

Review of Career Pathways for Community Learning and Development (CLD)

Executive Summary

June 2020

1 Purpose and background of the review

The purpose of this review is to create an overview of CLD Professional Learning (PL) currently available to practitioners in Scotland, assessing the extent of existing pathways and identifying actions to make them more effective and efficient.

The CLD Standards Council (CLDSC) is the professional body for community learning and development practitioners, established on the direction of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in 2008. The stated mission of the CLDSC 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.*”

There is a long-standing recognition of the need for a pathway of PL opportunities, with its roots in local communities, on which CLD practitioners can start out as volunteers, continue as part-time workers, reaching accredited milestones along the way to becoming a fully qualified practitioner with an approved degree qualification. Scottish Government guidance and strategies, also highlight the importance of a pathway.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen an exponential growth in the number of people engaging to support the isolated and vulnerable in their communities. For those wishing to continue and to develop their new found skills a clear, supported learning pathway will be essential.

2 Accredited Pathways to CLDSC Registered Membership

The information used to explore accredited CLD pathways has been drawn from the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

There are now only 4 Universities in Scotland providing ordinary and honours degrees approved by CLDSC as professional qualifications in CLD – Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and University of West of Scotland. As recently as 2014 there were 10 across a wider geographical spread.

Action: to secure adequate provision of degree level professional qualifications in CLD.

There are 25 programmes along the developmental route to professional qualifications which suggests that the route to a CLDSC approved degree is well served with stepping stones. However, some of these are associated with a particular strand of CLD (adult learning, community development or youth work) and the availability of opportunities appears to vary between strands. The Higher National Certificate (HNC) and National Certificate (NC) Working with Communities are significant to the accredited pathway. These courses are designed to be generic; but it is uncertain how widely known this is.

Action: to ensure that the generic nature of the NC/HNC Working with Communities and the value of generic CLD qualifications is better understood and promoted.

While research on the local availability of accredited programmes is not yet complete, the reduction in the number of courses is sufficient to cause concern that opportunities are limited both in terms of number and geography. There appears to be a number of reasons for this reduction, including the emphasis on full-time programmes in the college sector.

Action: to secure and support a minimum level of provision in each region, including the expansion of part-time programmes.

Overcoming barriers along the route

Access to funding for accredited learning up to and including degree level is a major issue for aspiring CLD graduates, particularly for those over 25 years of age. Working with Scotland's Communities 2018 noted that '*many of the students studying CLD at universities and colleges are over the age of 35*'. Following reductions in public sector funding, very few employers are in a position to finance college or university attendance for their CLD staff or volunteers.

Action: to develop a guide to funding and support for CLD students.

Working with Scotland's Communities 2018 *also* identified a number of equality and diversity issues in relation to the CLD workforce, including under-representation of BAME people, and under-representation of women in management roles.

Action: to address additional barriers faced by these groups when accessing and progressing along CLD PL pathways.

Direct entry for HNC Working with Community students to the second year of the degree programme, through the credit accumulation and transfer process is a great financial boost to CLD undergraduates and is in place in some but not all universities.

Action: to extend guaranteed year 2 articulation for all HE institutions.

The facility to complete some of their course using blended/distance learning methods makes accredited learning more accessible to CLD practitioners and alleviates financial burdens. Examples of work-based routes that utilise these methods are very much in the minority and there is an imperative to expand these approaches.

Action: to sustain and develop increased on line capability and to restructure programmes to include blended and distance learning approaches.

The Individual Recognition Process (IRP) is the procedure by which an individual who does not have a recognised degree level qualification can apply to be a registered member of the CLDSC by demonstrating that their education, training and experience has equipped them to a standard comparable with professionals who meet the specified criteria. This route eases some of the barriers mentioned for CLD practitioners in a variety of contexts.

Action: to review and promote the IRP.

There is a need to strengthen partnership working and commitment to standards for CLD Professional Learning to secure and increase the number of providers seeking and gaining CLDSC approval of programmes to degree level. While it is mandatory in comparable sectors for staff to be members of the relevant professional body and to undertake training approved by their professional body, this remains optional in the CLD sector.

Action: to develop a strategy to increase the expectation that practitioners will become CLDSC members and that all PL programmes will be CLDSC approved.

3 Local/Regional Pathways

The work of the Regional CLD Networks contributes to the developing picture of PL pathways locally and regionally. It is likely that the detail needed to complete this review will build up incrementally for each region, building on the broad-brush picture established so far. Key partners are supportive of this development.

Action: to complete the local pathways review, taken forward by working group.

4 Post-qualifying Professional Learning

Organisations providing PL for their staff and volunteers are encouraged to seek the CLDSC Standards Mark. There is, however, no comparable endorsement of post-qualifying professional learning to signal the value and relevance of these programmes.

Action: to develop a quality mark for accredited post-qualifying CLD programmes.

CLD practice across sectors and settings has become more common as it has become better understood that this is integral to the achievement of national outcomes, organisation goals and public sector reform.

Many CLD practitioners employed in other sectors such as health and housing are members of CLDSC and participate in ongoing PL activities, but others have little or no opportunity to develop their competencies.

Action: to identify and address the post-qualifying PL needs of CLD practitioners employed in other sectors.

There are many people undertaking CLD activities in other sectors who, while they may hold a professional qualification in their field, have no background or training in CLD. CLDSC wishes to ensure that CLD practice, in all contexts, is undertaken to a high standard and reflects the CLD competences, values and ethics as endorsed in the CLD Regulations.

Action: to identify the extent of CLD practice and where CLD PL can add value along with CLDSC registration.

Reductions in public and third sector funding has led to the flattening of management structures and it has become increasingly common for senior staff with no background, experience or qualifications in CLD to hold responsibility for CLD Strategy and the management of CLD staff and volunteers. An understanding of CLD policy and the legislative requirements, knowledge of HM Inspectorate scrutiny processes and an awareness of the role of CLDSC and the benefits of employing members is essential if these responsibilities are to be carried out effectively.

Action: to develop a guide and PL module to assist those with strategic and management responsibility for CLD.

5 Drivers for change

This review highlights significant progress in the CLDSC mission and identifies improvement actions addressing issues that impede progress. Many of the drivers that mitigate against the achievement of the CLDSC mission and Scottish Government policy objectives stem from the voluntary nature of CLDSC membership and the absence of a statutory requirement for CLDSC approved qualifications. Making it mandatory for all CLD providers in receipt of public funding to recruit CLDSC members and for institutions offering CLD PL programmes to seek CLDSC Approval would transformed this situation.

Action: to establish the case for and develop proposals to introduce mandatory requirements for the CLD profession.