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Issue 4

June 2014

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If community is the answer...

In the last issue of the Policy Commentary we raised some questions about how the CLD sector can develop a stronger voice and what a stronger voice sounds like. We outlined how the Standards Council is playing a part in this and sought your views on how we can do more.

Since then we've carried out a survey of members' views. Hopefully you took the opportunity to contribute to this, together with around a third of members. This excellent response will help to guide the Standards Council over the coming year and we will be feeding back on what you told us and what we plan to do as a result.

And working in partnership with IACD, we've delivered *Community is the answer*: the conference brought together almost 500 community development practitioners, academics and community activists from around the world.

...what are our ambitions for community development?

Since our last issue the Scottish Government has launched *Adult Learning in Scotland – Statement of Ambition*. True to its title, this sets out an ambitious vision for the role of adult learning, while leaving for the future the specifics of how this is to be achieved. The Statement sits alongside our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people in Scotland, the *National Youth Work Strategy*.

So far no parallel statement on community development or community capacity building.

Community is the answer was about the way people in diverse and excluded communities, some of them in more adverse circumstances than it's easy for most of us to imagine, develop a voice; and about the support that helps them to do this.

The conference has given us a vast amount of food for learning – not least around how we in Scotland work with communities to strengthen their voice and how we advocate better for the support that builds the individual and collective capacity needed to do this.

- **How do we ensure that policy and practice for CLD in Scotland gives equal emphasis to community development with youth work and adult learning - as the messages both from the participants in *Community is the answer* and the wider thrust of public policy demand?**
- **And what can we learn about developing a voice for CLD from the way in which communities have faced and overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges?**

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

Next steps for Community Empowerment legislation

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill has been published and has started its progress through the Scottish Parliament.

Do you know what's happening in your area to prepare for it becoming law? Are you and your colleagues considering the implications for practice? We'll be aiming to promote discussion on the issues for CLD practitioners over the coming months.

As part of the first stage of Parliament's consideration of the Bill, the Local Government and Regeneration Committee "wants to hear from local communities and interested bodies to find out if the proposed measures really will deliver empowerment and whether they will lead to real changes to where decisions are made?"

Further information on the Bill and on how to make a

submission [can be found here](#).

Meanwhile, Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) has developed a new website for community groups called Communities Channel Scotland. The Scottish Government has funded the development of the website, which puts communities in the spotlight by connecting people and sharing ideas.

The Communities Channel will share the stories and experience of community groups and organisations in their efforts to improve their communities, and highlight resources that can help groups in their work.

It will provide regular news stories on any developments affecting community groups, whether at a national or local level.

The Communities Channel can be found [here](#).

Workplace voices

In the last Commentary we noted the varying opportunities to be heard that we have as individuals and as CLD practitioners, and referred to trade union membership as one of these. A question was raised in response to this about whether it is relevant only to practitioners working for local authorities, or elsewhere in the public sector, with the suggestion that CLD practitioners in the voluntary sector are not usually members of trade unions.

We're not in a position to comment on how generally this is the case. But clearly employment circumstances and conditions of Standards Council members, and other CLD practitioners, vary; "casualization" is an issue for some, or for others there may be opportunities to develop "portfolio careers".

What are the challenges arising from all of this? There may be ways for you to work with colleagues to develop a

stronger voice in shaping your work situation. Clearly the Standards Council can't and shouldn't take on the role of representing members in the way a trade union can. We may be able to provide fora where members can find out about each other's work circumstances, shared issues and potential ways of addressing them. **Views on this would be welcome.**

CLD Innovation and Improvement Fund

The 'CLD Innovation and Improvement Fund', managed by Education Scotland, has been created to offer grant funding to partners working together to implement CLD policy, strategy and legislation. Applications to this fund must demonstrate how they will embed CLD policy in practice through delivering at least one of the following outcomes:

1. CLD partners are more confident, skilled and better equipped to deliver the requirements of CLD policy and legislation.
2. The quality of CLD activity is improved through innovative practice that embeds CLD policy.

For detailed information on assessment criteria, [please visit the Education Scotland website](#).

The application process for the Improvement and Innovation Fund this financial year 2014-15 is only going to be available once.

The deadline for applications is Friday 11 July 2014 at 5pm.

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

Ambitions for practice?

With the Youth Work Strategy and Adult Learning Statement published, there are two ambitious agendas for the work of CLD in place. This is welcome from a Standards Council perspective, in particular because a serious ambition implies a commitment to fulfil the stated aims. It is also a serious challenge: are we ready to take advantage of it?

It is worth reflecting on the scale of the ambitions that have been declared.

“Every adult in Scotland will have the right to access learning to meet their educational needs and aspirations. Youth work opportunities will be accessible, equitable and inclusive for all young people. Adult learning and the outcomes that learners achieve will be world leading. Scotland will have well-motivated, well-trained and supported [youth work] practitioners.”

With these and other admirable aspirations in place, in a context

where CLD practitioners are faced with relentless challenges over staffing and budgets, it's inevitable that a debate on resources will follow. No doubt as Standards Council members we will all engage with these in our own contexts.

But we can't afford to bury ourselves in questions of resources, over which most of us have little influence, at the expense of engaging with the other challenges and opportunities that the positive ambitions of policy present.

Here are three that will hopefully promote debate and action:

1. Part of what's distinctive about CLD is that it links personal development to community empowerment – not just in the sense that one might well follow from the other but as a coherent set of practices. The broader policy agenda developing from the Christie report demands this type of practice.

How do we apply and develop this kind of practice, based on the CLD competences and Code of Ethics and with community development as a powerful component, in the context of the Youth Work Strategy and the Adult Learning Statement of Ambition?

2. The Statement of Ambition and *Our ambitions for improving the life chances of young people in Scotland* both highlight the importance of workforce development. The Youth Work Strategy particularly emphasises the importance of training and development for volunteers.

Given the scale of the ambitions set out, what do we need to do differently to develop ourselves and the CLD workforce to meet the challenge?

3. Both the strategy and the statement of ambition refer to the wide range of policy agendas that CLD relates to; from “early years” to financial capability, from GIRFEC to community empowerment. CLD can potentially impact across all of these, and offer a key to changing the way that public services are delivered. But with limited resources, trying to be seen to contribute to all or most of them is likely to lead to dissipating energy and lack of recognisable impact.

Are we ready to make clear choices about where CLD efforts will be concentrated – whether at strategic level or in day-to-day practice - and assertive enough to say “no” to involvement in some areas of work? Do we have the political, analytical, evaluative and leadership skills required?

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

A sense of purpose

A number of Standards Council members were able to attend at least one day of the *Community is the answer* conference, which took place in Glasgow from 9-11th June.

We aim to share and build on the learning from the conference over the coming months. Here are some initial reflections.

For anyone in doubt, the conference showed that although the practice we're involved in takes a distinctive form in Scotland, there is nothing eccentric or accidental about its role. Delegates and speakers from across 6 continents (Antarctica wasn't represented) communicated their creativity and commitment in a common language, and illustrated time and again how community development enables people who have been excluded from resources, power and influence to start to shape their world.



We continue to try to bridge the gap between practice based in local authorities, or other public sector settings, and in third sector organisations. However many of the presentations and discussions at the conference highlighted a more fundamental question about practice – whether described as CLD or community development – located within the education, health or other “system”, whether in a statutory or voluntary agency.

This question is: to what extent do we define the change that we can work with communities to achieve in terms of the goals of the “system” we're part of? And in turn does this shape our view of what is possible “for them”?



Speakers at the conference including Harry Burns, until recently Scotland's Chief Medical Officer for health and now a Professor of Global Public Health, and Vikram Patel who combines similar academic eminence with a leading role in alternative, community based approaches to mental health in India, highlighted that a sense of purpose and meaning is the key factor in peoples' resilience and ability to thrive.



This indicates why the distinctive features of CLD practice are so powerful. We can discover, or rediscover, a sense of purpose when we're empowered – and empower ourselves - to make our own choices based on what's important to us.

It's precisely this distinctiveness of CLD that is repeatedly a target for savings and reorganisations, and which practitioners can find it hardest to maintain their focus on within the “service systems” that employ them. The conference gave a powerful message - and in particular this was the focus of Margaret Wheatley's presentation on the final day - about the value of continuing to practice in this distinctive way. And the importance of supporting each other to nurture the perseverance to do this.



This of course points to the role of the Standards Council. How do you see the part we can all play in supporting each other as individual practitioners?



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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.

