



CLD Standards Council Scotland

Response
to
Scottish Government Consultation

Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Planning Guidance

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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 2950 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](#) 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

Introduction

CLD is a field of professional practice that is critical in the achievement of any policy and 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, community empowerment and community support groups, to working with young people and adults regarding enablement and citizenship, and improving literacy and numeracy within Scotland's communities which impacts on economy, health and wellbeing. CLD practice includes examples such as improving opportunities for learning and development in rural areas, supporting learners of all ages to develop confidence, autonomy and skills, literacy and numeracy support through to community art projects, citizen assemblies, community participatory budgeting initiatives and supporting capacity building of community developments such as foodbanks and credit unions.

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 practice extends the reach of democracy and widens its scope.

CLD offers the learning and development opportunities to ensure communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe, to tackling poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally, working collaboratively to make Scotland's National Outcomes a reality however it is not recognised or acknowledged for its role and this we would like to see changed.

This response was compiled following consultation with members of the CLD Standards Council, partner organisations, staff team and stakeholders.

We facilitated an online consultation event with members on 6th September 2023. We attended online discussions hosted by the Scottish Community Development Centre ([SCDC](#)) and also had dialogue with individual members and the CLD Standards Council staff team.

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. The consultation focus group data provided a valuable insight into the experiences based on the views of the member participants. 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 Scottish Governments consultation on Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Planning: Guidance

Q: Do you agree that the purpose and scope of the guidance is clear?

The purpose and scope of this guidance is generally clear and informative, and we welcome the recognition that some of the people in our communities are more vulnerable, and therefore may find engagement challenging but that these are voices that need to be heard and should be given equitable opportunity to engage and have an influence in development. There is concern around how this would look in reality, across Scotland's vastly differing urban and rural landscapes and communities. As it is, the guidance overall offers detail regarding stages and engagement levels but it is felt there is considerable lack of attention and detail regarding the people, human resource and skills required to achieve these engagement aims, with our communities. To create a better understanding of community need, along with how human aspects of location and infrastructure interrelate and interact, we will need the engagement of people in those communities, and offering them support of qualified CLD practitioners will enable meaningful engagement and data gathering of needs from the ground up perspective.

We would like to see further attention to language, specifically around the difference between consultation and perhaps the more significant forms of participation. It is interesting to see empowerment outlined as placing decision-making with contributors from our communities as often when we see other guidance and proposals that offer clarity around empowerment it does not imply such a power shift.

"All the levels of engagement are a form of empowerment for communities and planning authorities will work towards different levels of engagement depending on the stage of the local development plan."

We would strongly suggest you review this point and the overall guidance communication around empowerment. Empowerment is about people having the power and skills to have control over their own lives. CLD practitioners are trained and qualified to support and develop the knowledge and skill people require to empower themselves. There may be empowering elements in all the levels of engagement but not all are empowering. There is no guarantee that engagement with local authorities and planning, as mentioned in this guidance, would positively impact, support and enable people to be empowered, therefore all levels of engagement will not empower communities.

An exemplar would be useful in this section to illustrate what this would look like in practice and therefore mitigate inconsistent application of this guidance. Whilst as professional CLD practitioners, who are involved in community development, we understood the language used within this section and the guidance as a whole document, it was felt that some community members and other stakeholders may not and therefore language should be questioned and reviewed throughout. It was also suggested that perhaps the use of shorter versions for community groups which are seeking ways to have a stronger voice in development planning would help engagement and in particular support community bodies preparing local place plans.

It should be clearly stipulated that CLD as a profession and a practice has a crucial role within this guidance and its approaches. The professional practice of CLD and its community-led approaches should be emphasised as vital service to safeguarding the processes which ensure communities can successfully indicate the priorities of those who live there. This would include co-participation and community led action planning and research, supported by professional CLD practitioners who can offer community capacity building.

There are a number of plans, guidance and legislation which impact community empowerment, development and engagement. This guidance and authorities using it must ensure there is rigor around about these and that they align with each other, so communities and the CLD sector who works to support them are not stretched due to the level of duplication and replication. This could negatively impact the quality of engagement as well as the capacity of communities and supporting agencies.

Q: Do you agree that the terms inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower, as described in the table, are helpful terms to support understanding of different levels of engagement and the influence that results from it?

Overall yes, it was felt that it is fairly clear. This section intimates that real community empowerment only applies to developing plans, which is never the motivation of community groups - they want action, influence and implementation. This could be a limitation of the planning legislation rather than the guidance, so perhaps the role of the guidance can be how to strengthen capacity building in the third sector and of the CLD workforce to support this guidance and its engagement approaches. We would also welcome a stronger definition of the term collaborate, as it could offer and demonstrate a more equal partnership. We appreciate that this guidance is linking to the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) and International Association for Public Participation ([IAP](#)), which we believe is important and useful. There is a real need for capacity building support as it is not something that communities often have the knowledge and skills to do from a standing start themselves so it is imperative that the national standards and IAP are embedded.

There is some concern regarding the language and the ability of community members being able to see themselves in the different levels of engagement as it is currently explained in the guidance. It is critical communities feel represented and can connect themselves to the terms used. To support this, the guidance would benefit from some short evidence based examples of the ways in which individuals within our communities can and have influenced and impacted on community development at the suggested different levels of engagement.

The opportunity to have info graphics and visuals as a PDF or PPT would also be a useful tool. They are a good introduction to engagement and support those initial conversations with communities and groups. Having more visual mapping of tools or approaches can help bring the topic alive and is proven to be good for stimulating discussion and for understanding.

Building up a series of case studies or stories where communities have led sustainable change can only support this approach as well as send out a strong positive message about Scottish Governments commitment to genuine engagement.

Q: Do you agree that the appropriate levels of engagement have been identified for the stages of local development plan preparation?

We welcome the fact that this guidance offers some detail around the roles and responsibilities of all people involved in engagement, however it could go further and we suggest it offers more clarity of the roles throughout. As it stands the power of influence and sense of control is often vague. It would benefit all parties to have further demonstration of how communities have the opportunity to engage with their planning departments and the local authority, as we have concerns regarding the current cultural power imbalance which could undermine this approach.

Ultimately there is a requirement for change, and an acknowledgment that community voices are valued and respected, and can impact on planning and guiding the development that is required for their local community. We welcome this consultation as without clear defined guidance emphasising the importance of the community voice throughout all processes in this approach, and the critical role communities play, then there is an apprehension that control and influence is never truly with, and part of, a community's power (e.g. local authorities can deny planning, developments can be overturned by the Scottish reporter etc). What assurances will communities be offered on this?

Historically and culturally decision-making power often lies out with the community so a considerable amount of work around these new approaches, the flow of communication, as well as developing trust and understanding from all parties will be needed. Without these community members may feel contempt, frustration and disempowerment, with engagement being seen as another tokenistic and "being done to" initiative by community planning and ultimately the local authority.

Q: Overall, is the approach set out in the guidance helpful?

We fully understand the positive impacts and significant benefits this approach offers planning partners, individuals, communities and local economies. It could award substantial change which can be life changing if done correctly but this will require significant commitment from all involved, especially the individuals and communities who will be giving up their time. We would like to see some assurance and a commitment from Scottish Government and local authorities that the significant investment and resources required by the CLD sector, individuals and communities will be made available to all involved. Ultimately this will enable the processes to be both a positive and a meaningful collaborative experience with the best outcomes for all.

As mentioned previously, cultural change regarding meaningful engagement around planning is required and we would welcome more detail in the guidance advocating innovative and creative methods which support engagement, commitment and ultimately a real power shift. Examples of

this are citizens assemblies, community panels, lived experienced focus groups and grassroots community development organisations. We also seek further details regarding how community groups can hold statutory partners to account if they do not feel meaningfully engaged in planning processes or even are purposefully excluded.

We want to see all stakeholders support and enable the cultural change that is needed and this guidance should give more focus and guidance on how to ensure statutory partners carry out meaningful engagement with community members and groups. The guidance should also offer all parties further evidence based information on the benefits and importance of engaging with individuals and communities of protected characteristics. Whilst there are sections on equality and human rights which inform on some of the barriers faced by groups with protected characteristics it was felt more could be done to promote the benefits of positive engagement, ensuring processes are equitable and fair to all parties and the importance of gathering all views. This would ensure the more vulnerable and marginalised voices are heard so outcomes are beneficial to all impacted in these communities.

Q: Will this help advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discriminations and foster community relations?

Only if it is an accessible and inclusive process in reality. Without thresholds being set the process risks continuing to have dominant voices overshadowing the community's wider need. If statutory partners are responsible for getting this right, they need to be supported to believe and trust in our communities; utilising professional CLD staff to enhance engagement and build relations is vital.

It is important that all engagement and development throughout is "alongside and enabling" rather than "doing to" as often has been the approach in the past. As mentioned previously, there is a significant cultural change required in some areas to ensure we advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discriminations and foster trusting and transparent community relations. This can be achieved if capacity building for community groups is resourced e.g. through more funding for local authority CLD services and third sector interfaces to support community-led planning. Training and clear communications for all stakeholders would be essential to ensure understanding of the processes and approaches, and to enable meaningful engagement and empowerment.

It is important to recognise that a growing number of CLD practitioners are volunteers within our communities and play a vital role in supporting individuals, communities and therefore positively impacting Scotland's wellbeing economy by fostering positive community relations and enhancing community voice. The growing role of volunteers could in part be attributed to the cuts in the CLD workforce in local authorities and third sector, however volunteers are often not recognised regarding the role they carry out and the impact that has on our communities. We would ask that a summary is added to this guidance, where the term CLD practitioner could be defined as someone who works or volunteers to support individuals and communities, along with definitions of other stakeholders. This would offer clarity and inclusion to all involved.

In terms of real life impact – there are concerns regarding how we continue to see statutory bodies and representatives state they follow good practice and inclusion when community organisations and third sector organisations continue to remain unsupported, un-resourced and often excluded. Equality of opportunity, elimination of unlawful discriminations and positive community relations will be unachievable without statutory bodies shifting their outlook and culture when it comes to working with communities.

It was felt that collaboration across multiple sectors (including communities) is key to ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate and contribute to this guidance. Collaboration to ensure that delivery can take place within communities is much needed and it was felt that the private sector also has crucial part to play in this especially via the delivery of community benefit and social value workstreams. The private sector have a moral duty to make sure they are building capacity within communities and this guidance must ensure the private sector is communicated with, and actively involved in these planning approaches.

Q: Thinking about the potential impacts of the guidance – will these help to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and foster good community relations, in particular for people with protected characteristics?

Identity and Belonging: People require ways to discover who they are and where they belong, to develop a sense of belonging to a place. This personal and community development is supported by CLD Youth Work, Adult Learning and Community Development however funding is required to grow the CLD workforce.

There is a need for youthwork to be more than a provision delivered inside schools, but available in all our communities, into our community spaces, halls, hubs and on the streets. It is clear that CLD approaches and practice supports the engagement of young people with the processes of planning, participatory budgeting and community development. CLD enables the exploration and communication of need, and facilitates the development required by young people and communities for the building of youth clubs and spaces, community projects. This fosters young people's community pride and sense of belonging which can only support the advance of equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and foster good community relations.

It is often found that in the most deprived areas the sense of belonging and identity is strong as community members and groups, alongside CLD practitioners, have worked hard to become empowered, to be active and to strive to make their community better for themselves and for others.

Q: Do you have evidence that can further inform the impact assessments that accompany this guidance, in particular in relation to the impact of the guidance on people with protected characteristics, businesses and costs to businesses?

We recommend that further detail is offered to ensure that the processes around qualitative and quantitative data gathering support a continual cycle of data gathering to keep it up to date and

relevant. Data gathering must also keep community voice and changing needs at the heart of the information and development.

For meaningful data to be gathered we suggest that this approach supports concise collaboration with cross sector knowledge, engages with local authority CLD teams as well as third sector organisations and volunteers who are working within communities and with stakeholders. We offer caution that this process does not lean towards or heavily rely on surveys or government data, and that there is a significant shift of mindset towards positive community led engagement using a variety of methods and approaches rather than one off consultations.

Q: Please provide any further comments on the guidance set out in this consultation.

CLD as a practice is critical to supporting the development of communities, from working with individuals, young people, adults, families alongside community capacity building and supporting community development through learning and change. We strongly believe there is a fundamental need to ensure that the CLD profession and its workforce across Scotland is supported to further support the connections and communication channels between communities and government. CLD is an inclusive profession with a commitment to high standards of practice. It is critical therefore that the CLD regulations are reviewed and we see a systemic change in CLD 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 disappointed to note that the CLD profession, its practice, practitioners and the voluntary sector are not specified as key partners within this guidance and we would hope that this will be rectified in the final guidance document.

The CLD sector is professional qualified in community development and therefore fully understands that co-production is an essential approach to ensuring fair and equitable commitment from all involved. [Planning With People - Community engagement and participation guidance \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot) states “Co-production is defined by the [Scottish Co Production Network](#) as the process of active dialogue and engagement between people who use services and those who provide them. Co-production requires people to act together on an equal basis, contributing their lived experience, skills and ideas about what works to make our communities better. CLD practice offers that by supporting a Co-production approach, ensuring decisions affecting people are made with them, not for them.”

CLD as a professional practice supports community led action research, and the CLD workforce is skilled in enabling communities to enquire and decide on the issues to be researched, to design and carry it out, as well as the delivering the learning that communities require to be able to engage with other stakeholders and in the use of results to achieve positive change. Community led action research is needed to fully understand the needs of communities and to raise awareness of issues such as accessing GPs, transport issues to chemists, local shopping needs, lack of community based spaces to support connectivity and social interaction. That research is best supported by professional CLD practitioners, who are qualified and experienced in this approach and can work alongside community members to develop their research and

engagement skills. This will then support and benefit the engagement with the planning process as communities will have evidence based knowledge to support their needs and be able to communicate that to the local authority.

In our experience of community engagement with young people, they often offer valuable insight from differing perspectives which might not have been thought about by older members of the community. Young people, with fresh ideas, can be creative in regards to understanding need and finding solutions. Meaningful engagement with younger members of a community is best when supported by professional CLD youth workers as trust and effective communication channels have already been established. However, in our experience young people can often get forgotten in the collaboration and therefore go unheard, or when they have been engaged with they are then quickly disregarded and designed out of the process and development stages further on. Social interaction and meaningful engagement emerges when there is a solid community infrastructure - good youth organisations, voluntary organisations, services, learning and development opportunities, democratic participation. We would like to know what steps in this guidance, and its defined approaches, will be offered to ensure that community voices, at all ages, will be valued as well as listened to throughout all stages.

Discussions were had around the definition of “communities” and it was felt that it is important to ensure it is consistent with other legislation and community development strategies such as National Planning Framework 4, Community Wealth Building, Community Empowerment act, Island Scotland Act etc. Common identity such as languages, age, locality, cultures and ethnicity amongst others must be recognised and supported in everyone’s understanding of communities.

We would like to note that there are serious concerns regarding the raising of hope and the expectations of meaningful change and growth within Scotland’s communities, which, if no resources, infrastructure of services or funding to implement change further down the line are secured would lead to a shattering negative impact in and on those communities. In Scottish Governments [Planning with People](#) guidance published by the Scottish Government on the 21st April 2023, it clearly states “Effective services must be designed with and for people and communities – not delivered, top down for administrative convenience. In order to be effective, community engagement must be relevant, meaningful and have a clearly defined focus”. For this to happen this guidance must show commitment to this clearly throughout and requires the necessary commitment, funding and resources to be made available.

While it is recognised that many other public and voluntary sector staff contribute to the type of engagement required, CLD practitioners both paid and voluntary, are best placed in terms of their practice, skills and relationships with communities to co-ordinate activities and demonstrate good practice. It is essential to acknowledge that CLD community development practitioners already play a crucial role in supporting community groups to gain and access the skills and learning needed to respond to emerging need. This was highly evident during the [Covid 19 Pandemic](#), [Community, COVID-19, challenge and change – Policy Scotland \(gla.ac.uk\)](#), [Engage, Educate, Connect, Empower: CLD, Resilience and Recovery - July 2020 \(cldstandardscouncil.org.uk\)](#). CLD practitioners offer professional, high quality learning, guidance and skills needed for not only the development, progress and governance of community organisations, but also in supporting the operational delivery of community-based

services, for communities, groups and individuals, empowering them to have a greater stake in the communities in which they live and work, and in turn, Scotland's wellbeing economy which includes just transition to Net Zero. Where planners and architects have spent years planning spaces and places, CLD has spent time studying community, and becoming qualified in and implementing all of the tools and techniques of good community work. It is essential we all understand each other's strengths and collaborate. We strongly believe that the CLD sector and CLD as a practice needs to be given a legitimate place and role in the process.

The first-ever international standards for community development practice became available in 2018.

The CLD Standards Council worked on the standards with the International Association for Community Development, and the IACD launched them at their AGM as part of the World Community Development Conference at the end of June 2018. The full standards guidance, and recommendations on how it can be used can be found on the [IACD website](#). The CLD Standards Council has recently undertaken the review and creation of a range of National Occupational Standards (NOS) relevant to CLD practice. This involved consulting with industry experts across the four nations within the UK, amending existing NOS where appropriate and developing new NOS according to the roles the sector representatives identify. We feel these would be useful for reference in this guidance. The [National Occupational Standards](#) can also be used alongside the [CLD Competences](#).

Although language is mentioned previously in this response, we feel strongly that to ensure meaningful engagement it is important that the language used within this and other legislation mentioned is accessible and understandable to all who may be impacted by it and may want to use it. We suggest that the draft guidance should be taken to focus groups of community members who are not normally involved in these consultations and legislation, to see how well it is understood and that there is no misinterpretation of words and phrases. To ensure we get it right in terms of getting our communities involvement within these process we need to make sure that language being used is understandable and that people are not being overwhelmed by jargon and therefore disengaging with discussions.

CLD Plans: [The Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#) place duties on local authorities to work with partners and communities to co-produce and secure the delivery of CLD in their area and publish a 3-yearly CLD Plan. In December 2020, the Scottish Government provided a [CLD Plans Guidance Note](#), setting out a number of expectations for education authorities and their partners when meeting duties in community learning and development (CLD) planning for 2021 to 2024. The CLD Standards Council call for the legislation regarding these plans to be strengthened so that more detail and accountability regarding Community Wealth Building, Community Planning and Engagement, Community Empowerment and Community Assets transfer can be clearly seen as well as measured. Guidance is required to enable to 32 local authority CLD partnerships to not only record the same measurable data, but to offer insight into all community engagement legislation and ensure approaches are being developed which positively impact Scotland's communities.

We want to take the opportunity to highlight that HM Inspectors engaged with the CLD sector between April and June 2022. They visited 23 CLD settings and engaged with learners, volunteers, practitioners, local authorities, and local and national third sector organisations to gather evidence. The settings visited covered a wide variety of urban and rural areas across Scotland and included national and third sector organisations. The HM Inspectors gathered

evidence of how high-quality community development in a CLD context is helping to secure better outcomes for children, young people, families and communities. The findings focus on the key themes of:

- Community response
- Volunteering
- Partnership working
- Digital access and workforce development
- Planning for the future and next steps

[Responsive, supportive and resilient communities: A review of community development during the pandemic \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

We would like to offer some further links to relevant and useful references:

[Competent Practitioner Framework | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

[National Standards for Community Engagement](#)

[Community Engagement and Participation Guidance | COSLA](#)

[How to do a community audit: building profiles using neighbourhood statistics – infed.org:](#)

[Community-Profiling-in-West-Dunbartonshire.pdf \(gcph.co.uk\)](#)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/strategic-guidance-community-planning-partnerships-community-learning-development/>

<https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/about/2022-census/>

[Council Area Profiles | National Records of Scotland \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](#)

[Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021 \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<https://pbscotland.scot/>

Conclusion

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.

Community Development, part of CLD (Community Learning and Development) is an approach to achieving social change. It is action taken through building organisation, learning and power within communities in order to promote democracy, sustainable development, equality and social justice. It builds community capacity and influence by enabling people to develop the confidence, understanding and skills required to influence decision making and service delivery.

We fully welcome the development of this guidance and feel strongly that the CLD sector as a profession should be reflected throughout this guidance as a key stakeholder. The approaches in this guidance align with CLD value based practice as mentioned above. These values adopted by the CLD Standards Council underpin CLD practice and the CLD competences provide a framework for practice. How we practice as a profession is directly informed by why we are doing it – the CLD [Code of Ethics](#) provides the means for us to make this connection.

Finally, we feel the guidance does not go far enough in its detail regarding the full physical and psychological resource requirements needed to realise the aspirations of these approaches in improving Scotland's communities. It needs to go much further in offering detailed guidance to the importance of valuing community voice throughout all processes, as well as fully acknowledge the funding, resource and commitment required from individuals, communities and supporting professions, such as CLD. We strongly feel that CLD as profession and a domain of practice, as well as a sector, should be recognised and included throughout this guidance.