CLD Standards Council Scotland

Response
to

Consultation on Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice: Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

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About Us

The CLD Standards Council Scotland, as the Professional Registration and Standards Body (PRSB), is a place where Community Learning and Development professionals, students and volunteers can share information and learn from each other. We are a membership-based organisation, a Scotland-wide community of people committed to improving lives and supporting communities.

We believe that the work done by our members across the country really matters. We always aim to nurture their personal and professional development. That, in turn, helps them support and strengthen the communities they work in.

A further strand of our work is to set and maintain standards for what is expected from people working in CLD across Scotland. We do that by approving college and university courses, and by bringing our members together to share knowledge, learning and good practice, and to uphold collectively agreed standards from those working in our sector.

As a Scotland-wide organisation supporting those who are delivering essential work across the country's diverse communities, we are committed to using our collective voice to influence and inform those who lead, manage and fund CLD. As a member-led organisation we have a growing membership of over 3325 members, an executive committee and three functional committees which are made up of members from across the CLD sector in Scotland. Our approach and work plans to deliver our core responsibilities are defined by our member committees and based on feedback from the wider membership.

Our ministerially set core responsibilities are:

- Deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses, and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD
- Maintain a registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice
- Develop and establish a model of supported induction, professional learning, and training opportunities
- Improve and develop our organisational capability; and
- Collaborate and contribute to relevant CLD policy and workforce development information.

Vision

"Our vision is that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners that are recognised as competent, confident and committed to equality, empowerment and life-wide learning for all."

Mission

"Our mission is to drive high standards of professional practice in the CLD sector by the approval of professional learning, the registration of practitioners and the enabling of professional development, working with our members to be a voice for the profession."

The CLD Standards Council works with a wide range of organisations across CLD and education sectors, nationally and internationally. We are members of a number of organisations, some we have specific partnership or framework agreements with, and we engage and work with many others.

Organisations we have formal agreements with:

- AIEB (All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training)
- COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

- Education Scotland
- GTCS (General Teaching Council Scotland)
- JETS (Joint Education and Training Standards – UK & Republic of Ireland)
- SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries)
- Volunteer Scotland

Organisations we have membership of:

- BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland)
- CDAS (Community Development Alliance)
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland
- IACD (International Association for Community Development)
- Inclusion Scotland
- PARN (Professional Association of Research Networks)
- SCDI (Scottish Council for Development & Industry)
- SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
- TAG:PALYCW (The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work)

Key Stakeholders and Partner Organisations:

- Alliance of Commonwealth Youth Work Associations (ACWYA)
- CLD Managers Scotland
- CLD Professional Learning Networks
- College Development Network
- CWA (Community Work Australia)
- LEAD Scotland (Linking Education and Disability Scotland)
- Learning Link Scotland
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Open University
- SCDC (Scottish Community Development Centre)
- SCDN (Scottish Community Development Network)
- Scotland's Learning Partnership
- The Young Women's Movement
- WEA (Workers' Educational Association)
- YMCA Scotland
- Youth Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland
- Youth 1st (Fife)
- Youth Highland
- Young Scot

For further information on the CLD Standards Council please visit our website and view our social media cldstandards | Twitter, Facebook | Linktree. If you would like to discuss this response further, please email us on contact@cldstandardscouncil.org.uk

About Community Learning and Development in Scotland

Community Learning and Development is a strategic and essential field of professional practice within Scotland's education system. It is critical to the successful implementation of education, equality and community focused policy and legislation, particularly where these aim to reduce inequality, improve life chances and remove barriers to learning. CLD supports lifelong learning, empowerment, social justice, and participation, while also strengthening families, communities and the delivery of wider public services.

The CLD sector is a unification of the three professional practice disciplines of Adult Learning (Including ESOL), Community Development and Youth Work, and was recently reviewed and reported on in Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD), which was undertaken by Ms Kate Still, as part of Education Reform, and commissioned by Mr Graeme Dey MSP, the then Minister for Higher and Further Education, and Veterans. It clearly evidences how CLD plays a vital role in meeting the diverse and often complex educational needs of people of all ages across Scotland, including children, young people and adults with additional support needs (ASN) and those affected by poverty, trauma, disability, health needs, caring responsibilities, language barriers or social exclusion. Through accessible, inclusive and community-based approaches, CLD responds directly to individual circumstances, lived experience and local priorities, ensuring that learning opportunities are flexible, relational, needs led, and rooted in trust.

Supporting Children, Young People and Families
For children and young people, CLD through CLD youth work, provides early intervention, prevention and targeted support for those who may struggle to engage with formal education or require additional or alternative non-traditional pathways to thrive. CLD creates safe, supportive and relationship-based environments where learners with ASN can access education, and develop confidence, communication skills, resilience and wellbeing at their own pace.

CLD youth work supports learning for life, learning, and work by:

- Building social, emotional and interpersonal skills
- Strengthening voice, agency and participation in decision making
- Supporting transitions into adulthood, training, education or employment
- Promoting inclusion, anti-discriminatory practice and positive identity

Importantly, CLD works with families as empathetic partners in learning, recognising that supporting parents, carers and siblings is crucial to achieving positive outcomes for children and young people with ASN. This whole family and community based approach helps reduce isolation, increase understanding of support systems and strengthen relationships between learners, families, educational settings, services and communities.

Supporting Adults with Additional Support Needs
For adults, CLD plays a critical role in supporting those with additional support needs to re-engage with learning, particularly where previous experiences of formal education have been negative or inaccessible. CLD adult learning addresses core areas such as literacy, numeracy, digital inclusion, employability, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), health and wellbeing, parenting and independent living skills. These learning opportunities are especially vital for adults who:

- Experience disability or long-term health conditions
- Face poverty, unemployment or financial insecurity
- Have caring responsibilities or experience social isolation
- Require additional support to access education, services or work

Through strengths based, trauma informed and person-centred practice, CLD enables adults to build confidence, develop transferable skills and progress towards further learning, training, volunteering or employment, thereby improving outcomes not only for individuals, but also for their families and communities.

A Holistic, Community Based Approach
Across all age groups, CLD adopts a flexible, learner centred and inclusive approach, combining informal and non-formal learning with community engagement and development practice. Learning is codesigned with learners to ensure it is relevant, levelled, empowering and responsive to individual and collective need, including any additional support needs. By supporting people to identify personal and shared goals, CLD strengthens community capacity, enhances democratic participation and contributes to wider social, economic and environmental outcomes, including improved health, wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability. This community-based infrastructure is particularly important for reducing inequality and ensuring that learners with ASN and their families are not left behind.

An Integrated Professional Discipline
The three interconnected domains of CLD (Adult Learning, Community Development and Youth Work) work together as a single, unified professional discipline to contribute to Scotland's National Outcomes. The impact of CLD is greatest when these domains operate in unison, enabling whole family and whole community approaches to change. For example, CLD youth work supporting young people with additional support needs around confidence, employability or equality is significantly strengthened when complemented by community-based adult learning and community development that engage parents, carers and local communities to lead inclusive change. Guided by the National Performance Framework, along with the Competencies, Values and Ethics for the sector, CLD is a vital educative force that should be strengthened through focused legislation, recognition and investment.

Values-Based Practice
Fundamental to CLD practice across all settings are the values identified by the CLD Standards Council:

- **Self-determination** – Respecting individuals and valuing the right of people to make their own choices, including how they access learning and support.
- **Inclusion** – Valuing equality of opportunity and outcome, and actively challenging discriminatory practice, particularly for those with additional support needs.
- **Empowerment** – Increasing the ability of individuals, families and communities to influence decisions that affect their lives through individual and collective action.
- **Working collaboratively** – Maximising partnership working across services, sectors and communities, including meaningful collaboration with learners and families.
- **Promotion of lifelong learning** – Ensuring that learning is accessible at any stage of life and adaptable to changing needs and circumstances.

Legislative Context
In Scotland, CLD is underpinned by legislation through the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013, located within Section 2 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. These Regulations require each local authority to publish a three year CLD plan setting out how CLD activity, including support for learners with additional support needs and their communities, will be delivered locally, as outlined in the Community Learning and Development Plans Guidance 2024–2027. HMIE also produced the Evaluation of Community Learning and Development in Scotland, alongside the wider piece around Education Reform in Scotland.

CLD has its origins in the period of change that swept through society in the 18th and 19th centuries. New industries, and changes in science, technology, land use and education dislocated or smashed traditional forms of family and community life, with the history of youth work starting with voluntary action through faith organisations. Over time, we saw the further development of adult and young people's education with

development of the Workers Educational Association and the National Council of Labour Colleges, and then the growth of community development as a response to the "rediscovery of poverty" in the 1960's. The Alexander Report – Adult Education: the challenge of change (HMSO 1975) was a response to the persistent issues of disadvantage and advocated that "*Adult education should be regarded as an aspect of community education and should with the youth and community service, be incorporated into a community education service*". In 1998, Mr Brian Wilson MP established a working group to "*consider a national strategy for community based adult education, youth work and educational support for community development in the light of Government priorities in relation to social inclusion and lifelong learning*" (Communities: Change Through Learning. P14). In 2004, the Scottish Executive published Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities, stating "*Community learning and development should incorporate the best of practice undertaken in the fields of 'community education' and 'community development'. It should enable individuals and communities to make real changes to their lives through community action and community-based learning. CLD is an approach which enables agencies to work with communities and provide access to their involvement in learning, action, and decision-making*." These advancements were fundamental in bringing about the birth of CLD in the form it has grown into in the 21st century.

The following diagram was used in the 2012 Strategic Guidance on CLD for Community Planning Partnerships to illustrate the policy context for CLD in Scotland and continues to provide a useful picture of the pivotal role of CLD.

This response was compiled on behalf of the members of the CLD Standards Council.

Assumptions:

It is important to note that this CLD Standards Council response reflects insights gathered from online engagement with members regarding this guidance, as well as previous engagement with members through consultation activities and online professional learning opportunities. As such, it provides an indication of member views and experiences but should not be considered fully representative of the entire CLD sector in Scotland or the full CLD Standards Council membership.

Response from the CLD Standards Council to the consultation on Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice: Statutory Guidance on the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

This response highlight's key themes and addresses the consultation questions relevant to CLD. It draws on extensive engagement with our members and partner organisations and reflects both the operational realities and lived experiences of CLD practitioners and the communities they support. The purpose of this submission is to provide an informed perspective on how CLD contributes to the effective interpretation and delivery of the refreshed Code of Practice on Supporting Children's Learning. It highlights the role of CLD in supporting children, young people and families with additional support needs across school based and community based settings and identifies opportunities to strengthen the guidance so that it more fully reflects inclusive, rights-based and relational practice within the current legislative and policy landscape.

Question 1

The refreshed guidance sufficiently makes clear that it is a statutory document, which is legally required to detail the 2004 Act's provisions and the secondary legislation that supports it.

Disagree

The refreshed guidance clearly establishes its status as statutory guidance linked to the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and associated secondary legislation. Members broadly understand that education authorities and relevant agencies must "have regard to" the Code, and that it provides an authoritative interpretation of legal duties. However, feedback from members highlighted that the meaning and implications of "*statutory guidance*" are not well understood by non-professionals, nor consistently understood across the wider workforce beyond more strategic level of education staff. The concept of "*having regard to the guidance*" was repeatedly described as insufficiently robust, with members expressing concern that it could be used as a mechanism to demonstrate procedural compliance without meaningful change in practice.

Recommendation

The statutory status of the guidance would benefit from:

- Clear plain language explanations of what "statutory guidance" and "have regard to "means in practice
- Explicit clarification of expectations, responsibilities and accountability for different partners and stakeholders
- Supporting materials that translate legislative duties into accessible, real-world expectations for parents, carers, families and young people

Question 2

The draft guidance is clear, accessible, and reader friendly for the wide audience it is intended to support.

Disagree

Strong feedback from members indicated that the draft guidance is not sufficiently clear or accessible for a wide audience.

The length (approximately 159 pages), density of language and legal framing make it extremely difficult for:

- Parents and carers to understand their rights and entitlements
- Young people (particularly older young people with ASN) to engage with the guidance independently
- Community-based and third sector practitioners to use the document as a practical tool

Parents with lived experience described feeling overwhelmed and exhausted by lengthy documents and complex processes, often discovering key rights too late or only through advocacy support.

In considering accessibility, we also recommend that the guidance be made available in Gaelic, in line with Scotland's commitments to Gaelic language promotion, and that consideration is given to providing key summary materials in other commonly used community languages across Scotland. This would support equity of access for families for whom English is not a first language and help ensure that the rights and entitlements set out in the guidance are understood by all communities.
Members said:

"It's 159 pages. It's not an easy read."

"You would need to break it down into sections and maybe read a chapter a week – it's big, it's meaty."

"How are parents going to read this?"

"It's almost like they could do an easy read version."

"It's not accessible for the people that might actually use it – that's the first thing that springs to mind

"Where is the consideration for those less educated or English isn't first language?"

"This is a barrier to learning, not a support"

Recommendation:
To ensure the guidance is genuinely accessible and usable, we strongly recommend:

- An **Easy Read version** specifically designed for parents, carers and young people
- A concise **summary guide** clearly outlining rights, routes to support, and dispute resolution options
- Visual tools (e.g. flowcharts or pathway maps) to support understanding
- Co-production of accessible formats with families, young people and community-based practitioners, including Gaelic and alternative languages.

Without such materials, and them being readily available to the public, there is a significant risk that the guidance will remain largely inaccessible to those it is intended to empower.

Question 3

The refreshed guidance accurately reflects existing additional support for learning legislation and key policies affecting children and young people with additional support needs.

Disagree

The refreshed guidance broadly reflects the legislative framework and key national policies, including alignment with GIRFEC principles and references to UNCRC.
However, contributors identified a **disconnect between policy intent and lived experience**, particularly in relation to:

- Meaningful participation of children, young people and families
- Early identification and intervention
- Rights-based, relational practice

While the guidance articulates inclusive principles, these are not consistently realised in practice. Several contributors questioned whether the lived experience of families and young people has adequately informed the drafting of the guidance.
In addition, while the guidance recognises that learning can occur in community-based settings, it **does not consistently reflect the statutory role of Community Learning and Development** as part of Scotland's education landscape. Examples of where recognition and definition of CLD could be improved are throughout the "Additional Support" section pages 24 to 26, specifically points number 19,23 and 24. The CLD Standards Council would be happy to advise on enhanced wording. Also, page 28, point 29 should include language support for bilingual families, not just the child.

Recommendation:

- Strengthen alignment between policy principles and lived experience
- Explicitly recognise CLD as a statutory education sector alongside education, health and social work
- Ensure the guidance better reflects the breadth of educational provision, including non-formal and community-based learning
- Improve points throughout the guidance document where CLD should be explicitly named

Question 4

The refreshed guidance provides sufficient detail on each section of the 2004 Act.

Disagree

The guidance provides significant technical detail across the sections of the 2004 Act. However, members felt that greater length does not necessarily equate to greater clarity or usefulness.

While processes and procedures are extensively described, there is:

- Limited practical guidance on how these should be implemented in a relational, child-centred way
- Insufficient attention to the role of trusted professionals beyond schools
- An over-emphasis on school-based systems compared with community-based support

Members highlighted that CLD practitioners often identify emerging additional support needs early, particularly for young people disengaged from school, yet this role is completely under-recognised throughout.

While the guidance provides extensive procedural detail in relation to duties under the 2004 Act, there are notable inconsistencies in how professional roles are identified and described. This affects clarity about who is responsible for delivering and supporting Additional Support for Learning in practice. Members also noted that throughout the guidance, references to "persons who may be working with the child" frequently default to generic descriptions such as voluntary services or youth work, without explicitly recognising Community Learning and Development as a profession. This inconsistency risks obscuring CLD's statutory and professional role. For example, at page 44, paragraph 11, the guidance references early years practitioners, social workers and other professionals involved in early identification, but does not include CLD practitioners, despite their established role in community-based, preventative and relational support. Consistent and explicit recognition of CLD practitioners throughout the guidance is critical to ensuring clarity about professional roles, supporting effective partnership working, and enabling practitioners, children, young people and families to identify, access and be appropriately signposted to CLD support.

Members said:

"It kind of leans towards the importance of informal educational professionals such as ourselves, but it doesn't necessarily take that step into saying who we are and what we do."

"CLD is not named as a profession – the references are diluted into 'other services' or 'youth work'."

"If Scottish Government are placing Community Learning and Development under education, then we need to be in that document."

"Why are we being othered? We are being pushed into 'other'

"It says education, social services, and then it puts us in the 'other' category. I don't want in the other – I educate."

Recommendation:

- Complement procedural detail with clearer practice-based guidance
- Clarify the roles of different partners, including CLD practitioners, in supporting ASL duties
- Rebalance sections to reflect education in its broadest sense, not solely school-based provision
- Review references to "persons who may be working with the child" and "Multi agency teams may include" throughout to ensure consistent and explicit inclusion of CLD practitioners throughout the guidance, strengthening clarity of roles, partnership working and effective signposting

Question 5

The guidance document sufficiently signposts or provides links to further guidance and support where necessary.

Disagree

While the guidance includes references to advocacy and support services, members expressed concern that:

- Signposting is often buried within lengthy sections
- Links to additional resources can feel overwhelming rather than enabling
- Parents and carers may not realise which services are relevant or how to access them

Members reported on their experiences supporting families where parents had described encountering advocacy services only after prolonged struggle, often informed by individual professionals rather than clear signposting within guidance.
Members said:
"The onus was on me to get the help, even though I didn't know it was there."
"That was the first time (they) ever heard of Enquire Scotland – and that was only because support had been stopped."
"If I'd known about that (support) sooner, I could have had so much more."

Members noted that sections such as page 52: "Role of different professionals", page 59 "Multi Agency Support", Page 71 "Significant Additional Support", Page 87 "Service Providers", and pages 111/112 "Transitions/Key Principles", would benefit from clearer and more explicit inclusion of Community Learning and Development practitioners. While the guidance outlines the contributions of a range of professionals, the absence or inconsistent reference to CLD again risks under recognising its role in supporting children, young people and families, particularly in community-based, preventative and relational contexts. Explicitly identifying CLD practitioners alongside other education and children's services professionals would strengthen understanding of respective roles, support effective multi-agency working, and ensure that children, young people and families can be appropriately supported and signposted to CLD provision.

Members also asked that CLD practitioners are explicitly included in the sections on pages 123 to 125, which outline Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and describe the roles of partners such as Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and further and higher education (FE/HE). While these contributions are rightly recognised, the absence of CLD risks overlooking a critical part of the DYW landscape. CLD practitioners play a key role in supporting young people, particularly those with additional support needs or farthest from the job market, through community-based learning, confidence-building, employability programmes, youth work, family learning and progression pathways that often sit outside formal school settings. CLD also supports re-engagement, transitions and sustained participation for young people who may be disengaged from, or marginalised within, mainstream education. Explicitly recognising CLD alongside SDS and FE/HE would provide a more accurate reflection of partnership delivery, strengthen alignment with inclusive DYW principles, and ensure that all professionals understand CLD's role in supporting positive destinations and longer-term outcomes for young people.
Members said:
"Some young people make more progress through CLD youth work and community learning more than they ever did in a classroom."
"CLD is often what keeps young people engaged through transitions, especially those furthest from the labour market."
"Developing the Young Workforce only works if community-based pathways are valued alongside schools and colleges"
"CLD should be explicitly names across every stage of transactions, we often are the only consistent trusted person throughout each stage change"
Recommendation:

- **Strengthen and streamline signposting** to advocacy, mediation and support services by ensuring references are clear, prominent and consistently positioned throughout the guidance, rather than embedded within lengthy or technical sections.
- **Provide clear, simple summaries** that explain *when*, *why* and *how* particular services (including advocacy and community-based support) may be helpful, enabling parents, carers and young people to navigate support more confidently and at an earlier stage.
- **Explicitly and consistently include Community Learning and Development practitioners** across all relevant sections of the guidance, including roles of different professionals, multi-agency support, significant additional support, service providers, transitions, and Developing the Young Workforce,

to accurately reflect CLD's contribution to prevention, early intervention, engagement, re-engagement and transitions.

- **Ensure CLD is recognised alongside partners such as Skills Development Scotland and FE/HE within DYW-related sections**, acknowledging CLD's role in supporting young people, particularly those with additional support needs or furthest from the labour market, through community-based learning, youth work, employability pathways and sustained participation.
- **Develop accessible companion materials** for parents, carers and young people, including Easy Read, visual and youth-friendly formats, that support understanding, engagement and informed decision-making across school-based and community-based contexts.

These strengthened recommendations reflect the need for guidance that is not only procedurally robust, but practical, inclusive and enabling in real-world settings, ensuring children, young people and families can access the right support at the right time.

Question 6

Which areas of the refreshed guidance would most benefit from practical case studies to help school staff in supporting children and young people with additional support needs?

There is strong support for the inclusion of **practical case studies**, particularly in relation to:

- Early identification and intervention, including community-based responses
- Transitions (early years, primary to secondary, post-school)
- Partnership working across schools, CLD, third sector and health
- Advocacy-supported planning meetings
- Supporting engagement where children and families have had negative experiences of schooling

Members emphasised that case studies should:

- Reflect a range of settings (school and community)
- Include lived experience perspectives
- Illustrate relational, strengths-based and rights-respecting practice
- Demonstrate the contribution of CLD, youth work and family learning

Question 7

Please provide any further comments you may have on the guidance document.

Through engagement with members and stakeholders, further key themes raised include:

Recognition of Community Learning and Development

The guidance frequently reflects CLD values: participation, empowerment, learner-led planning, but rarely names CLD explicitly. This lack of visibility undermines clarity and accountability and risks marginalising community-based education. Members asked for clarity of the role of CLD throughout the document and it to be included and named as Community Learning and Development (CLD Adult Learning, CLD Youth Work and CLD Community Development) where possible.

Example of this can be found on page 3 "Who Should Read the Code". CLD could come under a number of these headings, and members acknowledged there was a "nod towards us" under other agencies and under Voluntary sector, however it was strongly agreed that CLD should come under its own section here, like Social Work Sector does, as that would then allow for further descriptors of the domains of practice that come under the CLD profession. The CLD Standards Council would be happy to provide you with a correctly worded and inclusive paragraph for this purpose. It could also be used in other sections such as page 17, where you list "Appropriate Agencies".

Language, Framing and Inclusive Terminology

Members highlighted significant concerns about the language and framing used throughout the guidance, emphasising that terminology plays a critical role in shaping power, access, expectations and experiences for children, young people and their families.

Members said:
"Supposedly this is rooted in UNCRC, so where are older young people who could read this themselves?"
"They're never going to look at that. They'll ask someone they trust – and that's usually us."

A particularly strong and consistent concern related to the **repeated and predominant use of the term "parent" throughout the guidance**. Members noted strong concerns that this framing does not adequately reflect the realities of many children and young people across Scotland, particularly those from vulnerable or marginalised backgrounds. Many families do not conform to a traditional or nuclear family model, and the language used within the guidance risks rendering these families invisible or unsupported. Examples of using this restrictive language can be seen on page 34 "Working with Parents" and "Communicating with parents".

Members highlighted that children and young people with additional support needs are disproportionately more likely to:

- Be cared for by grandparents or extended family members
- Live in kinship care arrangements
- Experience care or be care-experienced
- Live with foster carers or guardians
- Be supported by wider family networks rather than parents
- Experience family breakdown, trauma or instability

Members said:
"It doesn't really reflect our societal norms anymore – the nuclear family."
"So many of the children we work with don't come from a family unit made up of just parents."

The consistent use of "parent" language was therefore seen as **excluding a wide range of carers and family members** who play a central role in supporting children's learning and wellbeing. For some families, this terminology can act as a barrier to engagement, reinforcing feelings that the system is not designed with their circumstances in mind.

Members with lived and worked experience also noted that school-centric and formalised language, including repeated references to "parents" attending meetings in school settings, can be particularly intimidating for families who have had negative or exclusionary experiences of education themselves. This can exacerbate power imbalances, discourage participation and undermine the principles of partnership and empowerment that the guidance seeks to promote.
Members said:
"Asking parents to come into school and talk about their child can be very difficult, especially when they've had negative experiences themselves."
"You're surrounded by professionals who think they know better, it's very intimidating."

In addition to concerns about family terminology, members raised broader issues around deficit-based or overly procedural language, including references to "specialist provision", "adapted environments" and narrowly defined attainment measures. Such language risks reinforcing the idea that some learners are outside the norm, rather than recognising diversity as inherent and expected within an inclusive education system.

Members also highlighted the importance of linguistic inclusion. Alongside the use of inclusive terminology to reflect diverse families, there was strong support for the guidance, and its associated summary materials, to be available in Gaelic and in key cultural and community languages used across Scotland. Without this, families who are already marginalised are further excluded from understanding and exercising their rights within the education system.

Within this context, our members also questioned the continued use of the term **"Additional Support for Learning"**. While recognising its legislative basis, many felt that the word *additional* frames support as exceptional or supplementary, rather than as a normal and integral part of inclusive education. This framing was perceived as unintentionally reinforcing stigma and deficit-based assumptions.
There was widespread agreement that:

- Difference should be recognised as normal, not exceptional
- Support should be framed as part of a continuum of universal, targeted and specialist provision
- Language should reflect dignity, belonging and entitlement
- Family diversity should be explicitly recognised and respected

Members asked that the refreshed Code of Practice:

- Moves toward consistently inclusive terminology such as **parents, carers, guardians and family members** throughout the guidance
- Explicitly acknowledges the diversity of family structures and caregiving arrangements across Scotland
- Avoids language that inadvertently marginalises or excludes vulnerable families
- Uses inclusive, strengths-based language that frames support for learning as integral rather than exceptional
- Acknowledges the limitations and potential stigma associated with the term "additional", while signalling a broader cultural shift towards inclusive, needs-led support for all learners

Strengthening the guidance in this way would better reflect lived experience, support meaningful engagement with vulnerable families, and align more closely with Scotland's commitments to inclusion, equality and human rights. It would also reinforce the principle that support for learning is universal and relational, not conditional on family structure, postcode lottery, or terminology.

Meetings and power dynamics
Members reported that families describe school based meetings as intimidating and overly professionalised, sometimes involving pre-meetings without parents or young people's involvement, or asking them to wait outside whilst the pre-meeting takes place. Others reported School staff not knowing or following guidelines and relevant people not notified in advance to ensure full range of support was offered. There is clear scope for stronger guidance on advocacy, consent and trauma-informed practice.
Members Said:
"She was kept waiting because there was a pre-meeting before the parent was invited in – that says a lot."
"If a professional struggles to keep up with the system, what chance do the families we work with have?"

Training and implementation
Members strongly agreed that this guidance on its own is insufficient to deliver meaningful and consistent change. Effective implementation depends on sustained investment in training and learning across the whole system. In particular, members highlighted the need for strengthened training that reaches **all professionals who work with children, young people and families**, including health, education, social work, third sector organisations, and **Community Learning and Development** practitioners.
Meaningful implementation requires:

- **Joint, multi-agency training** that builds shared understanding, common language and consistent practice across professional boundaries. Members emphasised that siloed training risks uneven application and confusion for families, whereas joint learning supports collaboration, trust and effective decision-making. Making better use of school based in-service days, bringing in the wider workforce would benefit all.
- **Community-based learning opportunities for parents and carers**, recognising that confidence, understanding and engagement are shaped by accessible, relational and locally rooted learning. Members noted that community-based approaches are essential to reaching those who may be

least likely to engage with formal systems. It would also support those who find accessing school buildings difficult.

- **Clear recognition and resourcing of CLD's role** in supporting implementation. CLD practitioners are well placed to:
    - Build understanding and confidence among parents, carers and communities
    - Support participation, empowerment and informed decision making
    - Bridge professional and community perspectives
    - Embed learning through informal, preventative and relationships-based approaches

Members stressed that CLD must be included not only as a delivery mechanism, but as a core partner in training, design and implementation, with opportunities for CLD practitioners themselves to access high-quality, consistent training. Without this, there is a risk that CLD's contribution is under-utilised and that implementation fails to reach communities in a meaningful or equitable way. Overall, members were clear that improved, inclusive and ongoing training is critical if the guidance is to translate into real change in practice and outcomes.

Recognition of and alignment with wider legislation, policy and reform programmes

The draft Code of Practice would benefit from a clearer and more explicit articulation of how it connects to, supports and is shaped by the wider landscape of current and emerging Scottish legislation, policy reform and system redesign. At present, these connections are largely implicit. Given the scale of education and public-service reform underway in Scotland, there is a risk that the guidance is read and implemented in isolation rather than as part of a coherent system.

Alignment with education reform and system change

The refreshed guidance sits alongside, and will be directly impacted by a number of significant education reform processes, including:

- The **National Discussion on Scottish Education** and resulting reform programme
- Proposed and forthcoming **Scottish Education Reform Bills**
- The establishment of a **new Education Scotland Agency** and a **new HMIE/Inspectorate Agency**
- The appointment of a **Professional Advisor for Education Reform**

The guidance would be strengthened by making explicit how it aligns with, and should be enacted within, a re-designed education system that places greater emphasis on:

- Learner voice and participation
- Inclusive, rights-based practice
- A broader understanding of education beyond school-based provision

Explicit alignment would support consistency of interpretation and implementation during a period of structural change and uncertainty for practitioners and families.

Links to additional legislation affecting children, young people and families

Members expressed concern that the guidance does not sufficiently acknowledge how requirements under the 2004 Act intersect with newer and emerging legislation that will shape practice expectations, accountability and rights-based approaches, including:

- The **UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act**
- The proposed **Human Rights (Scotland) Bill**
- The proposed **Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Bill**
- The proposed **Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill**
- The **Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill**

There is a clear opportunity for the guidance to:

- Explicitly frame Additional Support for Learning within a human-rights-based approach
- Clarify how decision-making, participation, advocacy and accountability under the 2004 Act contribute to wider rights realisation
- Support duty bearers to understand cumulative responsibilities rather than treating legislation in silos

Given the emphasis within many of these bills on participation, prevention, early intervention and inclusive public services, the guidance would benefit from explicitly demonstrating coherence across this policy landscape.

Relevance to major reviews affecting learning and qualifications
The refreshed guidance would also benefit from clearer links to recent national reviews that affect how learning, progress and success are understood, including:

- The **Hayward Review of Qualifications and Assessment**
- The **Withers Review of Skills Delivery**
- Ongoing reform of vocational pathways and accredited learning within and beyond school settings

Members highlighted that many children and young people with additional support needs experience progress, achievement and attainment in ways not adequately captured by narrow academic measures. Clearer alignment with these reviews would strengthen the guidance's credibility in promoting a broader, more inclusive understanding of achievement.

Connection to the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (the Still Report)
Finally, there is a significant missed opportunity to explicitly connect the guidance to the **Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (the Still Report)**.
The Still Report makes several recommendations that are directly relevant to the effective implementation of Additional Support for Learning duties, including:

- Recognition of CLD as a key part of Scotland's education system
- The importance of community-based, relational and preventative approaches
- The role of CLD in supporting inclusion, participation, transitions and engagement with families and communities
- The value of trusted relationships in reducing inequalities and supporting wellbeing

Many of the principles embedded within the refreshed guidance — particularly around learner-centred planning, partnership working, early intervention and engagement with families — closely align with the findings of the Still Report. However, this alignment is not made explicit, and CLD's statutory and practical contribution remains under-recognised.

It was strongly felt that the guidance should:

- Explicitly reference relevant findings and recommendations from the Still Report
- Clarify how CLD contributes to meeting Additional Support for Learning duties across school and community settings
- Recognise CLD as both a preventative and enabling part of the ASN landscape, rather than a peripheral or "other" service

Conclusion and Key Actions Requested

The refreshed Code of Practice represents a significant opportunity to strengthen rights-based, inclusive and preventative practice for children and young people with additional support needs. To realise this potential, the guidance must move beyond procedural compliance and operate as a genuinely enabling framework that supports consistent, high quality practice across Scotland's education and wider children's services system.

Drawing on the evidence and perspectives provided in this response, we ask that the Scottish Government takes forward the following key actions as part of finalising and implementing the guidance:

- **Improve accessibility and usability** by producing Easy Read, summary and visual formats of the guidance for parents, carers, young people and community-based practitioners, ensuring the statutory nature of the Code is clearly explained in plain language.

- **Explicitly recognise Community Learning and Development** as a statutory partner in education, with clear articulation of CLD's role in early identification, relational support, advocacy, transitions and community-based learning, drawing directly on the recommendations of the Independent Review of CLD (Still Report).
- **Strengthen alignment with wider legislation and reform,** including education reform programmes, equality and human rights legislation, wellbeing and sustainability policy, and forthcoming bills affecting children, young people and families, so that the Code is clearly positioned within an integrated policy landscape.
- **Embed lived experience throughout the guidance**, ensuring that the voices and experiences of children, young people and families inform not only consultation responses but the structure, language and practical application of the Code.
- **Enhance practice guidance through case studies**, particularly in areas such as early intervention, partnership working, advocacy-supported planning, transitions and community-based support, reflecting the diversity of learning environments beyond schools.
- **Support effective implementation** through coordinated multiagency training, shared learning opportunities and community education approaches that enable all duty bearers and families to understand their rights, roles and responsibilities in practice.
- **Guidance and accompanying accessible formats are available in Gaelic**, with key summaries provided in other widely used community languages, to support inclusive access for families across Scotland.

We recommend that these actions are reflected either through a dedicated section or a strengthened introductory narrative within the Code of Practice, clearly setting out how the guidance aligns with current and forthcoming legislation and reform programmes, demonstrates coherence across education, wellbeing, equality and human rights policy, and supports practitioners, families and young people to understand the guidance as part of an integrated system rather than a standalone document.

Taken together, these improvements would significantly strengthen clarity, accountability and confidence at a time of major reform and transformation across Scotland's education and public service landscape, ensuring that the refreshed Code operates as a catalyst for meaningful, sustained change for children and young people with additional support needs. We look forward to continued working with Scottish Government, and to strengthen partnerships with Education Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, SAAS, Inspections Scotland, and Qualifications Scotland, to further develop the systems and structures required, as we feel strongly that the CLD sector has a critical part to play across the Scottish Lifelong and Life Wide education landscape, as a recognised profession we should be reflected as a one of the key stakeholders to support and implement the change required to bring Scottish education into the 21st century.

We welcome the ongoing review of this guidance and would welcome the opportunity to work more closely with the Scottish Government as the next stages of development for this guidance are taken forward, specifically around how and where CLD should be named and included. We believe it is essential that systemic change is progressed in relation to Community Learning and Development legislation, alongside clearer and more consistent recognition of the CLD sector across national policy and statutory guidance such as this. Such recognition is critical to providing protection for CLD practice, safeguarding the existing workforce, and supporting renewed investment to enable recovery and growth following more than two decades of sustained disinvestment in the sector.

We remain hopeful that the CLD profession, encompassing adult education, community development and youth work, alongside its practitioners and the voluntary sector, will be explicitly recognised and specified as key partners in future policy and guidance development, reflecting their vital role in delivering inclusive, rights based education and support for children, young people and families across Scotland.