



CLD Standards Council Scotland

Submitted Response
To
Scottish Government
Independent Review of CLD

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the Community Learning and Development Standards Council's (CLD Standards Council) overall response to the Independent review of Community Learning and Development (CLD) in Scotland, framed around the CLD values and competences, with a focus on the CLD workforce, CLD careers, and qualification pathway for CLD practitioners.

2. Background

In December 2023, Mr Graeme Dey, Minister for Higher and Further Education and Veterans, announced an independent review of Community Learning and Development (CLD) in Scotland. The rationale for the review was in line with the wider reform of Scottish Education and in particular the recommendations contained within the 2023 report authored by James Withers¹. The focus of the review was to explore the two practice disciplines of CLD: Adult Learning and CLD: Youth Work with four themes considering;

- Awareness & Visibility,
- Accessibility & Availability,
- Support & Learning
- Pathways & Progression

The recommendations of how these practice disciplines of the CLD profession can be strengthened, to support delivery amid the current and future economic climate, will be presented to the Scottish Government for consideration by June 2024.

We look forward, on behalf of our members, to working closely with the Scottish Government and CoSLA to respond to the review recommendations in due course.

3. Executive Summary

In this submission, the CLD standards Council, on behalf of our members, seek to set out the key challenges and recommendations for the CLD workforce that the Independent Review of CLD should consider and address. Based on 940 member engagements of the CLD Standards Council this submission summarises the key messages and argues:

- For a revision to, and strengthening of, *The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013*² as a means of protecting and developing the professional identity, the CLD competences and practice standards for qualified CLD practitioners and the role of the CLD Standards Council as the professional body.
- For a strengthened, and invested in, CLD Standards Council with parity of esteem with other professional bodies, with fair and appropriate levels of funding and resource to support the ongoing development of the professional workforce, improve awareness of professional identity and promote CLD as a valued career choice.
- For a strengthened role and resourcing of the CLD Standards Council to assume a role similar to that of a Skills Sector Council for CLD standards and qualifications.
- That employers of CLD practitioners and volunteers in the public sector, as well as third sector employers in receipt of public funds for the delivery of CLD activity and programmes, should adhere to nationally agreed CLD job roles, job titles, job descriptors, qualification requirements and salary scales, as per the Joint

¹ [Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation: Skills Delivery Landscape Review – Final Report \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

² [The Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Workers model that is used successfully in England and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

- That Further Education and Higher Education institutions providing CLD qualifications should adhere to nationally agreed course titles, descriptors, and mandated course content requirements, with a strengthened approvals, validation, and endorsement role for the CLD Standards Council.
- For a role for His Majesty's Inspectors of Education CLD team to work with the CLD Standards Council to review initial CLD qualifying training at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Diploma levels to support equalities, recruitment, and workforce development.
- That mandatory registration with the CLD Standards Council for all qualified practitioners at SCQF levels 9 and above should be introduced, along with recognition that the BA (Hons) and the Postgraduate Diploma programmes are the recognised professional level qualifications that provide a professional licence to practice CLD in Scotland.
- For the implementation of a suite of national outcomes for CLD, supported by the development of a single national data system which captures and measures qualitative and quantitative evidence and impact, across all three disciplines of CLD practice – adult learning, community development and youth work – aligned to the National Performance Framework.
- For the implementation of a 10 year fully costed and funded workforce development strategy for CLD, with a clear role and focus within this for the CLD Standards Council as the professional body. This strategy should address workforce diversity, support careerlong learning and development, confirm career progression routes and improve entry level pathways for volunteers, community activists and non-qualified staff members supporting CLD delivery.
- That the Scottish Funding Council should continue to work towards achievement of its commitment to support the CLD sector with additional resource to develop community-based learning programmes, led by qualified CLD practitioners.

4. The Role of the CLD Standards Council

The CLD Standards Council³, is separate to the independent review team and Education Scotland, with its own distinct governance arrangements. The CLD Standards Council is the members led professional body for CLD that is mandated by Scottish Ministers and operates within a Framework Agreement with the host agency, Education Scotland.

The CLD Standards Council has a growing membership of over 3000 members, which is governed by an executive committee and three standing committees, with the membership of each committee being drawn from the members who work, and/or volunteer, in CLD organisations and job roles across Scotland.

Our strategic objectives, as agreed with Education Scotland and Scottish Government are to:

- Deliver, maintain, and further develop a professional Approvals⁴ structure for qualifications, courses, and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD.
- Maintain and develop the Registration⁵ system and establish members' services for practitioners delivering and active in CLD.
- Maintain and develop models of Professional Learning⁶ and training opportunities for CLD practitioners.
- Improve and develop our organisational capability.
- Lead and contribute to relevant CLD policy and workforce information services.

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.”

³ [CLD Standards Council for Scotland | Professional Learning](#)

⁴ [Approvals | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

⁵ [Registration | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

⁶ [Professional Learning | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

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.”

5. The CLD Standards Councils Approach to the Gathering of Member Feedback

In order to represent the views of Members, the CLD Standards Council’s objective throughout the review period has been to raise awareness and facilitate a programme of member focus groups, stakeholder meetings, questionnaires, and online member engagement activity. To date the CLD Standards Council has offered:

- **Thirty** engagement opportunities for members, stakeholders, and partner agencies.
- **Fifteen** online discussion groups.
- **Six** in person discussion groups.
- **Seven** one to one meetings, and
- **Two** online questionnaires to capture the views of qualified practitioners who no longer work in a CLD role, and to gather current demographic data on our membership.

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed to ensure all practices and events were fair and did not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation. We have recorded over **940 member engagements** across the thirty events, with a further two in-person events scheduled to be held in rural regions of Scotland in mid-March, a staff discussion day late March and a joint conference with CLD Managers Scotland in April.

In person discussion sessions took place with current CLD students across three Scottish Universities, and with partners from the Further and Higher Education CLD sector. Our staff team and committee members also engaged and participated in external consultation events hosted by partners such as Volunteer Scotland⁷, Education Scotland⁸ and YouthLink⁹ Scotland.

Online focussed discussion groups were supported by use of digital tools such as Menti-Meter and Padlet to collate the members’ views. This approach generated both qualitative and quantitative data which has informed our **twelve** summary reports, which we have submitted separately as a suite of responses to the Review Team.

Our Director - Dr. Marion Allison, reconvened the CLD Leadership Group that had been active during the pandemic period with a view to this group submitting a coordinated response to the review. The group has met regularly throughout the consultation period and are preparing a separate submission for the review team.

In addition, at the request of the CLD Standards Council, the Chair of the Education Training Standards (ETS) forum in Scotland, has worked with colleagues from other ETS groups to prepare and submit a separate submission¹⁰, concentrating on qualifications, practice standards and the importance of maintaining the shared validation and endorsement framework for the U.K. and Ireland.

A detailed overview of our approach to gathering member feedback and providing appropriate sector and organisational data is outlined below:

- Member engagement events were framed on the CLD Values¹¹ and Competences¹² to encourage thinking and responses primarily on the workforce aspects of the review.

⁷ [About Us - Volunteer Scotland](#)

⁸ [Education Scotland | Education Scotland](#)

⁹ [Community Learning and Development \(CLD\): Independent Review | YouthLink Scotland](#)

¹⁰ [JETS Submission FINAL.pdf](#)

¹¹ [Values of CLD | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

¹² [Competent Practitioner Framework | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

- As the professional body the CLD Standards Council has focused on workforce specific themes – fit for purpose, future, data, workforce, context, policy, regulations, other.
- Conducted a membership equalities audit to provide an understanding of membership demographics, as a reflection of the CLD workforce.
- Promotion of the Citizen Space questionnaire to encourage members to respond as individual practitioners.
- Promoted the learner’s questionnaire to members and encouraged them to undertake learner engagement events to develop and submit responses.
- Engaged with members and stakeholders via online meetups and focus groups, in-person drop-in events, in-person meetings with stakeholders, 1- 1 meetings with allied organisations and promoted use of the contact email box for members to submit their thoughts and suggestions direct.
- Conducted an online questionnaire targeting CLD qualified practitioners who do not work in the CLD sector to understand the reasons for this.
- Reviewed previous prepared responses relating to the wider education reform that could be applied to the CLD review.
- Protected time as part of the executive and standing committee meetings to gather the views of the committees in relation to the review themes.
- Supported the planning and delivery of a national conference in partnership with CLD Managers Scotland, to engage CLD managers in discussion around the review themes (to be held April 2024).
- Submission of appropriate CLD Standards Council data to the review secretariat – budget information, workforce statistics (2018)¹³, membership Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion data, annual reports¹⁴ and member case studies.
- Use of social media platforms and websites to build awareness of the review amongst the CLD Standards Council membership, wider CLD sector, allied sectors, and organisations.
- Submission of mini reports following each engagement event providing summary of discussions and suggested areas for consideration by the review team.

6. Limitations / Caveats

It is important to recognise that this response provides an insight into the views and experiences of our members, based on the responses gathered from the engagements outlined in section 5, and at a time when the sector, and membership, are contending with significant resource reduction in the public and third sectors.

7. Member Feedback

There was general consensus from CLD members, our stakeholders and partner agencies on the following points:

CLD is an educative intervention.

The CLD sector is an integral part of the wider Scottish education¹⁵, ensuring individuals, families and communities across Scotland reach their potential through lifelong learning, mutual self-help, and community organisations - and that the available support and opportunities are built around people’s aspirations and community’s needs.

Taking an educational early intervention and prevention approach, it provides learners of all ages with skills for life and learning opportunities to address personal and social development, active citizenship, and community engagement, and plays a critical role in supporting individual health and wellbeing.

¹³ [Working with Scotland's Communities 2018 \(cldstandardscouncil.org.uk\)](https://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk)

¹⁴ [Council reports and papers | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

¹⁵ [Community Learning and Development \(CLD\) | Sector | Learning in Scotland | Education Scotland](#)

Starts where the learner is.

Using both informal and formal engagement, CLD supports learning opportunities that start from where the learner is at in terms of their social, emotional, and learning abilities. Competent and qualified professional CLD practitioners provide learning and development opportunities in a range of contexts that are developed in dialogue with individuals and communities. They generate learning opportunities that tackle barriers to participation, and co-develop, design, and deliver learner-centred programmes which often take advantage of learning and development opportunities in everyday situations.

“Community workers are often the first point of contact .We have no agenda - start from where the person is”

Through person centred learning, qualified CLD practitioners champion the empowerment and enablement of people, both as individuals and in communities, to tackle inequalities and make positive changes in their lives and their communities – both geographic and of interest.

“important principle of CLD is that we start from where they are at - what they need”

Co-production of skills, knowledge and problem solving (Frierien Approach).

Co-production¹⁶ increases engagement, accountability and understanding, by fostering a more equal relationship between the learners and communities, and the providers of the learning opportunity, such as CLD services. Building on the person-centred approach, it recognises that everyone has value, supporting all involved to draw from their own experiences and knowledge, therefore creating a balance of power. This assists the production of the learning experiences and solutions required to best serve the individual or community.

“Creative and flexible engagement in language that makes sense to people”

Social Justice.

There was a strong call to ensure that CLD going forward was not considered solely as a skills and employability agenda response but was acknowledged, accepted, and defined, as being a profession that uses educational theories and approaches with communities, families, and individuals to lead transformative personal and community change through the lens of social justice¹⁷.

Our members highlighted that they feel there is a gap between the policy rhetoric and the actual delivery of CLD, with an already universally accepted settled will in Scotland that CLD is about using education for social justice¹⁸ , transformative change and building human relationships .

“Definite lack of clear and consistent policy framework - values and principles are our main underpinning constant to influence our practice, Social Justice.”

CLD role in Economy, Society etc.

CLD as a field of professional practice 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 supports the delivery of other services.

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 Community Learning and Development provision¹⁹ in their area and publish a 3-yearly plan¹⁹. This is

¹⁶ [Scottish Co-production Network \(coproductionscotland.org.uk\)](https://www.coproductionscotland.org.uk)

¹⁷ [CSJ19940-Playing-The-Ace-221125.pdf \(centreforsocialjustice.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁸ [What Is Social Justice Education? | Learning for Justice](#)

¹⁹ [Community Learning and Development Planning 2021 – 2024 | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

accompanied by strategic guidance²⁰, issued by Scottish Government, which aims to align the system more purposefully with national ambitions for jobs and growth; to improve people's life chances; and to ensure the sustainability of Scotland's systems in a time of inescapable pressures on public spending. This guidance recognises community learning and development (CLD) as being a key stakeholder and an integral partner in achieving the National Performance Outcomes²¹.

Members also discussed concerns around the CLD workforce always being required to be available when the country, or a community, has a crisis²² - covid²³, climate, poverty, - with an ask that research is done to support understanding of the negative impact and increased demand on other sectors when CLD is reduced or removed.

“When will they realise that cuts to CLD mean increased costs to other sectors such as education, health, housing, social work, economic development “

“Concerns Cuts to centres, libraries, spaces where CLD would happen in communities.... we need to highlight the detriment to our communities when they are not supported to have their own voice!”

CLD Comprises Adult Learning, Community Development and Youth Work

That CLD as a singular professional practice discipline (covering adult learning, community development and youth work) is located within one Ministerial portfolio of Scottish Government, as a means of greatly improving the awareness and recognition of the sector and supporting impact across the policy landscape and national performance framework²⁴. This should also be reflected in the Directorate structures of local authorities.

“Important definition is we are the sum of the three thematics. It has a power to offer real sustainable change for Scotland's communities.”

The consistent messaging from all the engagement events was the high levels of concern expressed by the membership and stakeholders, that the community development aspect of the profession was being overlooked and the potential negative impacts this may have on professional practice moving forward.

“We have a definition of CLD and its constituent parts, so we need national measures that identify and connect across adult learning, comm development and youth work.”

CLD is primarily a profession. It is also a service and can be an approach used by other educators in different contexts.

A call for mandatory registration of degree level qualified practitioners to support the identity and profile of the profession.

Concerns were raised regarding the lack of visibility of the profession as a career and felt this needed to be addressed at strategic levels, with an overhaul of CLD data on careers services and websites such as My World of Work²⁵, Skills Development Scotland²⁶ and UCAS²⁷, with additional comments on the need for improved funding and promotions of the career pathways at entry levels and also for qualified practitioners seeking to further develop their theoretical knowledge and understanding.

²⁰ [Contents - Strategic guidance for community planning partnerships: community learning and development - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

²¹ [National Outcomes | National Performance Framework](#)

²² [Pandemic and lockdown: how CLD practitioners have responded | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

²³ [Engage, Educate, Connect, Empower: CLD, Resilience and Recovery - July 2020 \(cldstandardscouncil.org.uk\)](#)

²⁴ [National Performance Framework | National Performance Framework](#)

²⁵ [Community development worker | My World of Work](#)

²⁶ [About SDS - Skills Development Scotland](#)

²⁷ [UCAS | At the heart of connecting people to higher education](#)

“Is there something around the 'profession' vs job titles? Just working alongside social workers who have a range of different job titles but still have their professional identity.”

“We are diluting our professional qualification by recruiting folk with "equivalent" degrees. Schools wouldn't recruit a community worker to teach maths, but CLD might recruit a teacher for a qualified youth work post.”

“Mandatory registration ‘may’ provide a greater level of credibility for our profession and practice by employers, other professional bodies, and service recipients. Particularly at a time when expectations on the ability to change to meet a rapidly changing policy landscape is being placed on our profession.”

It was also felt that these strengthened academic requirements would reinforce that CLD is a profession first and foremost. Currently confusion exists as to CLD being considered by employers and stakeholders as a profession, or a local authority service, or a partnership or an approach to delivery. The view being that there is a CLD sector in Scotland that brings together different providers such as local authorities, colleges, health and the third sector, but that within that there is a clear and evident professional practice discipline of community education. This is reflective of the Education sector with teaching being the professional practice discipline, but with wider contributions from others for example pupil support assistants and educational psychologists.

Partnership, collective action, and collaboration

A more detailed summary of the views and feedback of our members have been captured and reported to the independent review team through our suite of thirteen submissions. These submissions provide a summary of the discussions that took place, provide a series of recommendations for the review team to consider against the thematic area being discussed and use direct quotes from our members, stakeholders, and partners as evidence to support the discussion points and direct asks from the review process²⁸.

8. Budget Considerations for the Sector and the Review

Throughout all of our engagements there was a mixed response to the undertaking of the review. Many of the more cautious comments related to the timing of the announcement and querying if this was linked to the Scottish Government budget setting process with a view to maximising further reductions in CLD budget and resource across the local authorities, *“Why is this being done and why now?”*

Since the review was announced and the local authority budget setting has taken place, our members are reporting many areas in Scotland where CLD resource has been unfairly targeted in order to protect what is often viewed as other statutory services. This is placing undue pressure on communities, practitioners, and service providers to meet the learning and development needs of communities, young people, and adults, as stated in the CLD Plans for the period 2021 – 2024 and will have far reaching consequences for the sustainability of CLD practice and the workforce in those authority areas. This is also supported by the recent publication of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework Report 2022/23²⁹ by Improvement Services where they state.

“Expenditure within social care, education, and support for care experienced children continues to be sustained and enhanced, increasing since 2010/11 by 29%, 21% and 17% respectively. Meanwhile, disproportionate, and substantial reductions are targeted in non-statutory services in order to provide balance to statutory and ringfenced commitments elsewhere.”

Despite the CLD Regulations published in 2013, placing a statutory requirement on local education authorities to publish a 3-year CLD Plan detailing how they will secure community learning and development in their authority area, there remains no consistent understanding of the statutory duty to provide and protect CLD services in Scotland across community planning partnerships³⁰, and local authorities in particular. There was a strong

²⁸ [2024 CLD Review Submissions](#)

²⁹ [National Benchmarking Overview Report 2022-23 \(improvementservice.org.uk\)](#)

³⁰ [Community Planning | Our Place](#)

message throughout all of our member engagement events on the need for improved legislation, from the Scottish Government, to protect and develop CLD as a professional practice area by revising and strengthening the statutory guidance for CLD, and publishing a fully funded 5 or 10 year CLD Strategy for Scotland with clear SMART outcomes and indicators for the development and delivery of the 3 disciplines of professional practice – adult learning, community development and youth work.

“Not only is there economies of scale in youth work, adult learning and community development being together – it allows us to have better access to job opps across the range of our prof skills.”

“Important definition is we are the sum of the 3 thematics. It has a power to offer real sustainable change for Scotland's communities.”

Members also recognised that for the CLD Standards Council to be able to fully meet its requirements as the professional body for the sector, then fair, appropriate, and sustained levels of funding and resource would be required. This would be reflective of the growth in other national CLD sector organisations, who operate with a larger staffing and budgetary resource.

“FULL investment is needed by Scottish Government for our children, young people, adults and elders in our communities and for the CLD Standards Council to be the Anchor and Enabler to the workforce. If we don't have the right commitment and investment, Scotland suffers... need to look into social capital, benefits of early intervention etc”

“The Standards Council delivers a National and International face and voice for our profession. A profession that we are individually and collectively proud of and proud to be associated with”

“The national agency for CLD. Needs to be in legislation and have greater regulatory power”

“Having come as a volunteer youth worker into what was once 'Community Education' onto CLD. the emergence, creation and evolution of the CLD Standards Council has provided a beacon for me to follow, and provided an opportunity for me to grow as a professional. The Standards Council supports volunteers to practice and grow as a CLD practitioner.”

9. Critical Response to the Independent Review Process.

For those who expressed their excitement at the review the comments were related to the spotlight being on the profession, and the wider sector, and the chance to demonstrate to government and policy makers the valued contribution that high quality professional CLD practice makes to the lives of communities, young people and adults which may support the need for strengthened legislation and the role of the CLD Standards Council as the professional body supporting the CLD sector.

“Optimistically I hope the reason is in light of the recognition of the role of CLD within the Education Reform process..... ideally it should lead to strengthened statutory guidance on CLD and greater parity within the education & skills landscape.”

“...and we want the review to recognise the investment that's lifted the CLD Standards Council is so important.... we are at precipice, a moment where we could become huge enablers to Scotland with the right investment.... Building blocks have taken it to here but needs to continue to take it further.”

The timelines for the undertaking of the review were also seen to be an issue as it was recognised that the CLD sector is so broad and complex that to be able to generate a full and detailed understanding of the interdependencies of the three disciplines of practice – adult learning, community development and youth work – within the variety of delivery contexts and settings, could prove to be too big of an undertaking. Our members are concerned that the review will conclude, and report recommendations that will have significant impact on

the profession, and the sector without the full understanding of the varied contributions that CLD makes to central and local government policy agendas.

“Not a full review of CLD - only a partial, is this the best we deserve or need.”

In announcing the review, the Minister also made clear that there would be no additional resource made available to support the review process. Members were concerned that this was not reflective of the other reviews that had been undertaken as part of the broader education reform work and were concerned what this would mean for the CLD review and how the reviewer would be able to plan and deliver a successful review process.

Our members discussed the risks and opportunities that this Independent Review of CLD presents to the professional workforce, and the wider sector and agreed the following:

- Concerns around the treatment of youth work and adult learning strategies – if repeated with the recommendations of this review Scottish Government begin to lose trust of the sector.
- Financial position will restrict any investment – but realignment of other budgets across education and lifelong to address the recommendations of this review should be undertaken.
- There is an opportunity for greater demand on CLD skills and learning opportunities to support the changing need of the economy of Scotland, due to the continued increase in an ageing population alongside the continually rising of the eligibility age for a state pension. Scotland Census³¹ reports that there are more people in the older age groups than ever recorded in previous Scotland’s Census, with over one million people aged sixty-five and over (1,091,000). This is over a quarter of a million higher than the number of people under 15 (832,300). This continuing change in our demographics, alongside a forecast stability of numbers leading to a small drop in unemployment figures³² will mean a greater demand on adult learning to support skills development of the ageing workforce.
- Missed opportunity to legislate and secure CLD as a statutory profession, on par with others, will allow further division of the sector and workforce, and ultimately the loss of the profession, causing significant increase in demand and cost to other services, as well the catastrophic negative impact on individuals and communities across Scotland.

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

³¹ [Scotland's Census 2022 - Rounded population estimates | Scotland's Census \(scotlandscensus.gov.uk\)](#)

³² [ScotGov Labour Market Trends](#)