



CLD Standards Council Scotland

Report

In response to

Skills Delivery Independent Review: Call for Evidence
December 2022

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Introduction

The Scottish Government is conducting a number of reviews across 2022/2023 into the future of Scottish education with the aim of hearing from the widest possible range of voices and views. In September 2022, the Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training set out to parliament that he would be initiating an independent review of the skills delivery landscape in Scotland as part of work to ensure that the skills system is fit for purpose for delivering Scotland's national outcomes and meeting future economic challenges including the transition to net zero.

James Withers was appointed as Advisor to the Review. The review's scope and purpose were to explore how the public body and advisory landscape can be adapted to drive forward the Scottish Government's outcomes and ambitions for skills. Specifically, it looked at the skills functions of Scotland's public bodies and will then make recommendations on their roles and responsibilities within the future delivery landscape. The purpose of this call for evidence was to gather evidence from all interested parties to inform recommendations in relation to the future of the skills delivery public body and advisory landscape, including the future remit and status of Skills Development Scotland.

The purpose of community learning and development (CLD) is to empower people, individually and collectively, to make positive changes in their lives and in their communities, **through learning**. The Government's National Performance Framework sets out the strategic objectives for all public services, including those delivering CLD. CLD's specific focus is:

1. improved life chances for people of all ages, through learning, personal development and active citizenship.
2. stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities.

The CLD sector is an integral part of Scottish education. It plays a central part in ensuring individuals, families and communities across Scotland reach their potential through lifelong learning, mutual self-help and community organisation - and that the available support and opportunities are community-led, built around people's aspirations and community's needs.

CLD Standards Council would like to take the opportunity of this review to raise and promote the lifelong learning landscape, and that skills delivery is critical for all ages and stages of learning. We also wanted to highlight the role and agility of Community Learning and Development practitioners and organisations who support and offer learning opportunities to Scotland's learners and communities all year. We recognise that there is common ground as well as robust partnerships between traditional education establishments such as Schools, Colleges, Universities, and CLD in terms of values, outcomes and practice methods. It strongly believes that it should not just be traditional educational bodies making decisions which affect education and learning opportunities for all of Scotland's learners, and that it is critical that Scottish education is about all learners at all ages and stages in life, life wide and lifelong

CLD Standards Council submitted this report in response as well as gave its members the link to the Scottish Governments Skills Delivery Independent Review: Call for Evidence webpage, and encouraged members to submit individual responses.

Response from the CLD Standards Council to the Skills Delivery Independent Review: Call for Evidence

Part 1 - Scotland's Skills Delivery Landscape

vision is for a skills and education system that can provide individuals with the skills they need to have rewarding careers, and businesses with a skilled workforce which will enable the economy to flourish.

Q: If there was one thing you would like to see change in how our skills landscape is structured and delivered, what would it be?

The Lifelong Learning landscape should be determined by a framework that facilitates vocational, professional and/or technical competencies to be accredited, through a process such as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) on the SCQF framework – using micro-credentials. Giving skills and competencies parity with academic attainment and recognising achievements for all learners at all levels, making it simple and clear for community-based learning providers, schools, FE/He and Employers to understand an individual's attainments.

Parity of esteem given to those vocations and learning pathways which are deemed less academic or of less value, so that individuals are encouraged and commended to follow whichever skills path they choose. Culture change towards trades and other vocations so society value them as much of an achievement as becoming a doctor or following a career in retail.

Clarity re the principal of lifelong learning i.e. that learning, work, career and vocation pathways are not linear. People move between learning and work opportunities at different age, rates and stages.

Alternative pathways to vocations, away from traditional routes such as College and University. More value given to the community-based pathways which enable people to develop vocational and social/personal skills together, with a critical focus and recognised importance of Lifelong Learning, especially for adults to engage and access apprenticeships.

Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) provision around vocational education pathways is underdeveloped and limited to young people in schools, let alone incredibly limited regards adults looking for training and support. For young people it does not offer enough of a focus of other possible options outside of the academic "higher" route and university. Whilst we are aware there are alternative pathways, often they are not offered, explained or as widely understood.

Whilst My World of Work is a useful tool, it is not widely used/accessed by adults or employers. It should support lifelong and life wide learning pathways ([Adult Learning Strategy](#)) and enable learners of all ages to understand the choices they have, so they can access information and support regards the path that suits their learning needs at that specific time. The quality, level and location of information is inconsistent and often difficult to manoeuvre, for learners of any age and ability. For people with any additional needs or lower levels of literacy there seems very little assistance to support their ability to access guidance and information on skills, learning and employment, within the current information and advice systems. The Scottish Transitions Forum in their [Principles of Good Transitions](#), state that it is critical that young people and parents/carers are provided with clear advice and guidance to support a positive and successful post school transition, and that support should be co-ordinated across all services. This support should be afforded equitably to learners of all ages and levels to support their skills development needs.

Q: Thinking about the different national agencies and partners involved in skills delivery, are there areas where more clarity is required about roles and responsibilities or where you think the balance of responsibilities should be changed?

We would urge you to review Scottish Government strategies such as the Adult Learning Strategy, the Youth Work Strategy (published early 2023), along with Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. All clearly define the work and ambitions of the key agencies and partners who support delivery of skills across Scotland, strengthening learning opportunities within communities as well as in the traditional educational settings. These strategies outline the key actions required to develop and improve the learning and skills offer for people of all ages, lifelong and life wide.

Q: Thinking about how our economy and society is changing and the Scottish Government's ambitions for a skilled workforce as set out in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, do you have any evidence on where the current skills and education landscape needs to adapt or change and how it could be improved?

Focus on skills that develop confident learners for the world of work, for industry, third sector and in our communities. Prominence on the delivery of skills to learners of all ages that are engaging, relevant to their lives, develop curious learners with critical thinking skills: eg. communications skills (verbal and written), numeracy skills, meta skills, digital skills, hand and tools skills, problem solving, motivational intelligence, open minds, growth mindsets.

Adult Apprenticeships should be available to any learner over the age of twenty-five. With an aging population, drastic changes in economy and industry, our support to adults who may wish of need to change careers is critical. Robust and practical frameworks should be developed in key areas to support Scotland's ambitions to develop a strong and inclusive economy and support the focus of Scottish Governments No one Left Behind; [delivery plan 2020](#) that people are the centre of the design and delivery of employability services " A person-centred system that is more flexible and responsive to the changing labour market, tackles inequalities and grows Scotland's economy". These apprenticeships would offer a solution to skills shortages at a local and regional level, not restricted to sectors which have national skills shortage.

Q: Can you provide any evidence of skills structures in other places that are delivering outcomes in line with Scotland's ambitions which Scottish Government should look to in achieving its ambitions?

Community Learning and Development (CLD) practitioners, across Scotland, in Local Authority, Third Sector and other organisations are delivering learning and accreditation to Young People, Adults, Families and Communities. Many local authorities have their own SQA accreditation centre which CLD practitioners support by programmes such as delivering and assessing core skills for Modern Apprenticeship learners who left school without the required levels, as well as offering learning and accreditations to learners of all ages who are looking for learning opportunities to develop skills that will ultimately improve employability and life chances.

Part 2 - Apprenticeships

There are three apprenticeship programmes operating in Scotland. Modern Apprenticeships; Foundation Apprenticeships; Graduate Apprenticeships

Q: Do you have any evidence relating to the outcomes of the current funding and delivery of apprenticeship programmes (Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships) in terms of either outcomes for learners and/or the needs of employers?

As stated previously, an equitable and fair funded apprenticeship framework for all ages. One that recognises the benefits of learners over the age of 25 reskilling and supporting Scotland's changing workforce landscape. These adult apprenticeships would offer a solution to skills shortages at a local and regional level, not restricted to sectors which have national skills shortage.

Q: Do you have any views or evidence on how changes to the operation of apprenticeship programmes could support the ambition for apprenticeship programmes to be an embedded part of the wider education system?

A Lifelong Learning Framework, to genuinely embed apprenticeships in the wider educational and skills landscape, and for learners of all ages. A cohesive framework with parity for skills, competencies and knowledge is required.

Q: Apprenticeships are often described as being 'demand-led'. Do you have any evidence about how process for developing and approving apprenticeship frameworks responds to skills priorities? Please include suggestions of how the development process could be enhanced. Include suggestions of how the development process could be enhanced.

The proposed new awarding body needs to be more responsive to the needs the economy when developing qualifications. The current time lag in introducing new qualifications undermines the value employers and learners attach to these awards. Using Micro-credentials which are SCQF rated may help speed up the process and aid revision of awards more quickly.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS: TAKING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO MAXIMISING. Community Learning and Development (CLD) is well placed to contribute to the refocus of Scottish Government skills strategies, particularly with respect to its key role as a provider of lifelong learning and opportunities for reskilling. Skills 4:0 presents a model of skills for the future termed as 'meta-skills', and defined 'as timeless, higher order skills that create adaptive learners and promote success in whatever context the future brings (Skills Development Scotland, 2018). 'These are the skills that enable individuals to perform highly today; in a changed world of work, they will be required by all of us.'

'Skills Development Scotland's intention is to further define these skills as measurable and observable standards that will make their adoption in learning programmes straightforward'.

The CLD Standards Council proposes that these meta-skills should be embedded within the development of micro-credentials targeted towards those furthest from the labour market and those 'at risk of unemployment' who require to reskill' (See [full paper](#))

Part 3 - National Occupational Standards

Q: Do you have any evidence on how the current arrangements for National Occupational Standards are delivering against the intended ambitions of the National Occupational Standards Strategy?

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) do provide a consistent definition of standards across the UK. From our experience of undertaking NOS reviews, we are aware of a need to further promote the value and understanding of NOS with employers, as there is often a lack of awareness of how they can be used to the benefit of employer and employee, often employers are not aware they exist.

Q: Do you have any evidence to support how changes to the delivery landscape for developing and championing National Occupational Standards could support the ambition for National Occupational Standards to be the foundation of vocational training and learning in Scotland?

Currently, it is our understanding that because NOS is a mandatory component of the SQA vocational qualification frameworks, that this ambition is already being met. We have noticed that there can be confusion around what is a NOS standard and what is a teaching unit, so greater clarification between these would assist this issue.

We would suggest that if the NOS database had the capacity to present NOS as both individual standards and as a full suite for a sector, this would support the understanding of the range of standards required for an occupation.

Part 4 - Upskilling and Reskilling

Q: Do you have any evidence to demonstrate how the existing delivery arrangements for upskilling and reskilling, including the specific funding programmes, are impacting on outcomes for learners and/or industry and sectors?

Clarity of Language: Why up skilling and reskilling, why not just SKILLING. Many people of all ages will not either understand or recognise differences, they will just want to be able to access skills learning.

The Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland sets out key aims and ambitions which support improved delivery arrangements for upskilling and re-skilling. Whilst it recognises there are multiple barriers to individuals accessing learning, it still has a key action that every adult in Scotland should have the right to access learning to meet their education's needs and aspirations. There is a critical and urgent need for clarity regards skills learning, particularly around the opportunities available for people to upskill and reskill, which will support the ambition regards expanding and extending adult learning and "for adult learning to be available, accessible and meaningful. We want the value and impact of adult learning to be understood".

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/adult-learning-strategy-scotland-2022-27/pages/4/>

There is a need to recognise that those who require additional support will not progress immediately on to vocational training opportunities straight after school. Attention should be given to creating appropriate progression routes which support transition from introductory programmes to more high-level course as part of a coherent learner journey, with the funding available to draw down as and when the person needs it.

My World of Work. Great website packed with information and suitable for those who are digitally agile, career focused, literate. Whilst additional guidance and support is offered in schools and with direct online help if you are a young person in mainstream education, sadly it stops there. This resource requires an online "chat to me" support for people of all ages and abilities, to help navigate the complex pages. Many adults lack the confidence or literacy skills required to be able to sign in and navigate a web-based platform such as My World of Work. There is also a need to review and ensure the language used is easily understandable, inclusive and accessible for all, such as offering advice on skills and employment rather than on reskilling or career pathways. Many adults accessing this site are not there to research a career, but to get support on how to change or improve their job prospects with little or no knowledge on the opportunities there are. They perhaps do not see themselves as career focused or having career needs but more that they need help understanding the skills they have, what they like doing and therefore what areas of employment and skills learning would be best suited to them. This need is only going to expand with our aging population and older working age force, who may find the need to change jobs as they get older.

Q: Thinking about the government’s ambition to optimise the existing system for upskilling and reskilling throughout life, do you have any evidence to support how changes to the delivery landscape could help to achieve this ambition?

The Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland sets out key aims and ambitions which support improved delivery arrangements for upskilling and re-skilling to help achieve this ambition. One of the key actions within the Adult Learning Strategy is to appraise the usefulness of present systems regarding Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Correctly recognising prior skills, learning and experience through an effective initial assessment and recording framework is crucial to supporting learners of all ages to person centred learning programmes. Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy. The CLD Standards Council believes that achievement of this Adult Learning Strategy ambition will support the development of our frameworks and systems towards a culture which recognises lifelong, life wide learning as well as the equitable value of multiple individual pathways towards further learning and employment for people of all ages.

Part 5 - Sector and Regional Skills Planning

Q: Thinking about the overall ambition to ensure that the skills and education system is aligned to local, regional and national skills priorities, what aspects of the current delivery landscape are working well to support this ambition?

Building a Wellbeing Economy is a top priority, an economy that is inclusive, promotes sustainability, prosperity and resilience, and that supports all of our communities across Scotland to access opportunities that deliver local growth and wellbeing. The Community Learning and Development workforce in Scotland are key to this, already working within some of Scotland’s most hardest to reach communities and with some of our most vulnerable learners of all ages. A primary process of community learning and development is to improve the quality of life. CLD is a field of professional practice that enables people to identify their own individual and collective goals, to engage in learning and take action to bring about change for themselves and their communities. A value-based practice. CLD professionals have committed themselves to the values of self-determination, inclusion, empowerment, working collaboratively and promotion of learning as a lifelong activity. ([CLD Values and Ethics](#))

The National Performance Framework (NPF) is Scotland’s wellbeing framework. It explicitly includes ‘increased wellbeing’ as part of its purpose and combines measurement of how well Scotland is doing in economic terms with a broader range of wellbeing measures. These indicators incorporate a wide range of different types of data – from social attitudes and perceptions to economic and environmental statistics – in order to paint a picture of Scotland’s performance. [NPF Scotland's Wellbeing May2019.pdf](#) (nationalperformance.gov.scot) The focus of CLD, which the Strategic Guidance puts into the context of the National Performance Framework, is identified as:

- Improved life chances for people of all ages, through learning, personal development and active citizenship.
- Stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities.

Q: Thinking about the current delivery landscape, how well is it structured to deliver the Scottish Government's ambitions for a just transition to net zero?

As mentioned previously, language and accessibility of information for all is critical at all levels and stages. For there to be a transition to net zero, we want to reiterate that there needs to be a review of language around careers, specifically for those who are not in work, have never worked, are perhaps not quite ready for work, but who are however ready for learning opportunities to grow and develop skills. The Royal Society

for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) published a report “Rebalancing adult learning” which offers to inform us on the needs, motivations and barriers to learning of those furthest from traditional education provision, and how to reframe skills away from industry driven and towards wider inclusion and participation in learning. It states that rebalancing learning provision towards the needs and motivations of learners, in order to increase participation will help individuals, society and the economy to thrive. [Rebalancing adult learning](#) - RSA report (thersa.org)

Part 6 - Careers and Young People

Q: Do you have any evidence to inform how the new Careers by Design Collaborative could be embedded within the wider education and skills system and delivery landscape to enable the recommendations of the Careers Review to be taken forward to ensure people can access the advice, information and guidance that they need?

We note in the supporting documents to this consultation that there will be open access careers guidance for adults, along with a key commitment to the development of a lifetime skills offer which makes it easier for individuals and employers to navigate existing careers and skills support. We heartily welcome this and suggest it is critical that the provision offered to adults is accessible by all, that it supports adults to recognise and value prior learning and transferable skills, that it recognises the lifelong and life wide skills needs of our learners in an ever changing economic landscape, and that it uses an operating model suitable and supportive to all adult learners abilities and needs.

Q: Alongside Careers information, advice and guidance, do you have any evidence to demonstrate what additional support young people, including those from marginalised groups, might need to develop their skills and experience to prepare them for the world of work? Please include details about who you think should be responsible for providing this support.

Many young people are unable to access school in the traditional sense, due to personal, physical and economical barriers, therefore they will be unable to access careers information, guidance and support. In many instances community learning and development workers are the professional workforce who are supporting these young people and their families, both in their communities and their homes. The careers/guidance/skills support services that will be available to these young people need to recognise and be skilled in the alternative approaches required to engage and support them, including the length of time engagement may take. Not all young people are digitally able, not all are ready for work or a career, but they will be ready to take up skills and learning opportunities which will help encourage them to see further and reach higher than they might have before, unleashing potential they did not realise. This is critical and key to realising the vision “For a world-class, professionally led, aligned and flexible system of CIAG services which delivers for every citizen, regardless of where they live in Scotland, their age or circumstance. A system through which citizens can expect a high standard of support that meets their needs when they need it most, a system that is fully interconnected to ensure citizens access the right people and services which includes employability and skills support.” [Scotland's careers strategy: moving forward - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)