

Executive Summary

YouthLink Scotland's Response to the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD)

The contextualisation of the CLD review as part of broader education and skills reform, following Muir, Hayward and Wither's reviews, presents some opportunities for growing the sector and meeting local and national policy objectives.

It is essential to note that this review is narrower in scope than the previous Osler and Alexander reports into CLD, yet it could be as consequential. If the focus is primarily post-16 skills-based targeted provision only, there are real concerns that the current broad range of support youth work offers could be diluted. There is some concern that the Review may fail to consider holistic and preventive approaches – such as youth work's role in addressing poverty and promoting social justice, community empowerment, positive health and well-being, youth justice, and equality.

We believe the Review could present various opportunities for youth work within the education and skills ecosystem. The potential redefining of CLD services offers a chance to emphasise the critical role of youth work in addressing societal challenges and enhancing educational outcomes. By advocating for and strategically positioning youth work within the reviewed landscape, we can position better youth work within education and skills.

Reform in education, which integrates youth work into the system, is crucial to meet the evolving needs of Scotland's young people. Lifelong learning and skills reform highlight the indispensable role of youth work in creating an interconnected education system. The reform emphasises the need to integrate youth work as a fundamental entitlement for every young person, ensuring equity and excellence in education. To achieve this, collaboration among stakeholders is crucial, strengthening youth voices and promoting equality, opportunity, and community engagement.

The [National Discussion](#) is clear about youth work's integral role in Scottish education, recognising our contribution to holistic learning experiences. The [Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment](#) also emphasises the need to embed youth work into the curriculum, offering personalised pathways for all learners. This approach acknowledges youth workers' expertise in delivering tailored approaches and ensures equitable access to learning opportunities.

Youth work aligns with efforts to strengthen post-school learning, addressing wider priorities such as poverty reduction and building a well-being economy. Integrating youth work principles into education reform promotes skills development, empowers young people, and supports transitions into employment.

Our key asks include recognising and resourcing youth work as a fundamental element of the Scottish learning system. Structural and cultural changes should prioritise youth work, ensuring parity across educational settings. Youth workers must be empowered to engage with young people and advocate for their needs.

The incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law marks a significant milestone. The UNCRC emphasises the pivotal role of youth workers in promoting the rights of children and young people, both within local authorities and across the third sector and the need for a sustainable volunteer and paid workforce to realise its aims. It recognises the unique position of youth work in advancing the UNCRC principles and underpins the essence of what youth work exists to do.

Clear leadership is essential to uphold young people's right to access youth work as part of their learning journey. A human-rights-based approach to education highlights the importance of collaboration in demonstrating that all young people 'matter' and deserve equitable opportunities for growth and development.

Our complete [consultation response](#) includes recognition of youth work impact, integration in policy frameworks, and presenting youth work via stories and numbers as an existing community asset that should be invested in for the greater good.

Everyone wins when there is collaboration between local authorities, and voluntary youth work provision and a thriving youth work sector

ENDS

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EDITOR'S NOTES