# A Consultation on the Digital Strategy for Scotland

## CLD Standards Council Response
**Submitted 23/12/20**

### *Questions on collaborative approach*

*This discussion document has been co-produced with COSLA. We wish to build on this collaborative and partnership approach to digital with other organisations and sectors across Scotland to maximise the impact of the strategy. Thinking about this:*

### *1. Do you think there are opportunities to realise this collaborative approach?*

Yes

### *Please explain why:*

From the perspective of the Community Learning and Development Standards Council Scotland (CLDSC) there are considerable opportunities to build on this collaborative and partnership approach in order to create a digital strategy which supports  lifelong learning and community development. Addressing digital poverty/exclusion requires to be a key driver in delivering a fairer and more inclusive Scotland.

### *2. Of the opportunities which you have identified, which do you think are the priority ones?*

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to the development of a Lifelong Learning Strategy. This provides a particularly important opportunity to build on the partnership approach to digital inclusion. In particular, the development of a common digital platform for the delivery of lifelong learning across all sectors and settings would have a major impact in improving inclusion in learning and digital upskilling.  In addition it would assist in the development of articulation and progression pathways from community based learning to other tertiary education providers.

### *Questions on vision*

We are particularly interested in your responses to the narrative and actions set out in Sections 4 'No one left behind' to Sections 9 'An Ethical Digital Nation':

***3. Is the vision that we have set out in the supporting narrative in each of these sections the right one?***

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| No One Left Behind | ○ | ⦿ |
| Services Working for All | ⦿ | ○ |
| Transforming Government | ⦿ | ○ |
| A Digital and Data Economy | ⦿ | ○ |
| A Vibrant Tech Sector | ⦿ | ○ |
| An Ethical Digital Nation | ⦿ | ○ |

***If you have ticked 'no' or you think we could improve the vision please explain why:***

**No one left behind**: while the commitments to inclusion and digital inclusion are very positive, it is important to be clear that tackling digital inclusion will not in itself overcome exclusion and inequality, and that improving access to technology is only one of the steps required to overcome digital poverty. Digital exclusion is only one element in the interconnected factors that drive poverty and inequality (albeit one that can exacerbate others). The Council contends that the narrative would be greatly strengthened by emphasising the following points:

- by recognising the need to tackle exclusion of neighbourhoods in towns and cities most impacted by poverty and disadvantage;
- by considering the issues impacting on rural communities both in terms of geography and deprivation; and
- by acknowledging the continued importance of "non-digital" contact in the delivery of public services particularly for the most vulnerable individuals and communities.

**Services Working for All**: The Council supports the overall ambitions for services "*to be inclusive and designed around the needs of their users, rather than the*

*organisational structures or traditions of the organisations that provide them*" and "*to make sure our design methods are inclusive and accessible for everyone, so that we encourage, empower and enable all citizens to participate in designing the services they need.*"

While digital delivery offers significant opportunities for designing services around the needs of users, for those individuals and communities impacted by deprivation there remains a need to ensure that they have access to professionally qualified # support to engage effectively, articulate their needs and develop the confidence and skills required to co-create appropriate service provision. CLD practitioners across the country are an essential resource in order to facilitate this active citizenship , and have demonstrated effectively their ability to respond in an agile way to the new challenges posed by the pandemic.

**Transforming Government**:  The Council proposes  that the aim of transforming government should be that "*public sector organisations will: focus their resources on the things that matter most to people, with innovation that improves the experiences of their users, reflects local circumstances, and ensures their wellbeing*". Becoming a "digital organisation" should be seen in that context.

**A Digital and Data Economy**: The Council support strongly the call for "*a robust, inclusive, wellbeing economy with the resilience to deal with such cataclysmic disruptions*". It contends that developing this resilience and inclusiveness at community level should be regarded as a key element of economic as well as social strategy. With reference to an "*education led recovery*", the Council would emphasise again that education should be considered as a lifelong process that takes place in a variety of settings, and that digital technology is as crucial for adult learning as for the young people studying in school or college/Higher Education Institution.

**A vibrant tech sector**: In relation to the commitment to "*Ensure equality of opportunity for all to increase diversity at all levels of the workforce in the digital technologies sector; and in so doing to ensure that the sector harnesses talents from across Scotland*", it is the view of the Council that the proposed Lifelong Learning Strategy will have a key role in enabling people who experience the most severe barriers in engaging with institutional learning to develop their capacities and move on to accessing these types of opportunities. The Lifelong Learning Strategy should support enhanced collaboration at both national and regional levels, involving colleges/HEIs, CLD providers across sectors and others, and as a result enhanced support for articulation and progression by people who experience exclusion.

***4. Do you think that the potential actions set out in each section will deliver the vision set out in the supporting narrative?***

|  | Yes | No |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No One Left Behind | ○ | ● |

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Services Working for All | ⦿ | ○ |
| Transforming Government | ⦿ | ○ |
| A Digital and Data Economy | ⦿ | ○ |
| A Vibrant Tech Sector | ⦿ | ○ |
| An Ethical Digital Nation | ⦿ | ○ |

***If you have ticked 'no' or you think we could improve any of the actions please explain why:***

**No One Left Behind**: The Council contends  that the actions in a number of areas require to be enhanced. Firstly, the skills development element of Connecting Scotland needs to be integrated more systematically with the delivery of lifelong learning and in particular the role of CLD in engaging with excluded individuals and communities. There should be obvious and direct common aims between the Digital Strategy and the proposed Lifelong Learning strategy providing a major opportunity to strengthen collaboration by all tertiary education providers  at both a  regional and national level . Secondly, a commitment to develop a common  digital platform for lifelong learning would strengthen considerably the proposed actions. Thirdly, in the action on "*An education system that builds digital skills*", it should be emphasised that education requires to continue through all stages of life, all the more so given the continuing rapid changes in digital and other technologies.

**Services Working for All**: In order to transform key public services in order that they are centred around the people who use them, the Council contends that it is essential that individuals and communities who are excluded have the opportunity to access support that enables them to engage effectively in the development and delivery of services. A key element in transforming learning as a public service is to focus on learning as a lifelong and life-wide process that includes informal as well as formal learning. This is essential if learning is to be centred around learners and in particular those who face the greatest barriers in engaging with institution-based learning. CLD practitioners are a key resource in all of these areas through their work in community development, youth work and adult learning.

**Transforming Government**: The Council  welcomes the emphasis on digital democracy. Active citizenship is central to participation in local decision-making therefore it requires to be recognised that individuals, and communities in the most deprived areas of Scotland,  will benefit greatly from access to professional community development support. In the absence of this, enhanced digital

participation mechanisms will largely benefit those communities best placed to take advantage of them and as a result it is anticipated that inequality will be reinforced.

**An Ethical Digital Nation**: The Council supports the spirit of the ambition to "*increase*" community engagement and participation. However, merely increasing the volume of consultation and participation should not be seen as an aim in itself. It is essential that individuals and communities can conclude that they are committing their time to positive process which produces tangible results. The National Standards for Community Engagement can assist public sector bodies in developing engagement and participation, and to ensure that steps to tackle digital exclusion are built into processes. Community development support to enable communities to decide what they want to participate in and how is a key element in ensuring productive engagement and participation. Communities that are impacted by poverty and disadvantage should have priority access to this support.


*5. Are any of the potential actions more important than others?*

Yes

*Please explain why:*

The Council contends that actions to ensure that no-one is left behind should underpin all the others. Without this, digital transformation could have the unintended consequence of increasing exclusion and inequality.

While the Council would not suggest that the actions relating to lifelong learning and community development are more important than the more technical and directly economic aspects of digital transformation, we believe that it is crucial that they are given equal attention and not seen as optional extras.


*Questions on parameters*

*The public sector sometimes has to work with parameters, some of which may be the financial, statutory or legal obligations; some or which may be about the wider economic conditions and other factors such as skills shortages. Thinking about these, and any other parameters:*

*6. How realistic do you think it will be to deliver these potential actions? Please explain why:*

It is the view of the Council that it is realistic to deliver the actions that we have advocated in this response as they do not require major additional resources and rely primarily on making best use of existing workforces. Ensuring that these workforces are not undermined by reductions in funding and inadequate resourcing requires commitment but not new resources. It is the view of the Council that the development of a common digital platform for lifelong learning would be an excellent investment which would provide significant economic and social return.

### 7. Is there anything else you wish to comment on that has not been covered elsewhere?

No further comments.