

CLD Standards Council Scotland

Engage, Educate, Connect, Empower: CLD, Resilience and Recovery

July 2020

1. Summary

In this paper, we argue that:

- The persistent impact of the C-19 virus, the likelihood of further disruptive events and the recognition that the “old normal” is not a viable model for the future all point to the conclusion that radically different social and economic policies are required.
- A more holistic policy and practice framework is needed, linking social, economic and environmental goals and based around the 4 pillars identified by the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (business, environment, people and community).
- Community Learning and Development (CLD), a profession distinctive to Scotland that engages, educates, connects and empowers individuals and communities, in particular those most excluded from opportunity, can play a pivotal role in creating and delivering new and radical socio-economic policies and interventions.
- To realise this pivotal role, action is needed to bring CLD towards the centre of policy delivery and to ensure its impact is maximised.

The paper outlines the longer-term strategic role that CLD can deliver within the overall social and economic reconstruction that is required following the pandemic. It identifies the changes needed within the CLD sector to enable this new role to be undertaken and seeks to start an informed dialogue on how the potential of CLD can be realised and the associated resources required to support this approach to Lifelong Learning.

2. The virus, disruptive events and the “old normal”

After the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the UK and Scottish Government responded by issuing guidance that has altered dramatically the way we live our lives in order to keep people safe. Since March 2020, workplaces, schools, colleges, Higher Education Institutions, restaurants, shops, amongst a range services, have closed with movement severely restricted. Individuals and organisations have been seeking ways to deliver services to the most vulnerable under new and difficult circumstances.

The process of easing the lockdown is now underway and planning for recovery is gathering pace. At the same time it is recognised that the Covid-19 virus is a continuing presence, with the possibility of a further wave and peak of infection therefore recovery planning needs to take account of this.

Furthermore, given that the increasing impact of factors seen as generating zoonotic diseases, such as encroachment on animal habitats, of climate change, and of continuing global instability and conflict seem overwhelmingly likely to remain as dominant features in the wider environment, it seems clear that we must expect more “unexpected” disruptive events, both further pandemics and others.

The argument of this paper is that planning for the future requires to take into account not only the continuing impact of the current pandemic, but also the potential for disruptive events of other kinds. The public and third sectors require to learn from the impact of the pandemic about the requirement to prioritise sustainability and resilience over the attraction of the “*business as usual*” response.

The idea of a “return to normal” is inevitably attractive and most of us will want to retrieve aspects at least of the way life was before the pandemic. However on the global scale, growing inequality and environmental degradation were core features of the old normal and despite intense efforts within Scotland to chart a positive way forward, some of the consequences of these broader realities have proved intractable. We suggest that across policy fields including health, the economy and education different approaches (that in most instances have been given some degree of support in the past) can and should be brought together and put at the centre of a new approach; and that CLD has a key role to play in this.

“We would argue that mechanisms to ensure citizen participation are essential for high-quality, inclusive disaster response and preparedness, and these can be called upon again in future emergencies.”

Community participation is crucial in a pandemic - Cicely Marston, Alicia Renedo, Sam Miles, The Lancet, 4/5/20

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31054-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31054-0/fulltext)

3. A new policy framework and the role of CLD

The Scottish Government’s Economic Recovery Implementation Plan¹, building on the work of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, sets out proposals for a shift to a well-being economy. These set out a framework for a new approach. If this approach is to be effective in rising to the challenges posed both by the pandemic and the legacy of the old normal, specific strategies will be needed to address issues that have been resistant to change efforts up to now; as well as those generated by the pandemic; these include inequalities in educational outcomes, the persistence of low skill levels as an issue affecting large sections of the population, youth unemployment and debilitating inequalities in health.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/economic-recovery-implementation-plan-scottish-government-response-to-the-advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/>

CLD practitioners work with individuals and communities in ways that generate social capital and economic opportunity, and that can be utilised to operationalise key aspects of the framework set out in the implementation plan. They:

- *engage* people, groups and communities that are at risk of being excluded and have the fewest opportunities to contribute actively to civic society;
- *educate*, in particular by co-creating inclusive learning episodes based on dialogue with learners of all ages;
- *connect* people, communities and institutions, creating pathways of opportunity and achievement; and
- *empower*, individually and collectively, those who lack power, influence and confidence.

The next section outlines the key roles that CLD practitioners have taken on in enabling the resilience of services and communities through the lockdown, and highlights that robust recovery plans are essential in order to maintain and build on this work. Following that we will focus on more specific policy areas within a new approach, and the role of CLD in these.

4 The CLD response to the lockdown

The impact of the pandemic, and of the measures taken to contain and counter it, have forced changes to the way education and other services are organised and delivered. The response to the pandemic has highlighted the key role of communities in sustaining people at risk and prompted a re-evaluation of what jobs and activities are valued by society. For many CLD practitioners this has meant assuming a key worker role in a variety of settings. From working in learning hubs and supporting communities to deliver vital services, to developing and delivering online learning resources for young people, adults and community groups, the CLD workforce is playing an important part.

The CLD Standards Council has been collecting and analysing information on the ways in which CLD practitioners are supporting community resilience, enabling and providing learning opportunities, and engaging people who are at risk, while providing links between communities and public services.

Workforce data tells us that CLD practitioners are applying their knowledge, skills and experience across all aspects of CLD (youth work, family, adult and community learning, ESOL and community development). There has been a blended learning approach to service delivery with a mixture of online / digital programmes and physical responses to individual and community needs. Importantly, CLD provision operates 7 days per week including evenings which has enabled the flexible delivery of services. The workforce has been resilient, agile and quick to respond to young people, learners and community needs with practitioners being an essential link between people Local Authorities, colleges, community and Scottish Government services such as digital

skills, health advice, utilities access, community resources, welfare / employment rights, governance, befriending, food / medicine distribution, mental health support, community cohesion, education and learning.

Key to this role has been CLD practitioners' access and knowledge of local communities and networks. Data evidences that services are being directed towards at risk and / or vulnerable young people, families and community members with examples of people working with addictions, homeless, BAME, refugees / asylum seekers and disabled communities.

Alongside the urgency of resilience is the equally pressing need to establish strategies and practical plans for recovery and longer-term renewal. The CLD sector, like others, is working with the Scottish Government to develop recovery plans. These strategies require to take account of the wide-ranging immediate, medium and long term social and economic impacts of the pandemic and the exacerbation of already wide inequalities across and within communities in Scotland. It is evident that the economic, health and social consequences of the pandemic will have long term adverse impacts on the most deprived communities if appropriate policies, with the necessary resources, are not put in place. The Scottish Government has taken the lead in developing guidance on providing CLD services safely² that provides a welcome first step.

5. Strategies for Resilience and Recovery

This section focuses on 3 key areas within a new socio-economic policy framework, and the role of CLD in delivering the new approach in each of them. These areas are:

- Protecting and improving health.
- Learning, employability, well-being and creating local wealth
- Building citizenship, community capacity, solidarity and “future-focus”

Protecting and improving health

“Past experience should be our guide. Grassroots movements were central in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by improving uptake of HIV testing and counselling, negotiating access to treatment, helping lower drug prices, and reducing stigma. Community engagement was also crucial in the response to Ebola virus disease in west Africa—eg, in tracking and addressing rumours”

Community participation is crucial in a pandemic - The Lancet, 4/5/20

The authors of the article in the Lancet referenced above are clear not only that “grassroots movements” and “community engagement” are central in responding to epidemics, but that skilled professional support is required to enable these collective responses. The article highlights “steps to community participation in the COVID-19

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-community-learning-and-development-sector/>

response” that reflect key dimensions of CLD practice and of the steps required to support this. These include:

- “Invest in coproduction
- Fund dedicated staff and spaces to bring the public and policy makers together
- Create spaces where people can take part on their own terms (e.g, avoid bureaucratic formalities or technical jargon)
- Move beyond simply gathering views and instead build dialogue and reflection to genuinely co-design responses
- Invest not only for this emergency but also for long-term preparedness to meet future radical change
- Work with community groups
- Build on professional expertise and networks
- Use professional capacity to mobilise wider communities
- Commit to diversity
- Capture a broad range of knowledge and experiences
- Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches to engagement
- Consciously include the most marginalised
- Be responsive and transparent
- Demonstrate that individual and community concerns and ideas are heard and acted upon
- Collaborate to review outcomes on diverse groups and make improvements”

The article emphasises the complexity of the tasks involved:

“Good mechanisms for community participation are hard to establish rapidly. High-quality co-production... takes time. Meaningful relationships between communities and providers should be nurtured to ensure sustainable and inclusive participation. Managing participatory spaces takes sensitivity and care to recognise and harness the different types of knowledge and experiences brought by diverse communities and individuals, and to avoid replicating social structures that could create harms such as stigma.”

Furthermore it highlights the need for strong leadership and readiness to reset priorities:

“Co-production under the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging and risks being seen as an added extra rather than as fundamental to a successful, sustainable response.”

Based on the evidence set out in the Lancet *CLD practitioners have an essential role in future health protection and health improvement*: working with public health practitioners, regional Health Boards and local communities to develop engagement on health related topics and improvement programmes., In the first instance the focus would be on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and related mental health issues, however recognising that there are other long-standing health issues, with strong connections to poverty and disempowerment, which require to be addressed. The advantage of this CLD approach would be that, while addressing immediate

issues, participants would acquire the meta-skills which are valued by employers and support civic engagement, and communities would build their capacity and resilience.

Furthermore, the *same requirement to mobilise communities applies equally to other disruptive events* including the anticipated economic downturn and climate change.

Learning, well-being and local wealth creation

A key aspect of the learning currently happening in communities is focused on how to support those isolated and at risk of serious harm. By enabling this learning, CLD practitioners are carrying out a “health protection” role. This extends across work with people to form new community groups to address new needs, working with existing community organisations to develop and co-ordinate their activities, adapting learning opportunities by using platforms available on mobile phones to enable refugees to develop the language skills to deal with practical issues arising from the lockdown, and maintaining community links for young people. All strands of CLD practice, across youth work, adult learning and community development are engaging with individuals and communities to enable learning and action to build resilience and lay the basis for reconstruction.

The impact of the pandemic has highlighted the importance not only of learning outwith school for school-aged children and young people, but of learning for people of all ages. Among the aspects of this are:

- the economic downturn resulting from the pandemic will result in major issues for young people in seeking to enter the workforce and/or progressing in it. This is likely to be significant for the large majority of young people but the impact will certainly be most severe for those experiencing disadvantage.
- Across all age groups, and in particular again for those who have faced the most difficulties arising from pandemic and lockdown as a result of poverty and other facets of disadvantage, many people will have lost confidence and experience significant mental health issues. Opportunities to engage in learning in settings that are “close to home”, and with support to build confidence and motivation, are a key way of enabling people to address these issues and move on in a positive direction.
- Digital literacy has become an essential skill for all in terms of engagement with Scottish Government services, broader citizenship engagement and employment. In addition, the pandemic has highlighted the limited access many people in the most deprived communities have to ICT equipment and connectivity. Addressing digital poverty will key to building back better.
- ESOL learning has provided a life-line to essential information for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Re-opening schools is central to the Scottish Government approach to moving to the renewal stage. However the lockdown has provided a demonstration of the importance of learning that takes place outwith schools, colleges and Higher Education Institutions. CLD providers working within the Regional Improvement Collaborative framework would have the opportunity to design and deliver both family learning and youth work programmes which supported the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the widening access agenda using a range of non-SQA qualifications. In addition it would provide opportunities for adult learners to acquire meta-skills to support their individual and community aspirations.

The Cities of Learning project (supported in the UK by the Royal Society of Arts)³ has highlighted that many people develop the collaboration, communication and creativity skills that businesses need through community centres, clubs and civic engagement.

"Contributing to the Cities of Learning programme will help us gain an understanding of how people and communities are interacting with new technology, the barriers they may face - perceived or actual - to maximising the benefits of that technology and how we can work with our partners in industry to improve their experience."

Richard Brophy, Head of Corporate Responsibility, OpenReach

There has been widespread comment on the impact of the loss of learning opportunities resulting from school closures on increasing inequalities in educational development. Given that these inequalities were already the focus of government policy on closing the attainment gap, *returning to the "old normal" seems unlikely to be a viable way forward. The wider and more inclusive understanding emerging from experiences during the lockdown points the way to a more inclusive, resilient and socially productive education system that will facilitate the reconstruction of a fairer and more resilient society.*

A learning community operating through a network within a defined geographic area, with community hubs, centres and meeting places, libraries, colleges schools, and sports/cultural centres as resources and locations of learning, provides the model for the building blocks of a more resilient education "system". There are numerous good examples emerging of this being demonstrated in practice (despite limited investment in this way of working).

Initiatives including the University and College Union's Transformational Further Education project⁴ and the four nations Healthy, Wealthy and Wise programme⁵ led by the Learning and Work Institute have highlighted that *while learning has a critical role in enabling people to enter and progress in the labour market, an exclusive focus*

³ <https://www.thersa.org/cities-of-learning>

⁴ <https://transforminglives.web.ucu.org.uk/>

⁵ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/healthy-wealthy-and-wise-the-impact-of-adult-learning-across-the-uk/>; <https://learningandwork.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports/healthy-wealthy-and-wise-implications-for-workforce-development/>

by educators on economic objectives is counter-productive. The development of meta skills in the key areas of confidence, self-management and creativity enables learners to become more resilient in all aspects of life and thereby more “employable”. The skills of CLD practitioners in engaging people who are distant from the labour market, have not had positive previous experience of education and who lack confidence are essential for inclusive economic as well as social development.

CLD providers working with colleges and SDS to establish an agreed community-based learning programme for adults, which supported the development of skills required for further study or employment, linked to the development an agreed approach to the co-creation of micro-credentials using the SCQF would be a means of offering this model throughout Scotland. Delivering a programme such as this in each college region would provide a systemic and coherent approach which would support effectively progression and articulation pathways to employment and/or further study

“The emphasis on subject knowledge transfer as the main output of education fails to take into account the pace of change brought about by digitisation, which has reduced the lifespan of such specific knowledge.

To meet the challenges which we face there is a need to focus on creating an inclusive learning framework which supports non-linear progression, places the learner at the centre and develops the meta-cognitive skills required for lifelong learning”

Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: implications for workforce development – Creating Inclusive learner pathways. (Learning and Work Institute/Further Education Trust for Leadership, 2019

Both CLD practitioners and colleges have shown their strength in being able to adapt and learn quickly in changed circumstances. Investment in more robust and consistent CLD/ college partnerships across the country, in which CLD providers are resourced appropriately to contribute fully, would be a highly effective means of countering the negative impacts from the pandemic and resulting social and economic challenges.

The Centre for Local Economic Strategies has taken the lead in promoting and supporting local wealth creation⁶ strategies, based on the one hand on local anchor institutions, such as local authorities, colleges, universities and hospitals, maximising their local purchasing, and on the other on strengthening skills and enterprise in local communities, towns and cities. The potential exists for the skills of CLD practitioners

“To build real community wealth, we need to rebuild the fabric of active community, with opportunities for real participation and collective decision making at all levels of the economy.”

Community Wealth Building: Eight Basic Principles The Democracy Collaborative, 2018

⁶ <https://cles.org.uk/the-community-wealth-building-centre-of-excellence/>

to be utilised in conjunction with strategies of this type, in roles including enabling people to make use of support to maximise their income, developing learner-focused skills pathways, working with others to build the skills and capacity for local enterprise while making effective links between local communities and anchor institutions.

This collaborative approach can respond quickly to the demand for new skills or knowledge required within a local economy, working with employers to rapidly co-create credentials that capture their needs and supporting local people to acquire the skills for sustainable employment.

Developing national courses is expensive and time-consuming as is the requirement of learners to commit to a long period of study, and they are often completed by relatively few people. The knowledge and skills acquired by those who drop out is unaccredited. Learning communities offer the opportunity to create pathways connecting discrete micro-credentials that can be earned in multiple settings and through different learning experiences to create routes to further study, employment, and work placements. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework provides a nationally recognised means of attaching academic credit to these micro-credentials.

The CLDSC sees the following as among the key areas for action:

- A renewed and strengthened focus on learner-focused education, based on a full recognition of learning in all contexts and equal collaboration by all educators, including teachers, CLD practitioners and college lecturers.
- Commitment by government and all partners to supporting the development of learning communities to underpin the learner-focused approach, with support for communities themselves to play a lead role.
- Specific attention to the needs of at-risk and/or disaffected young people and how these can best be met in this context.
- Support for development of strengthened partnerships between colleges and CLD providers, including joint professional learning.
- Development of a digital platform which supports CLD and colleges to provide Lifelong Learning opportunities for young people and adult learners maximising the benefit of public investment in ICT infrastructure.
- The skills of CLD practitioners to be utilised in support of strategies for local wealth creation.

The Centenary Commission on Adult Education - conclusion

“Once again, the promotion and development of adult education across our communities and society has become an urgent ‘national necessity’:

- Necessary to enable citizens to engage in educated reflection, critical thinking, and democratic discussion.
- Necessary to promote community cohesion through the co-creation of educational provision involving members from across the various communities.
- Necessary to promote understanding of different cultures and backgrounds. Not only to engender an appreciation of those with protected characteristics that need to be respected, but to create a strong collective understanding that can withstand the erosion of rights, and the hostility towards ‘other’ groups.
- Necessary to give members of society the capacity and capabilities to engage with the world of work constructively, whether through informed discussion over technological and other developments in the workplace, or combining with others to establish their own enterprise or social enterprise.
- And necessary to enable all members of society to consider and analyse the great challenges for the future – of tackling the damaging effects of income and regional inequality; promoting cohesion amongst all members of society whatever their race, religion, or other protected characteristic; and ensuring that the climate crisis does not wreak the devastation it threatens.”

“A Permanent National Necessity...” Adult Education and Lifelong Learning for 21st Century Britain, 2019

Building citizenship, solidarity and “future-focus”

The public response to the pandemic crisis has focused on solidarity as the necessary complement to health protection. For the moment at least, there is widespread recognition of the need to transfer “a sense of community” from the “desirable” to the “essential” column. The need for active citizenship has become more obvious at a time of enforced inactivity for many.

The Lancet authors of *Community participation is crucial in a pandemic* point out that “good mechanisms for community participation are hard to establish rapidly. High-quality coproduction of health takes time.” Similarly, *solidarity and citizenship cannot simply be wished into existence*. The weekly “clapping for carers” will not straightforwardly translate into greater social solidarity and the lockdown has generated its own tensions within communities.

Scotland is fortunate in having professionally qualified CLD practitioners among the already-existing resources to build solidarity and develop citizenship. Engaging

disaffected young people, developing youth participation, learning for democracy involving people of all ages (often on an inter-generational basis) and working with community organisations to develop the skills and knowledge to participate in decision-making are all aspects of this role, *This impact can be multiplied if they are organised as parts of a coherent “engage, educate, connect, empower” strategy for community learning and development.*

The experience of pandemic and lockdown has underscored the need for society as a whole to be more forward-looking, adaptive, and as a consequence, more competent to shape our future. The need for collective learning to enable a refocusing of resources, energy and creativity towards addressing pressing needs and opportunities could not be clearer or more evident. Communities, in particular, those that are disadvantaged in terms of poverty of wealth, income, health indicators and educational opportunities, have shown remarkable strengths. CLD practitioners have been to the fore in supporting and enabling these community responses. With more appropriate resourcing, the CLD workforce will work with communities to build their competence in responding to change and adverse events while playing an active and essential part in shaping the future.

6 Planning a CLD Response

The Standards Council contends that CLD is an essential component of success in supporting resilience and in the reconstruction of a fairer, more skilled and capable, more inclusive and future-facing society; and that the resource implications of this should be considered by the responsible bodies. Alongside this, we believe a step-change in the way in which CLD organises itself is required.

There is an urgent need for those of us in the CLD sector to be more coherent in our delivery and our messaging. *While celebrating the diversity of CLD practice we need also to celebrate the strength it derives from shared purpose and values, from the synergies between community learning and community development and from work with different age groups.*

While learning from the success of the CLD response to pandemic and lockdown it is vital to plan for CLD to play a key role in strategies for resilience and reconstruction. The distinctive application of CLD competences in adult learning, community development and youth work settings are essential in creating a renewed Scotland. It requires to be recognised that the CLD role is delivered in many settings across the public and third sectors contributing to protecting and improving health, learning, well-being, creating local wealth, building citizenship, solidarity and community empowerment.

While CLD partnerships, led by local authorities, must continue to determine local delivery models and priorities, this requires to be within a shared understanding of the mutual support between the three strands of youth work, community development and adult learning in order to ensure effective deployment and utilisation of CLD resources across the country.

To drive and support a coherent and effective CLD role in strategies for resilience and reconstruction, the national lead and umbrella bodies across the CLD sector should work collaboratively and with Scottish Government on the following:

- Agreement on a common vision encompassing all the 3 strands of CLD, adult learning, youth work and community development.
- Development of consistent branding of CLD that highlights the individual strands within the shared context.
- Commitment to use and promotion of the CLD competent practitioner framework as the benchmark for quality practice.
- Mutual recognition of the 3 strands within strategy statements and communication strategies.
- Commitment to sustained collaborative work to:
 - Strengthen synergies between youth work, community development and adult learning.
 - Engage with Scottish Government, CoSLA and SCVO to strengthen the linkages between the CLD sector and key policy areas.
 - Strengthen links between CLD provision in different sectors (3rd sector, local authority, other public sectors)
 - Support Community Planning Partnerships to maintain, enhance and develop joined-up delivery across the 3 strands of CLD.