "department". To realise its potential impact, service planners need to embed this practice as a core element of strategies, while organising the required provision to deliver this core role in line with local needs. In some instances this has happened, but in too many there is instead a churn of organisational structures with little or no strategic sense of how CLD can impact on key issues.

In other words, while there is a clear lack of sufficient resources for CLD provision, greater impact could be achieved even without additional resources if those available were applied in a more consistent, co-ordinated and strategic way; a relatively modest additional investment combined with this could have a major impact.

More specifically in relation to the CLD Standards Council itself, the barriers are similar. Resources are very limited in relation to the scale of the task. Equally importantly, an organisational form that is more fully fit for purpose is required. Since its inception in 2008, the CLD Standards Council has been located within host agencies (from 2011, Education Scotland). This provided a means of establishing

the Standards Council and taking forward the early stages of its key functions. However, it now needs a distinct organisational identity reflecting the nature of its functions. Establishing this would provide an important step in developing a more coherent and strategic national framework for the development and delivery of CLD.

Question 2: *Are there any services that you / your organisation has not been able to provide that you believe would work?*

Examples of work that the CLD Standards Council has not been able to progress as a result of limited resources and/or the need for a more appropriate organisational structure are listed below. All would contribute to the raising of standards of CLD practice and as a result to improving the effectiveness of services in raising the attainment and achievement of school aged children experiencing poverty.

- Developing the system for registration of practitioners as a more robust tool for regulation of standards.
- Wider and more systematic implementation of “developmental” approvals for CLD qualifications below degree level (e.g. HNC Working with Communities delivered by colleges).
- Expansion of the Standards Council Standards Mark to meet demand for its recognition process for continuing professional learning provision by employers.
- Increasing engagement with volunteer practitioners of CLD and their access to practice development and networking opportunities.
- Undertaking the first review of professional learning in CLD since 2001 to ensure that courses and qualifications at foundation, pre-qualifying, degree and post-qualifying (continuing professional learning) levels are fit for current purpose.
- Support for increased uptake of SVQs and Modern Apprenticeships in Youth Work and Community Development, further improving professional learning pathways.
- Enhanced partnership working with Skills Development Scotland to expand the accreditation of learning opportunities, further improving professional learning pathways.

Question 3: *If you work with schools/local authorities/others to address school attainment and wider achievement, what makes collaboration on this issue easy/difficult?*

We work with colleagues within Education Scotland and Scottish Government who are working to address school attainment and wider achievement, with a range of other national agencies and with local authorities. The main difficulty in making these collaborations productive is that colleagues working to address school attainment and wider achievement often do so within a policy, practice and conceptual framework that equates “education” with “schooling”, and, when it allows for the existence of other activities that have some relevance to education, sees their role exclusively in terms of supporting schools and/or teachers.

A related difficulty is a tendency to focus exclusively on “attainment” in the sense of exam results and to give little (or only tokenistic) attention to other forms of “achievement” that can be equally important in relation to developing the capacities intended to be at the core of Curriculum for Excellence. Support for and recognition

of wider achievement often plays an essential part in building confidence for children (and people of all ages) experiencing poverty, and in engaging them with learning.

Where local authorities, for example, are committed to holistic strategies for education and community empowerment within wider community planning processes this facilitates productive collaboration on the issue.

Question 4: *What else could be done to support the attainment /achievement of children and young people from families affected by poverty?"*

In the short to medium term,

- Recognition of CLD as a key contributor to the attainment /achievement of children and young people from families affected by poverty; consistently embedded in policy, delivery and accountability processes.
- Ensuring that Regional Improvement Collaboratives recognise the importance of learning outside school as well as in school and that this recognition is reflected in their priorities and work-plans.
- Ensuring that improvement planning for education similarly recognises out-of-school learning, and that support for lifelong learning has a particular impact on the attainment /achievement of children and young people living in families *and communities* affected by poverty.
- Ensuring that links between improvement planning for education, CLD planning and community planning at local authority and more local level are strengthened.
- Ensuring that work to support the attainment /achievement of children and young people from families affected by poverty, for example through the engagement of pupils and parents or the use of the Pupil Equity Fund, benefits from and is linked with work on community empowerment, co-production of services and participatory budgeting.
- Raising the profile of CLD as a named element in the Scottish Government Education and Skills portfolio and the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee remit.
- Enhancing joint initiatives between the Education and Skills and Local Government and Communities Committees in relation to poverty, community empowerment and educational achievement.

In the longer term, moving from an education system heavily focused on schooling towards a lifelong learning system that:

- Values education and learning in all settings;
- Builds on the strengths of existing institutions and professional practices;
- Has a clear focus on the empowerment of communities that are disadvantaged by poverty;
- Is founded on collaborative working between all the relevant disciplines based on mutual respect and parity of esteem.

The CLD Standards Council would welcome the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Committee to explore these issues.