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Legislation, strategy and reality—Happy New Year!

Welcome to the second issue of the CLD Standards Council's Policy Commentary. We want this commentary to help strengthen the voice of CLD by promoting fresh thinking about how policy impacts on practice and how the experience of practice can shape policy.



We hope that by the time you read this, you'll have fed your views into the Scottish Government's consultation on the proposals for legislation on community empowerment, and considered the opportunities to contribute to the national discussion on the Youth Work Strategy.

We've provided comments from the Standards Council on the proposals for the Community Empowerment Bill as a contribution to the debate needed to get the best legislative result possible.

In this Commentary we're aiming to explore the implications of these developments further, focusing on the challenges they present for CLD practice and how we can work together to address these.

Professional identity: old hat or new challenges?

At the Standards Council, we like to ask challenging questions - so here's one:

Is focusing on CLD practice, and the professional identity that informs it, a retreat from the world we're now in?

Some argue yes: that the need is to focus on how we achieve outcomes through partnership and thinking in terms of a profession with identified values, ethical principles and competences is irrelevant or worse. If the aspiration is for all public services staff to co-produce person-centred services, planned in partnership with communities, shouldn't CLD practitioners simply merge themselves into the collective effort?

Alternatively...

The Standards Council is founded on the belief that an inclusive CLD profession, working collaboratively and making an impact in an ever-widening range of settings, is more valuable than ever. The impact that CLD practice based on the Competences and Code of Ethics—whether it's described as CLD or not—can make through individual and collective learning and the action that results is not an optional indulgence, it's an essential factor in the wider change that's aspired

to. Some challenges follow from this second point of view. The impact and value of CLD depends on the rigour and creativity of practice – can we demonstrate this? How can we ensure that this practice is recognized fully as a part of “modernised” public services? How do we articulate both the distinctiveness of CLD, and its connectedness, in contexts as varied as the community empowerment bill, the early years “collaborative” and the youth work strategy?

The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland:
Policy Commentary

Community Empowerment: expectations and legislation...

The Scottish Government’s consultation on the proposed legislation now known as the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill is over. The proposals set out in the consultation paper certainly succeeded in stimulating vigorous debate but may have suffered from the high hopes and

expectations that had been invested in them; certainly a number of challenging questions have been raised.

One of the issues that has concerned CLD practitioners is this: who is most likely to benefit, and likely to benefit most, from opportunities presented by the proposals.

How relevant will community ownership be for disadvantaged urban communities? Will groups who already have the most resources and access to skills take the most advantage from the right “to request to participate” or to pursue requests for the transfer of assets?

There has also been surprise that proposals for strengthening Community Planning, while making clear commitments about clarifying the duties of all public sector partners, have relatively little to say about enhancing the role of communities (or of the third sector).

...Practice, Competence and Ethics

The starting point of our CLD competences is to “know and understand the community in which we work”. How does this relate to the issues that the legislation for community empowerment will pose for communities (assuming for the moment that it broadly follows the proposals consulted on)?

Take for example the use of a “right to request to

participate”. Most communities, particularly those that experience exclusion and poverty, will have a variety of issues they’d like an opportunity to “improve outcomes” around. Where to start and what to focus on? Community workers who can work with them to “critically analyse internal and external factors impacting on individuals and communities” will be a vital resource.

Community groups will make best use of new opportunities by working together and by joining up their requests to participate, their requests for transfer of assets and the influence they can have through community planning. A community worker who can use her or his skills to help communities shape their own strategies for change will be doubly valuable.

Similarly, a community based adult learning worker who can develop opportunities to learn through dialogue about, for example, opportunities to participate in “improving outcomes” will have a key role in making empowerment a reality. As will a youth worker who can apply their CLD competences to enabling young people to take advantage of these kinds of opportunities.

What next?

How much of the CLD practice that you are involved in or responsible for is engaging with people in the kind of way described here?

How well prepared are we, individually and collectively, for the kind of practice required?

Are you working with colleagues to develop the skills that we need?

What kinds of barriers need to be overcome—and what part can you play in doing this?

However the proposals are finally shaped into legislation, enabling excluded communities to take advantage of it is sure to be a major challenge. To meet it, there will be a need to bring together resources and skills from many different sources; working in partnership will be a basic requirement.

The competence of practitioners in working collaboratively is one essential ingredient, and so too is the competence of managers in engaging in, and influencing, more strategic partnerships from an informed CLD perspective.

What are we doing to make sure we’re ready for the challenge?

Last but not least, the Code of Ethics reminds us that the “primary client” of CLD practitioners is “the community, the young person or the adult learner with whom we engage.”

The opportunities arising from legislation for community empowerment will bring this sharply into focus—are we clear about the ethical principle in this new context? Can we use the arguments put forward by the Christie Commission to explain why it’s important?

The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland:
Policy Commentary

Ambitions for Youth Work

The Scottish Government, Education Scotland and YouthLink Scotland have issued “Our ambitions for improving life chances of young people in Scotland – draft national youth work strategy 2014-2019”.

A series of “national discussions” is taking place across the country and these will inform the implementation plan which is to be published along with

the finalised strategy in April.

Few would disagree with the ambitions that are identified: to put young people at the heart of policy; to ensure Scotland is the best place to be young and grow up in; to recognise the value of youth work; to build workforce capacity; and to ensure we measure our impact.

How far along the road to achieving these ambitions are we? The draft

strategy is very positive about the role of youth work but leaves answering this question to others. This leaves plenty of scope for practitioners to shape the direction of youth work, with the National Discussions as a first opportunity.

The Standards Council has a particular interest in building workforce capacity. The draft strategy identifies “recognising young people’s contribution” as one of the key areas for attention in building workforce capacity. It highlights that around 220,000 children are living in poverty in Scotland and states a commitment to ensuring that “all young people have opportunities which will improve their life chances”.

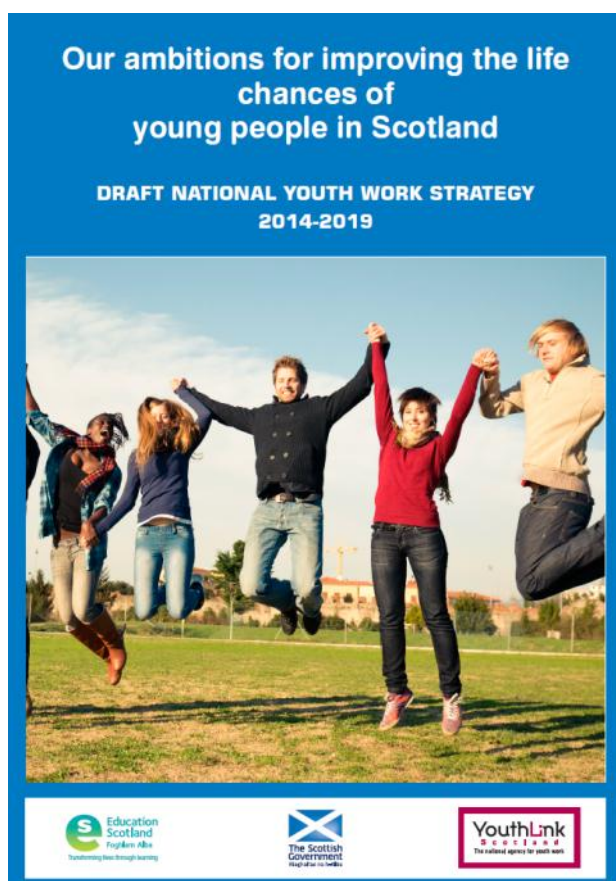
This is indeed ambitious. The draft Strategy “recognises that both universal and more targeted specific work have equal validity and importance”; how are they to be combined together, within limited resources, both to make a real

difference to the young people living in poverty (and those experiencing other forms of disadvantage) and also to ensure that there are opportunities for all young people to improve their life chances?

If these ambitions are to be real they need to translate into practice on the ground. Do we know what that looks like? We can be sure that reflective practice, and a learning culture that supports it, is essential. How do you see your role in developing that kind of practice and culture? If you’re not a youth worker, do you have a role in improving the life chances of young people—and are there skills you could develop to do this?

We hope you’ll contribute to the national discussions (online if you can’t get to one of the sessions) and consider the issues in your workplace. Let us know your ideas: the Standards Council would be glad to have a conversation

Further information, including dates of discussions, available from YouthLink Scotland.



How far along the road to achieving the ambitions set out in the Strategy are we?



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About us:

The Standards Council for Community Learning and Development for Scotland is the body responsible for the registration of CLD Practitioners, the approval of training courses and the continuing professional development of the sector workforce.

Help shape our future, today

This policy commentary has been developed for members of the CLD Standards Council for Scotland. To receive the commentary direct to your mailbox, register with us today.

The registration scheme is open now for all practitioners including volunteers. True to our collaborative approach, the scheme has been developed for the sector, by the sector.

Shaped by the views and experiences of a wide range of CLD practitioners, the CLD registration scheme will continue the culture of dialogue and debate, championing a shared sense of identity amongst practitioners, providing a national voice for the sector, and reaffirming the importance of CLD in Scotland.

Become a member and you can:

- Engage in professional dialogue, nationally and locally
- Drive forward new developments in our sector
- Support and evolve peer-led learning opportunities
- Be involved in Standards Council events and activities
- Play a lead role in shaping the future of the Standards Council
- Have a key influence on policy initiatives and responses

The Register is open to all CLD practitioners who demonstrate the values, principles, competences, Code of Ethics and commitment to CPD that underpin the sector, with two types of membership, based on qualifications and experience: Registered associate members and Registered members.

