



CLD Standards Council Scotland

Submitted Response
to
Scottish Government

Disclosure Scotland Fees: discounting,
waivers, and accredited bodies
consultation

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About Us

The CLD Standards Council Scotland is the professional body for people who work or volunteer in community learning and development (CLD) across Scotland. As member led organisation we have a growing membership of over 2850 members, an executive committee and 3 functional committees which are made up of members from across the 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 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.

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.”

For further information on the CLD Standards Council please visit our [website](#). If you would like to discuss this response further, please contact us via email on contact@cldstandardscouncil.org.uk

Introduction

CLD is a profession that is critical in the achievement of any policy or legislation that requires community engagement, development, and learning as it supports the learning, growth, empowerment of individuals and communities, as well as supporting the delivery of other services. From community development supporting climate action change, sustainability and protecting our environment, as well as developing neighbourhoods and community support groups, to working with young people regards empowerment and citizenship and improving literacy and numeracy within Scotland's communities which impacts on health and wellbeing.

CLD enables people across Scotland to identify their own individual and collective goals, to take action to bring about change and through this to achieve these goals. Using a range of formal and informal methods of learning and social development, CLD programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants, working particularly with those excluded from participation in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. Through working in these ways, CLD extends the reach of democracy and widens its scope. Many CLD practitioners, paid and voluntary, along with CLD organisations and community groups require to make use of Disclosure Scotland's services to ensure they carry out their work safely as well as safeguard the vulnerable individuals and groups they support.

This report provides a high-level analysis of the feedback received from CLD workers and volunteers across the sector, as well as consultation with partner organisations and stakeholders, and the CLD Standards Council staff team. We also refer to evidence and information from the Policy Champions Network, Volunteer Scotland and

Assumptions:

It is important to recognise that this CLD Standards Council response provides an insight into the views and experiences based on the those mentioned above. This response is not representative of the entire CLD sector across Scotland or the full CLD Standards Council membership.

Response from the CLD Standards Council to the Disclosure Scotland Fees: discounting, waivers, and accredited bodies consultation

1. Do you agree with the proposal to create a fee discount structure for people in receipt of certain benefits?

Yes: 63 %
No: 26 %
Unsure: 11 %

Whilst the majority agree with a fee discount structure as a means of supporting and enabling more vulnerable individuals to access volunteering, members discussed how in most cases those organisations offering volunteering options in regulated work normally cover the cost. Therefore, this in reality would not actually be a benefit or incentive to the individual.

2. What information do you think needs to be considered when looking at a fee discount for people in receipt of certain benefits?

Considerable concerns were raised regarding respecting individual's rights to privacy, along with concerns about who would be reviewing applications containing increased personal financial information. Individuals who volunteer as a route back into the labour market often have additional support needs as associated with lower levels of positive mental health, low literacy levels, and are more reliant on family or services to support applications and access to volunteering or work. This would mean vulnerable individuals would be required to share confidential personal information with additional agencies, friends, or family members in order to access volunteering opportunities. However, the cost benefits would be with the volunteering provider, not the applicant.

Comments offered:

"Individuals may not wish to disclose to organisations information on benefits they receive other income."

"The way they will determine eligibility, proof of status etc which should be dignified."

"If people are volunteering to deliver a service, why should they pay to give up their time? Also, why should the organisation that is scrambling around for funding to deliver the work have to consider paying this fee for volunteers?"

"Just evidence of that benefit."

"Does not discriminate against people with disabilities as their benefits are not means tested."

"... any person volunteering regardless of background should be free, I feel the discount should be 100%".

"The evidence that is needed to demonstrate that someone is on benefits - often individuals struggle to provide the evidence due to their chaotic lifestyle."

“All the same information as for other people except to include a statement of entitlement.”

“I think PVG's should be FREE for all people working with young people especially volunteers who are giving up their time for an organisation, and organisations that have limited funds should not need to pay for volunteers PVG'S.”

“It should be based on a person ability to pay and not benefits alone.”

“Although I have agreed that there should be a discount, I feel the onus is on employers and organisations requiring the PVG to pay rather than the individual.”

Further consultation with staff, partners and the Policy Champions Network all highlighted concerns regarding the probable negative impact to volunteering organisations who wish to engage with volunteers on benefits, believing it to cause an increase in barriers to volunteering and a decrease in positive engagement with potential volunteers. Fears were around what seems an intrusive requirement of requiring volunteers to disclose personal information regarding their benefits/financial status to identify if they were eligible for discounted fees.

3. Do you agree with the Option 1 proposal to provide a fee discount for care experienced young people?

Yes: 52.5 %
No: 47.5 %
Unsure: 0 %

4. Do you agree with the Option 2 proposal to provide a fee discount for care experienced young people?

Yes: 42 %
No: 5.5 %
Unsure: 52.5 %

5. Preferred Choice?

Op. 1: 6 %
Op. 2: 36 %
Neither: 58 %

6. What information do you think we need to consider when proposing a fee discount for care experienced young people?

Whilst it was agreed that this proposal may increase organisations to offer regulated volunteering or employment to care experienced young people, it was felt that this should be approached with caution as well as discussions on why the more vulnerable people in our society should be expected to fund PVG membership. It was felt that this proposal would again (as mentioned above) put the onus on the care experienced person to have to disclose this fact, and place the responsibility of then evidencing that which for many would be difficult due to the

often transient nature of being in care and being minors who may not be in control of their own paperwork. This possibly will have a significant negative impact on those young people, having to explain themselves and heightening the stigma felt by many. Overall, there were concerns over care experienced young person's equity of opportunity, and rights to privacy by having to prove their care background, and the significant impact this may have on mental health.

Comments offered:

"What other supports they have in place."

"PVG should be made free or lesser monies for those seeking it, shouldn't we make this process easier for those seeking a PVG? Many companies pay for this as an employer for employees working in the financial sector so why are we expecting people who seek a PVG personally to pay?"

"What is the evidence and how easily can that be obtained considering that young people may move about Local Authority areas and getting in touch with the relevant member of staff can be tricky."

"Making it as easy as possible for young people to claim, as they may not have the support or paperwork easily available."

7. Do you agree with the proposal to move to a fee discount structure for volunteers in QVOs?

Yes: 31 %
No: 59 %
Unsure: 10 %

8. What information do you think we need to consider when proposing moving to a fee discount for volunteers in QVOs?

Comments offered:

"It is not right that people experiencing financial hardship should have to pay anything to volunteer."

"the removal of the fee waiver for volunteers in Qualifying Voluntary Organisations would be considerably damaging for voluntary organisations, volunteers, and vulnerable people."

"Understand what the volunteer financial position is...perhaps they can afford to buy it."

"This will have an impact both on the volunteers and smaller, charitable organisations using volunteers who will be unable to meet the costs."

"many voluntary organisations are struggling financially already due to funding cuts; this would cripple them."

"Why would volunteers be given more of a discount than care leavers and people on benefits? They should have the same discount."

“The cost of doing this to the organisation, will inhibit their ability to offer opportunities to people.”

“The Scottish Government have a choice here to cover the costs of PVG's or not I think that this is short sighted of them as the proven social return of volunteers outweighs the costs of the PVG.”

“If people are doing voluntary that requires them to be disclosure checked then it should be free of charge.”

“QVOs may struggle to absorb the cost of the PVG scheme.”

“statement entitlement”

“we may see a change in volunteering “roles” forcing organisations to use loopholes in the system by saying these roles are not regulated, which is a huge concern as you would be putting those needing safeguarded at significant risk.”

“Funders/Grant making bodies should be involved in this proposal too.”

“Keep it free for volunteers, they contribute many ways saving the public purse money, to charge them would be absurd, and would exclude people due to cost.”

“This means there would be a cost to volunteering. I feel £28 is a lot for people on benefit and become work ready and this would be denied to many people if a cost was involved.”

9. Do you agree with the proposal to increase the accredited body registration fee to £120, with additional counter signatories continuing to be £15 per addition?

Yes: 42 %
No: 26 %
Unsure: 32 %

10. What information do you think needs to be consider in relation to the accredited body registration fee?

Comments offered:

“A lot of charities are also struggling right now, adding additional financial pressure to ensure volunteer are PVG checked could be a barrier.”

“Could there be discounts for those who process a small amount of disclosures each year as small community/charitable organisations will pay the same as a large organisation with a substantial turnover of finance.”

“As a country we should be encouraging more volunteers as this is proven to improve people’s wellbeing charging will put people off.”

“Voluntary organisations are already facing increasing financial difficulties due to cuts in funding or short-term funding streams, this will just increase that burden.”

11. What impact do you believe the proposed changes to Disclosure Scotland fees will have on your organisation or the organisations and groups you work with and support?

Comments offered:

“We are already struggling to cover core costs, any additional financial asks would add to this pressure.”

“This is an indirect tax, not to benefit the individuals and organisations. If it is a requirement by government then government should foot the bill. At least, public bodies and third sector organisations should be able to obtain PVGs free of charge and private companies charged.”

“Very little at the moment”

“This will impact on volunteers registering with us if they are required to pay for their own disclosures which are currently free. The only option will be for the local authority to meet this cost which is unlikely.”

Already stretched budgets, increased demand on service delivery and accountability of the public pound will have a detrimental effect as valuable funding may need to be aligned to pay / support disclosure Scotland fees.”

“It will help people apply for jobs which may need this as the cost has been a barrier.”

“More for councils and organisations”

“unsure as the reduced costs may still be too costly for most.”

“It will help them financially.”

“none”

“Reduce the number of people volunteering for us at a time we need more not less. If we have to pay more then we will struggle as we are already suffering financially with general people’s donations down and costs much higher due to the Cost-of-living crises”

“I think the changes will be absorbed by my organisation grudgingly.”

“It is an additional cost and may reduce the number of volunteers an organisation can afford.”

“I don’t think it will be more accessible.”

“loss of volunteers”

“Costly”

“Reduction in volunteer workforce”

“Less volunteering”

“Less people will volunteer...more people will be excluded.”

“I believe some organisations we work with will close, groups have already stopped since Covid as no new volunteers have stepped up and this will exacerbate the issue.”

12. What impact do you believe the proposed changes to Disclosure Scotland fees for volunteers will have on the volunteers you work with and the recruitment of volunteers in the future?

Comments offered:

“We couldn't possibly pass the cost of volunteering on to our volunteers, we would lose them! It will make recruiting volunteers more difficult than it already is.”

“It may reduce the numbers - the cost-of-living crisis means that people will have to consider whether they can afford to volunteer and goes against many volunteering policies which states that volunteers should not be out of pocket if they volunteer.”

“We will see a reduction in volunteers.”

“More people may then volunteer with the cost being reduced if they have to pay.”

“unsure as the reduced costs may still be too costly for most.”

“Make them more willing to volunteer if there is not a cost attached to the volunteering.”

“We will see a reduction in volunteers.”

“I think these changes will lead to a fall in the number of people volunteering.”

“While I believe the organisations will continue to involve volunteers, they will have to find the costs from somewhere.”

“It will make it easier.”

“they will not want to pay for it, or the service might not have the funds to pay for a multiple volunteer.”

“Reduction of volunteers”

“Anxiety around cost to volunteer”

“Less volunteers”

“Less people will volunteer...more people will be excluded.”

“Significant concern that this will mean lack of progression for some of our learners.”

13. What information do we need to consider for the Equality Impact Assessment?

It was felt that the proposals, as detailed in this consultation, are likely to have a real impact on efforts to improve equality of access to volunteering and employment, increasing stigma of those already vulnerable, heighten the risk of data breaches and infringe on an individual's rights to privacy.

If these proposals are put in place, we could see a substantial drop in volunteering and employment opportunities, negatively impacting individuals in our communities who need these opportunities and support the most. This would increase inequality for those most disadvantaged already. As mentioned throughout this response, there are significant concerns over how these proposals will inadvertently create barriers and impact negatively on the mental health, wellbeing, and rights of individuals, due to the need to provide evidence of eligibility for many vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities.

We would strongly recommend further consultation with protected characteristic individuals, groups and communities, and the organisations and practitioners that support such as them, including the Community Learning and Development sector, to fully investigate the equalities impact.

14. What information do we need to consider for the Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment?

Following from concerns raised to the previous question, there is a fear that children and young people will be impacted significantly due to a reduction in services of organisations who rely on volunteers, due to the proposed cost implications.

Consideration should also be given to the real prospect that organisations may not seek PVG membership for their volunteers or employees, by changing "roles" as it has been discussed that status changes from 'regulated work' to 'regulated roles' could be a potential 'loophole' for organisations to cut costs. We would strongly dispute this possible practice, but it has to be considered as a concern as it raises significant alarm bells regarding the safeguarding of all individuals involved.

15. Additional Information

CLD volunteers play a vital role in community learning and development, and support growth for individuals, communities, and organisations. [Scottish Household Survey 2021 Telephone Survey – key findings](#) shows that over 30% of adult volunteers in Scotland supported community learning and development yet there is little recognition to this large physical resource which unquestionably plays a vital part in support Scotland's economy, locally and nationally.

From the "Working with Scotland's Communities - CLD Workforce Survey 2018" that at least 40,000 CLD volunteers across Scotland are helping adult learners get back into work, supporting newcomers to our country to learn English, building the confidence of community members to make a difference in their neighbourhoods, changing the lives of young people through youth work activities and much more. For many in the most deprived communities volunteering is

often seen as the first steps to rebuilding confidence and acquiring skills needed for employment. If Disclosure Scotland go ahead with proposed plans to remove the membership fee waiver for the Protection of vulnerable groups (PVG), then this will create a financial barrier and have an adverse impact on volunteering opportunities for those who need it the most, therefore decreasing job and educational opportunities, ultimately failing to address family and community poverty.

Recommendations

In conclusion the responses generated through our members would indicate that there is not a willingness to accept the proposed amendments to the Disclosure Scotland fees due to concerns in relation to negative consequences on opportunities to support and enable the most vulnerable in our communities to undertake volunteering roles.

In addition, placing extra burdens on the most vulnerable to evidence their financial status places them at risk of financial exploitation and further enforces the stigma that they live with every day.