



CLD Standards Council Scotland

Response
to

Call For Views on Future School Reform
by
Independent Professional Adviser

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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. CLD is a field of professional practice which has three integral domains of practice; adult learning, community development and youth work. As a member-led organisation we have a growing membership of over 3325 members (inclusive of CLD: Youth Work practitioners), an executive committee and three functional committees which are made up of members from across the CLD sector in Scotland. Our approach and our 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

The CLD sector, which is a unification of the 3 professional practice disciplines of Adult Learning (Including ESOL), Community Development and Youth Work, is an integral and essential part of Scottish education, as recently reported 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 Minister for Higher and Further Education, and Veterans.

The CLD sector across Scotland is receiving considerable amount of attention at present, with the aforementioned recent Independent Review of CLD publishing the Still report [Learning: For All. For Life](#), (June 2024) and the HMIE producing 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.

CLD – A Strategic Professional Practice within Education

CLD is a field of professional practice that is critical in the achievement of any policy and legislation that requires education, community engagement, development and learning as it supports the learning, growth, empowerment of individuals and communities, as well as supports the delivery of other services.

CLD plays a vital role in meeting the diverse educational needs of both adults and young people across Scotland, particularly those who face barriers to participation, learning and opportunity. It provides accessible, inclusive and community-based learning opportunities that respond directly to individual and local needs, lived experienced and inequality

For young people, CLD supports personal and social development, confidence building, resilience and wellbeing. It creates safe spaces where learners can develop skills for life, learning and work, strengthen their voice and influence and actively participate in their communities CLD Youth Work supports engagement in citizenship, climate action, sustainability and community decision making whilst also contributing to improved educational outcomes, employability and positive transitions into adulthood.

For adults, CLD addresses educational needs relating to core skills such as literacy, numeracy, digital inclusion, employability and health and wellbeing. CLD adult learning opportunities enable individuals to gain confidence, improve skills, re-engage with learning and access further education, training or volunteering. These opportunities are especially vital for adults who have faces disadvantage, poverty or exclusion, or who have had challenging negative experiences within our formal education systems.

Across both age groups and communities, CLD adopts a flexible, learner centered approach that combines informal and non-formal learning with community development practice, Learning opportunities are co-designed with participants, ensuring learning is relevant, empowering and responsive. By supporting individuals to identify personal and collective goals, CLD strengthens community capacity, enhances democratic participation and contributes to wider social, economic and environmental outcomes including improved health, wellbeing and sustainability

The three domains of CLD (Adult Learning, Community Development, and Youth Work) work in unison to deliver [Scotland's National Outcomes](#). As a single, unified professional discipline, CLD is a vital educative force, and its impact should be strengthened through focused legislation. Guided by the [National Performance Framework](#), these domains are deeply interconnected — each reinforcing the other to create lasting change for our communities across Scotland. For example, CLD youth work on employability or equalities has far greater and more sustainable impact when complemented by community-based adult education and community development initiatives that engage families and whole communities to lead change. We offer a downloadable "[Guide to CLD in Scotland](#)" for further information.

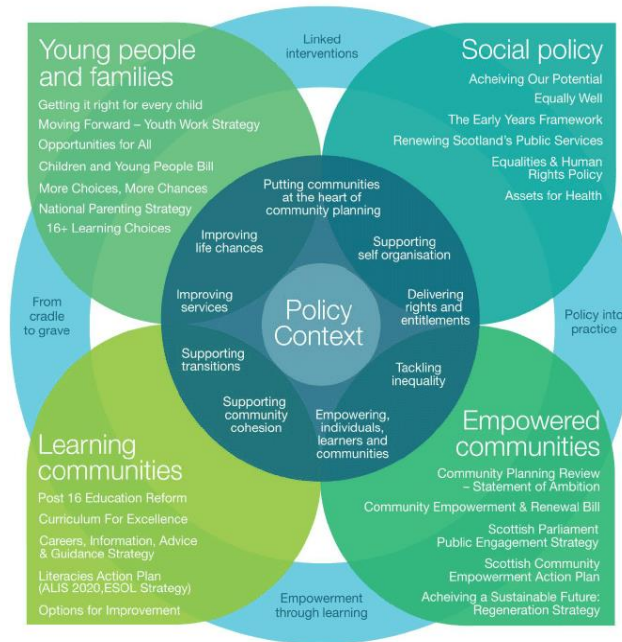
Fundamental to the practice of CLD across all settings are these values which have been identified by the CLD Standards Council:

- **Self-determination** – respecting the individual and valuing the right of people to make their own choices.
- **Inclusion** – valuing equality of both opportunity and outcome and challenging discriminatory practice.
- **Empowerment** – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities through individual and/ or collective action.
- **Working collaboratively** – maximising collaborative working relationships in partnerships between the many agencies which contribute to CLD, including collaborative work with participants, learners and communities.
- **Promotion of learning as a lifelong activity** – ensuring that individuals are aware of a range of learning opportunities and are able to access relevant options at any stage of their life.

In Scotland, CLD has a legislative underpinning through the implementation of the [Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#), which are located as

part of Section 2 of the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). These Regulations require each local authority to [publish a 3-year plan](#) that details the delivery of CLD activity in the local authority area, as stipulated in the [community-learning-development-plans-guidance-2024-2027.pdf](#).

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 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 Call For Views on Future School Reform

This response highlights key themes and addresses the questions most 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 can contribute to the development and delivery of a reformed education system across Scotland, particularly in relation to school improvement, school funding, and school governance. It also identifies opportunities to strengthen policy and practice to maximise the impact of CLD within a reformed education landscape.

Q: What systems or support are in place, that you are aware of, that help schools deliver high-quality education for all learners?

For this question you may wish to think about:

- support programmes or interventions;
- professional development and training for staff;
- mentoring or leadership support for school leaders;
- partnerships or networks between schools;
- guidance, monitoring or advice provided by the local authority; and
- additional support for schools that are facing challenges

CLD Support

Community Learning and Development (CLD) is central to improving outcomes for children, young people and families by strengthening relationships between schools and communities, playing a vital role to improve outcomes for children and young people, and the communities they live and grow in. As the professional body for CLD in Scotland, The CLD Standards Council works closely in partnership with Education Scotland, supporting this work by offering professional learning opportunities, advice and guidance. Across the two organisations, we facilitate national practice networks such as Professional Learning consortiums, CLD Leads, ESOL, Adult Learning and Youth Work. These networks provide targeted improvement support and Education Scotland have dedicated CLD education officers working across all of the 32 local authorities. Together, our support enhances the impact of CLD and youth work within effective school and community partnerships.

Strengthening Workforce Identity and Status

A clearer and more formal system of professional recognition for CLD practitioners would significantly strengthen workforce identity and enhance the status of the profession. The Still Report highlights that the CLD workforce operates across a wide range of diverse roles, often within fragmented structures and under significant financial pressures, contributing to a lack of visibility and consistent professional identity across Scotland. It notes that the sector delivers vital support to *“some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and communities”* and that CLD is a *“vital part of Scottish society”*. [Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development \(CLD\) - gov.scot](#)

Crucially, the report explicitly recognises the important contribution of the CLD Standards Council in *“raising standards across CLD, raising its profile and supporting those working in the sector”* despite limited resources. It makes 15 separate references to the CLD Standards Council

and recommends that it be supported to transition towards an independent status “more akin to the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS)”. This recommendation directly aligns with arguments for strengthening workforce identity:

- A regulated registration system would give CLD practitioners parity of esteem with school teachers and other regulated professions.
- It would enhance the credibility and visibility of the CLD role within the wider education and skills system.
- It would help clarify expectations, build confidence among employers and communities, and reinforce CLD’s role as an essential part of Scotland’s lifelong learning landscape.

The report further emphasises the need for a cohesive policy narrative and clearer leadership structures for CLD—conditions that are significantly strengthened when the workforce is underpinned by a recognised professional body with regulatory authority, as GTCS provides for teachers. **We therefore call for the formal professional recognition of CLD practitioners.**

Strengthening the professional recognition of CLD practitioners, including adult educators, youth workers and community workers, would bring significant benefits to the regulation, governance and overall quality assurance of the CLD sector in Scotland. Establishing clear professional status would consistent assurance to the public, employers, and government, offering a level of confidence comparable to the governance role fulfilled by the General Teaching Council for Scotland within the teaching profession. This would reinforce the credibility of the workforce, support higher and consistent standards of practice and ensure that CLD plays its full and recognised role within Scotland educations and lifelong learning landscape.

There is currently a [National CLD Workforce Survey](#) which is being undertaken by Rocket Science on behalf of CLD Standards Council, and was commissioned by the CLD Strategic Leadership Group. The purpose of the survey is to capture workforce data, building on what we found in the last survey conducted in 2018. The survey includes topics on staff and volunteer numbers, focus on CLD activities, qualifications, career plans, challenges and opportunities for the CLD workforce. It should develop important insights to help us better understand and support the workforce moving forward.

Local Authority CLD Plans (Statutory)

Under the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013, local authorities are required to develop and publish CLD Plans on a three-year cycle. These plans set out how CLD partnerships across each local authority regions will work collaboratively to support lifelong learning, community empowerment and improved outcomes for children, young people and adults.

The 2024–2027 CLD Plan guidance establishes clear national priorities, with a strong emphasis on reducing inequality and improving outcomes for vulnerable and marginalised learners. It highlights the importance of targeted, preventative and early-intervention approaches, including school-based activity delivered in partnership with CLD services, youth work, families and community organisations.

CLD Plans are expected to demonstrate how local authorities and partners will align CLD activity with wider education and children’s services priorities, strengthen school-community

partnerships, and ensure that CLD contributes effectively to closing the poverty-related attainment gap and supporting wellbeing, inclusion and engagement.

Leading CLD Professional Learning

As part of the learning offer for leaders we are delighted to co-deliver the Leading CLD programme for CLD leaders. Evidence suggests there is a need for systematic leadership support for CLD managers in Scotland, in line with the wider offer available to the education system. Facilitated by a team comprised of CLD Standards Council, Education Scotland CLD and Professional Learning and Leadership specialists, participants engage in professional learning and reflect on their current CLD role. Programme design is based on the experience participants bring, the knowledge of experts/academics; and collaborative activities to develop new knowledge. The programme is of most interest to senior local authority managers responsible for CLD services, who have identified CLD leadership as an area for professional development. As CLD teams often sit within Education Services, senior Education Officers benefit from this course, as well as general service managers with no, or little previous experience of CLD; and those interested in developing their leadership capital and professional network, and we have developed the content of the programme alongside senior CLD managers and colleagues from the Higher and Further Education sector.

Q: What actions or additional support could be put in place to help schools improve?

Strengthen Family Learning & Parental Engagement

Relationships between school and homes matters. CLD practitioners are skilled to foster positive relationships with parents and carers, as well as young people and adult learners, and where CLD services are embedded to supporting community learning opportunities as well as working with families evidences direct improvements in attendance, wellbeing, and attainment. CLD Standards Council set standards for professional qualifications and supports CLD practitioners professional learning, to

Possible CLD actions:

- Family learning programmes linked to literacy, numeracy, digital skills, or transitions.
- Workshops for parents/carers on supporting learning at home, navigating the curriculum, or building confidence.
- Targeted outreach for families who are seldom-heard or disengaged from school life.
- In-community sessions (libraries, community centres) to reduce stigma or barriers to attending school-based events.
- Family support workers or CLD practitioners collaborating with pastoral staff to address barriers like digital access, confidence, or communication challenges

Q: Are you content for your organisation's views on improvement to be referenced in the report?

Yes

Q: Are there any additional comments you would like to share that have not been covered above?

The CLD Standards Council is not a Sector Skills Council. Currently there is no Sector Skills Council that supports the CLD sector in Scotland or the UK, therefore the CLD Standards Council has grown to fill that vacuum where it can, as defined by its current role under [legislation](#). Through setting professional standards for the sector and our work on professional development and [Growing the Learning Culture](#) in CLD, the CLD Standards Council promotes a professional learning culture, where practitioners, paid or unpaid, are involved in a continuous process of learning, development and improvement. We look forward to working in close partnership with SFC (Scottish Funding Council), SDS (Skills Development Scotland), SAAS (Student Awards Agency for Scotland), HMIE (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) and the new agency QS (Qualifications Scotland), to continue our current work on mapping CLD pathways and driving progress to build the stepping stones between current gaps in SCQF level qualifications, and to raise the profile of CLD as a profession.

We believe that there is an opportunity for a paradigm shift in the way these organisations work internally, together and with key stakeholders such as ourselves, to create a cohesive and coherent post school education sector which provides the inclusive Lifelong Learning system required to ensure that no-one or community is left behind. We would also like to strongly emphasise the importance of secure investment and funding for CLD (Adult Learning, Community Development and Youth Work) as a critical sector to support and improve Scotland's economy and the development of thriving communities. An important part of this investment would be the tracking of support to the CLD sector, not just focusing ESOL but adult, young people, family, and community learning, so there is a clear understanding of the sector, along with measurement of activity, including funding and impact, by SFC. Still in her report on the Independent Review of CLD makes recommendations regards funding of CLD, which SFC will play an important role in.

- Project and programme delivery plans for CLD activities have the stability and predictability of funding to allow them to be sure that the medium to longer-term interventions often required in CLD can be delivered.
- That CLD's role within Scotland's overall Lifelong Learning system of education is fully recognised and is reflected in terms of the balance of government spending.

One of the key roles of the CLD Standards Council is approval of qualifications for the CLD sector. This quality assurance is a peer-driven process and covers a wide range of educational programmes from initial introduction qualifications such as access and PDAs, through to degree level and above. Professional approval by the CLD Standards Council demonstrates that these CLD learning opportunities are underpinned by [Competent CLD Practitioner Framework](#) which comprises CLD values, principles, code of ethics, and CLD competences. We are continually looking for clearer learning and development pathways for CLD so that learners can clearly see routes in and through the CLD profession; cohesive naming and recognition of the CLD qualifications at all levels would assist with this. We also are mindful of other comparable programmes in the United Kingdom and work closely with partners across all four nations where the [JETS](#) partnership sets and maintains Pan UK and Ireland wide standards.

FUNDING

Q: How well do you think the current system for funding schools in Scotland works, and to what extent is education funding allocated and used equitably to support those children and young people who require additional help such as those living in poverty? What changes would you make to ensure funding is more effective?

We consider that to fully answer this question, and benefit from an impactful reform review, it essential that the framework used to assess funding requirements be widened to recognise the full spectrum of lifelong learning delivered out with conventional school settings

Clarity is required around the funding of modern apprenticeships, foundation apprenticeships and graduate apprenticeships, and the age ranges they would be made available to. These apprenticeship opportunities are core to professional pathways for the CLD profession and therefore are required to be accessible and funded for a variety of different aged people at the different SCQF levels. Concerns regarding tiered funding and how this negatively impacts training providers and employers were highlighted, particularly when someone over the age of 25 is reskilling and demographic data for Scotland is showing the growth in number for older age ranges along with the need for reskilling an older workforce. The recent Scottish Government report on the [opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population](#) states *"We want a Scotland where everybody thrives. Many older people will continue to work to support their families and wider communities, which is welcome. We need to address the barriers that may constrain the ability of those people to contribute whilst also ensuring we have a skilled population to provide key public services and to generate the tax income to fund our public services and pensions"* (p.22) and the report goes on to make considerable mention of barriers to learning and skills shortages thought the document due to aging demographics and changing economies. The [Employer Skills Survey 2022](#) – Scotland shows that 31% of vacancies were due to skills shortages, and over 25% of employers having 1 or more vacancy at the time of survey.

We would ask for caution regarding future processes for releasing funding to schools and ask that critical consideration be given to education providers such as the CLD sector, both in local authority and third sector, who deliver a significant amount of skills, learning and accreditations to individuals of all ages, in schools, in communities and where there is need. We strongly urge that lessons are learned from the debacle surrounding funding of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) over recent years. When changed to the model where funding is distributed to ESOL providers within a Community Planning area via a nominated College within the Community Planning Partnership, it has become a bureaucratic mess. Many third sector and local authority training providers report that they decided not to access and draw down ESOL funding through this mechanism, citing it as cumbersome, often with unpractical timescales, an overload paperwork, as well as opening up routes for errors in cross recording of achievements. These local authority and third sector training providers have no option but to use alternative funding sources instead, which is having a negative impact on delivery capacity within the sector, the management of funding and the collation of impact and measurement of achievements. This complicates the gathering of delivery data, social capital, and measurement of impact. In additional, other training and accreditations for young people and adults were cut to enable

ESOL to be funded. Members tell us that the decision to not access ESOL funding through colleges is wholly due to the enormity of credit paperwork set by colleges, the unequitable variance of percentages being taken by colleges across Scotland and often “double counting” of delivery and outcomes.

The negative impact of this system is that it is primarily about hours of learning or presentation of qualifications and achievement, to draw down the credits. ESOL through the lens of CLD is much more than this; it is about inclusion, reducing isolation, citizenship, social justice. It supports the six overarching key outcomes as set out in the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2024 to highlight the importance of integration and acceptance. Often these life changing and critical aspects of ESOL support and learning offered through community-based provision are at best misunderstood, and at worst dismissed or not regarded as significant.

We strongly request the need for a full review of adult learning courses through colleges, what credits are worth and how community-based adult learning, including ESOL, is funded. Currently each College sets its own partnership agreement with whoever is delivering ESOL in their region. This includes agreement on their percentage take from all drawn down credit funding. All take differing amounts, with some instances of colleges taking a significant portion of the money for no delivery of the learning.

There needs to be set criteria across Scotland; a credit is worth a credit regardless of educational institution or geographic setting. There should be a nationally agreed admin fee/percentage for the college to take. Currently, the system is putting smaller providers like the WEA and ESOL Scotland (Glasgow ESOL Forum) into financial difficulty.

Regional and National Funding

Consideration needs to be given to those who use funding to deliver accreditations across Scotland, and not just in their locality or regionally. In CLD, many providers such as Borders College, Sports Academy of Scotland, and the Glasgow Council of Voluntary Services are key partners and main providers of modern apprenticeships for CLD youth work and community development. Currently many of these are registered to deliver and offer accreditation services across all 32 local authorities. If funding were to move towards a more regional funding model, how would organisations such as Borders College be able to continue to support work they may be required to deliver to Western Isles or Shetland, as they would be working across regional boundaries?

Conclusion

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.

Fundamental to the practice of CLD across all settings are these values which have been identified by the CLD Standards Council:

- Self-determination – respecting the individual and valuing the right of people to make their own choices.
- Inclusion – valuing equality of both opportunity and outcome, and challenging discriminatory practice.
- Empowerment – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities through individual and/ or collective action.
- Working collaboratively – maximising collaborative working relationships in partnerships between the many agencies which contribute to CLD, including collaborative work with participants, learners, and communities.
- Promotion of learning as a lifelong activity – ensuring that individuals are aware of a range of learning opportunities and are able to access relevant options at any stage of their life.

We welcomed the ongoing review of Education, and of CLD as a sector and the Still report as mentioned previously. It is a fundamental requirement that the statutory CLD regulations are critically reviewed as part of the review of Scottish Education, and we see a systemic change in CLD legislation and policy that give CLD (Adult Education, Community Development and Youth Work) protection, safeguarding the current workforce and funding to support the regrowth after 20 years of disinvestment in this sector. We are hopeful that the CLD profession, its practice, practitioners, and the voluntary sector will be recognised and specified as key partners in future reform, reports, policy, and guidance.