



Supportive notes to assist members and stakeholders in engaging and responding to the independent review of Community Learning and Development (CLD).



Your voice is especially important in this review because the youth work sector, voluntary and statutory, represents a vital part of the wider CLD field¹, made up of close to 60,000 paid staff and volunteers - serving over 400,000 young people.

The youth work sector's voice must be clearly articulated throughout the Review. We strongly encourage member organisations and stakeholders to participate by replying to the consultation and engaging organisations and young people to do the same.

¹ <https://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/about-cld/what-is-community-learning-and-development-cld/>

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Overview

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. We are a membership organisation representing local, regional and national youth organisations from the voluntary and statutory sectors. We aim for a nation that values its young people and their contribution to society, supported through critical relationships with youth workers to achieve their potential. As the collective voice of the youth work sector, we represent their interests, policy and practice needs. We campaign for equal access to high-quality youth work for all young people, supported by a confident, skilled, well-led and effective workforce while playing an essential role in delivering Scotland's national outcomes.

The workforce includes professionally qualified youth work/Community Learning and Development (CLD) and other experienced practitioners, including volunteers, with various competency-based qualifications and skills to practice youth work. Youth workers are based in the third sector and local authorities. The work is delivered across a variety of settings including youth centres, schools, colleges, outdoor education centres, or on the streets via outreach programmes and detached youth work.

Our Scottish education and skills system are at a pivotal point. One that could transform the learning experience for children and young people. It is an opportunity to get it right for every child, lift young people out of poverty, and ensure every learner knows they matter.

Our ambition for Scotland's children and young people can only be achieved by ensuring that youth work is a fundamental entitlement in our learning system. Youth work is an education practice, facilitating the personal, social and educational development of young people². It is part of the wider professional practice of CLD³. Its voice needs to be heard clearly throughout the Review.

This is a steering document for youth work practitioners to help with that aim.

² <https://www.youthlink.scot/what-is-youth-work/>

³ <https://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/about-cld/what-is-community-learning-and-development-cld/>

Policy Context

The context of this review, according to the Scottish Government, is to “*offer independent advice and recommendations on the delivery of CLD services in the context of a reformed education and skills system. It will align with the ambition set out by the Skills Delivery Landscape Independent Review”.*

The Full Terms of Reference for the Review are set out [here](#).

Specifically, recent proposals and consultations from across the policy landscape have highlighted a need to further collaborate on planning to ensure young people and adults achieve the support and skills they need to fulfil their potential and to develop an education and skills system that is fit for the future.

As part of this, there is a need to ensure that all parts of the system work collaboratively to provide the right level of support to help learners achieve the best possible outcomes – a necessity of which is to include youth work as an essential and integral sector to support this aim.

The independent review of CLD will consider recommendations outlined by [Professor Ken Muir](#), [Professor Louise Hayward](#) and [James Withers](#) to fully understand the extent to which the skills of CLD practitioners and the impact of CLD practice on marginalised learners are delivering outcomes towards the shared priorities of education and skills reform.

Aims of Supportive Notes

Youth work is a key domain of practice within the wider field of CLD. These supportive notes are designed to guide youth workers on how they can engage and what they might want to consider as priorities for the Review. It should be considered complementary support for our membership and partners to help engage meaningfully with their key networks and reply to the consultation.

Aims of the Review

- The Scottish Government are conducting an independent review into CLD.
- CLD provides early intervention and prevention to those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, inequality of opportunity within the education and skills system.
- The review will examine the extent to which CLD is delivering positive outcomes for some of Scotland's most vulnerable learners and marginalised groups.
- There are opportunities to give feedback on your response and that of the organisation you represent, including at network events, young people and practitioner surveys and via the Scottish Government Citizen Space Portal.

Background

The Scottish Government has undertaken various reviews of CLD in the past. The two most significant reports previously in shaping services have been:

- The Alexander Report. Scottish Education Department (1975). *Adult education: the challenge of change. Report by a Committee of Inquiry* (The Alexander Report). Edinburgh: HMSO.
- The Osler Report. Scottish Executive Education Department. (1999). *Communities: Change through Learning (The Osler Report)*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Process

- The Independent Review lead is Kate Still. She wants to hear from as wide a range of voices as possible and from learners about their experiences with CLD learning and those who might wish to do CLD learning now or in the future.

- To support this aim, Kate has published an online survey questionnaire on citizen space for learners and potential learners, consisting of 12 questions.

Questions for CLD practitioners

The [12 practitioner questions](#) are broken into thematic areas of awareness and visibility, accessibility and availability, support and learning, pathways and progression, and other comments.

YouthLink Scotland has provided some supportive notes below to help youth workers respond to the thematic areas in the consultation.

Awareness and Visibility

77 organisations completed a recent sector survey undertaken by YouthLink Scotland showing that youth work support directly to more than 300,000 young people⁴. Intermediary organisations represent youth work providers accessing a further 240,000 young people with 75% of the youth work providers offering targeted support to young people facing particular challenges/barriers to learning. To widen the reach and impact of youth work, 49% of providers are offering detached youth work, and 69% of organisations are working collaboratively with schools.

The following are some resources and suggested lines to help you answer some of the specific questions in the practitioners' survey:

- **How visible is CLD, and the positive outcomes it can deliver? (please consider learners/potential learners, decision-makers, and other relevant service providers)**

The youth work sector uses a common language and framework to demonstrate and articulate the positive outcomes it can deliver alongside learners. [The National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework](#) supports young people in recognising and articulating their development across various outcomes. It also provides a common language and framework for youth workers to plan, self-evaluate for improvement and to measure and communicate the positive outcomes youth work delivers with learners – at the local and national level.

Skills development remain an important element of youth work's role and impact across lifelong learning, including post-school learning and career services. The sector's skills focus is supporting understanding youth work's role and impact across the landscape for young people,

⁴ 77 of these organisations offer youth work support directly to young people. 25 are intermediary organisations also representing a wider group of community-based youth work providers.

decision-makers and stakeholders. This includes youth work's role in the career services ecosystem and delivering the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) skills for learning, life and work.

The youth work sector has communicated its role and commitment to delivering the recommendations from the [Careers Review](#).

YouthLink Scotland led the sector's engagement in the Careers Review and represents youth work on the Careers Services Collaborative Delivery group – ensuring youth work is a visible and vital element of the ecosystem.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was recently written into Scots Law and are enshrined in the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework. [The General Principles](#) of the UNCRC (Articles 2, 3, 6, 12) are the essence of what youth work exists to do. Particular areas on a right to personalised education (Articles 28, 29), alongside a right to play and recreation (Article 31) are particularly relevant to our sector - clustered together in the Framework for Children's Rights Reporting, as "*Education, Leisure and Culture*". YouthLink Scotland [policy briefing on youth work and UNCRC](#) acknowledges the unique positioning of youth workers within the heart of our local authorities and across the third sector as advancing the rights of children and young people.

As the National Agency for youth work, YouthLink Scotland undertakes national work to measure and communicate the sector's impact across a range of public policy areas. As some examples, this has included [employability](#), [volunteering study](#), [closing the poverty-related attainment gap](#), [COVID-19 education recovery](#) and [food insecurity, digital skills and cyber resilience](#) and the report on [Lessons and Learning from youth work during COVID-19](#).

- **Awareness and visibility. If you work in CLD or are a local decision-maker, please tell us how you go about making people aware of CLD learning opportunities?**

YouthLink Scotland's fortnightly [member briefing](#) highlights the best from Scotland's youth work, including policy consultations, sector news, learning and training, jobs, and funding opportunities.

- Awareness and visibility. Do you think there are clear career progression pathways in CLD for practitioners or volunteers?

[Progression pathways in CLD](#) for practitioners, both paid staff and volunteers are available from [National Youth Work Induction](#) through to postgraduate level qualifications.

Availability of different levels of training and qualification can vary across geographies, and there is an increasing need for 'work-based' routes to train, exacerbated by the number of volunteers declining in recent years.

Accessibility and availability

YouthLink Scotland wants Scotland to be the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. We want a Scotland where the rights of children and young people are not just recognised, but rooted deep in our society and in our public and voluntary services. We want a nation that treasures the whole wellbeing of children and young people⁵. To do this equal access and local availability of youth work and CLD services is crucial.

YouthLink Scotland worked alongside youth workers to provide a [Manifesto for youth work](#). We asked all political parties to stand with us and support our youth work sector at local and national level by delivering our three key asks, including:

- A right for all young people to access youth work opportunities.
- Investment in youth work services.
- Formal recognition of the positive impact of youth work across public policy areas.

The following are some resources and suggested lines to help you answer some of the specific questions in the practitioners' survey:

- **If someone wants to do CLD learning, how likely are they to find the learning they need or want?**

We advise members and stakeholders to answer within their own local context.

- **Do you have any concerns or hopes about the CLD learning offer in the future?**

[Lifelong Learning and Skills Reform: A Right to Youth Work as Part of Every Learner's Journey](#) highlights why Education Reform must seek to deliver changes to the structure and culture of Scottish education to demonstrate parity across settings and approaches to learning.

- **To what extent do you feel that the CLD learning is available at a time and location that works for the learner?**

Learning from COVID-19 demonstrates [the importance of access to safe spaces for youth work](#).

⁵ [National-Youth-Work-Strategy-2014-2019.pdf \(youthlink.scot\)](#)

Impact of COVID and access to facilities for youth work. The Young Scot, Scottish Youth Parliament, and YouthLink Scotland joint [lockdown lowdown report](#) from during Covid-19 highlighted the negative impact when access was removed.

Young people have a right to access youth work where and when needed, including in school⁶.

The reach and creative offer of digital youth work, specifically online youth work, enables youth work to be accessible and offered to young people where they are – including online spaces and rurally isolated locations. The life changing impact of this is explored through [a study with LGBT Youth Scotland](#).

Over 700 young people responded to the National Discussion on Education through youth work. Many spoke about the impact of having access to youth work as part of their education/in school. 87% of young people said all young people should be able to access youth work during the school day¹.

The final report from the National Discussion² highlighted the vital role of youth workers in supporting health and well-being – helping to create safe learning spaces, facilitating youth voice and as trusted adults that provide pastoral care, with the need for access to youth workers cited as especially important.

- **Are you aware of any financial costs for learners in accessing CLD learning?**

Many marginalised groups face digital poverty. Digital youth work and CLD helps towards digital inclusion, whether that is support focused on devices, connectivity or, critically for CLD educators, digital skills and literacies⁷.

⁶ <https://www.youthlink.scot/news/lifelong-learning-and-skills-reform-a-right-to-youth-work-as-part-of-every-learners-journey/>

⁷ [A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Support and learning

A recent sector survey undertaken by YouthLink Scotland was completed by 77 organisations that offer youth work support directly to more than 300,000 young people, showing:

- 88% of these organisations are supporting young people to build their health and wellbeing
- 77% are offering support with mental health
- 71% are supporting young people to participate and grow as active citizens
- 75% of these are supporting young people to develop skills through volunteering opportunities
- 69% of these are working collaboratively with schools to offer targeted support and wider opportunities for learning
- 67% of these are offering employability support to young people
- 63% are offering opportunities for youth awards / accredited learning
- 62% are offering outdoor education
- 60% are providing youth information
- 49% are offering sports-based activities

The following are some resources and suggested lines to help you answer some of the specific questions in the practitioners' survey:

- **Are CLD staff and volunteers trained/qualified to support a learner's journey towards achieving high-quality positive outcomes?**

The workforce includes professionally qualified youth work/CLD practitioners and other experienced practitioners, including volunteers, who hold various competency-based qualifications and skills to practice youth work. Training, qualifications and professional development are based on the [CLD Competent Practitioner Framework](#), which includes Competences, Values and Code of Ethics, and on the appropriate National Occupational Standards – for each domain of practice: [Youth Work](#), [Adult Learning](#), [Family Learning](#) and [Community Development](#).

In 2018 the youth work sector published a common [National Induction Checklist](#) as an agreed minimum standard for induction into youth work

practice for paid staff and volunteers across the statutory and voluntary sectors. This is currently being refreshed.

- **From your experiences, is learning taking place in a safe and welcoming environment?**

[Young people responding to the National Discussion](#) through youth work said youth work supports them in feeling safe, heard, and supported.

The [Impact of Universal Youth Work Research](#) series reinforces that youth work provides safe spaces and contributes to a range of important outcomes and achievements for young people, including health and well-being, educational attainment and employment.

CLD Competences practitioners are working towards include *"Provide learning and development opportunities in a range of contexts"*.

- **Are learners encouraged to give and receive regular feedback on their learning, and if it is meeting their goals?**

As a youth-led practice, young people shape their learning through ongoing self-evaluation and participation in developing the youth work learning opportunities.

Youth workers use various tools and approaches to support learners in recognising and tracking their progress, including the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework, reflective conversations, and Youth Awards.

The Youth work national occupational standards define the competencies of a youth work practitioner, including *"enabling young people to identify, reflect and use their learning to enhance their future development"*.

- **How 'joined-up' are CLD services to other related services, such as schools, mental health support, benefits/money advice, employability services, etc?**

We know youth work plays a vital role in Scottish education³.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is intended to be a holistic experience, encompassing learning across four contexts and different educational settings – including youth work. Youth workers design and deliver learning experiences for young people across communities, schools and colleges. This helps to maximise opportunities for learners to develop the four capacities and a broad range of skills that allow them to achieve and succeed.

Youth work offers important opportunities for realising the ambitions of cross-curricular areas, such as Learning for Sustainability (LfS) (and the recently launched [Action Plan](#)). Youth work values and pedagogies align closely with LfS and offer support for formal education.

Collaboration with formal education has improved since the introduction of the YouthLink Scotland, Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) National Programme

Partnership with youth work is encouraged by Scottish Government and Education Scotland through national guidance on the use of Pupil Equity Funding and Strategic Equity Funding⁴.

Youth work is recognised as improving health and wellbeing, readiness to learn and education outcomes alongside schools⁵.

Youth work is embedded in employability services⁶.

Youth work is a key partner in delivering Scotland's careers services⁷.

- **What role do Colleges and Universities play in CLD?**

Youth workers are important partners in the learning community. Youth work and college partnerships are supporting engagement/reengagement with learning and sustained participation.

Colleges and universities play a key role in the training and development of CLD practitioners, alongside sector providers. Colleges offer courses at a range of levels, from SCQF Level 3, PDA in youth work at SCQF Level 6 and HNC Working with Communities at SCQF Level 7. In order to gain professional qualification in CLD, a CLD Standards Council

Approved qualifying programme at degree level or above must be completed.

Pathways and progression

Youth workers are embedded in local partnership approaches and work collaboratively to support young people to secure and sustain progression pathways. Youth work expressly supports learners to reflect on progress and enhances their personal and educational progression.

The following are some resources and suggested lines to help you answer some of the specific questions in the practitioners' survey:

- **How are learners made aware of opportunities to take their learning to the next stage e.g. volunteering, more advanced learning, employability support, etc?**

Throughout the European youth work community, we see the same themes occurring as priorities for youth work and young people's lives: Digitalisation, sustainability, mental health, inclusion, democracy, employment. These align closely to the priorities of the sector in Scotland that YouthLink is committed to supporting development of practice skills and confidence to meet emerging needs of young people. By investing in workforce development around these areas the sector is growing in its confidence to meet young people's needs now and in the future.

Youth work also provides opportunities for pathways and progression through [volunteering](#).

- **How are learners supported with their learning to transition to the next stage?**

Youth work plays an important role with vulnerable learners in particular, who have more of a need for ongoing support to sustain participation/transition.

Scotland's professional frameworks are considered highly within the international community and we have been asked to contribute to workforce development projects within the Council of Europe and EU-CoE Partnership for youth. This includes a recent review of the Council

of Europe Youth Work Portfolio, which is a competency framework and self-evaluation tool and contributing to surveys on the practice architectures of youth work in Europe.

- **How do we know if CLD learning is delivering positive/good outcomes for the learners?**

The youth work sector uses National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework to support young people to understand their progress and work with them to create pathways and progression routes.

YouthLink Scotland is developing robust evidence that youth work is delivering positive outcomes for young people:

Youth Work Education Recovery Fund provided a national snapshot of the impact that youth work can have on young people's progression and pathways. It demonstrated:

- 82% of participating young people developed their skills
- 79% of participating young people experienced improved health and wellbeing
- 78% of participating young people overcame barriers to learning
- 61% of young people were more engaged in learning
- 37% of young people achieved recognition of wider achievement attainment e.g. youth awards.

A smaller number of projects measured four further outcomes showing:

- 96% of young people improved their literacy and numeracy
- 81% secured positive destinations.
- 55% showed improvements in school attendance.
- 35% developed their readiness for work.

The Outdoor Education Recovery Fund is another useful source of data from projects across Scotland showing how can impact on young people's progression and pathways, which shows:

- 87% of participating young people experienced improved physical health and wellbeing.
- 83% of participating young people had a stronger sense of connection with, and appreciation of, nature and place.

- 95% of participating young people developed their skills.
- 83% of participating young people were more engaged in learning.
- 100% of young people made progress in related Curriculum for Excellence areas and subjects.

The National Case Study Evaluation (2020) also includes a sample of data from across Scotland showing young people's progression through youth work:

- 86% of young people improved their health and wellbeing.
- 85% developed their skills.
- 77% became more engaged in learning.
- 72% took steps to overcome barriers to learning.
- 65% improved their literacy and numeracy.

The challenge of recognition of the value (and professionalism) of youth work is not unique to Scotland. The European Youth Work Agenda (the combined agenda of European Commission and Council of Europe Youth Work recommendations and strategies as declared at the 3rd European Youth Work Convention, 2020), and the Bonn Process of implementation features eight priority areas which include "Beyond the Youth Work Community of Practice: Communicate the value of youth work and engage effectively with different sectors" and "Promotion and Recognition: More strategic and co-ordinated efforts are needed to make youth work better understood, visible, and credible as a distinct work arena.

These sit alongside another six priority areas which align closely to the sector's ambitions for youth work in Scotland, and also give us an opportunity to reflect on the strength of the sector in Scotland, its impact and its role in Scottish society.

YouthLink Scotland's work on measuring impact through the Impact of Universal Youth Work and the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework was highlighted within Bonn Process report in 2023.

Please use the space below to provide any further thoughts or evidence about Community Learning & Development.

A recent youth work sector survey, undertaken by YouthLink Scotland was completed by local authority and third sector providers that offer youth work support directly to over 390,000 young people, highlighting:

- 76% are helping to tackle issues relating to the environment / sustainability

- 60% are helping to tackle issues related to equalities
- 39% are helping to tackle issues related to community safety
- 30% are helping to tackle issues related to Youth Justice
- 28% are offering opportunities for intergenerational work
- 26% are involved in community regeneration
- 14% are involved in international youth work.

Youth workers routinely work alongside the most marginalised in our society. They are based in the heart of Scotland's local authorities and can help address the key barriers and struggles experienced by different groups. We know that Children's Services Planning Partnerships will be central in delivering local collaborative approaches to deliver on local and national policy objectives. The review of CLD requires a united focus and purpose to provide the change to how CLD and related public services are delivered.

As the National Agency for youth work in Scotland, YouthLink Scotland, will continue to work with local and national partners to understand and support the role of youth work in developing a holistic support offer that recognises the transformative impact of youth workers on the lives of children and young people.

There is a breadth to youth work activity beyond the parameters of the Review of CLD, which is captured by the sector led renewed statement on the [nature and purpose of youth work](#).

Further Suggestions

- Please encourage CLD learners, potential learners, and those from broader community-based and volunteer youth work, to complete the survey.
- Use the [young people-friendly survey link](#) developed by YouthLink Scotland and young people for youth workers to support the voice of young people to feature in the Review.

The Review Team has published a separate survey, also [available on Citizen Space](#), to hear from CLD practitioners, budget-holders, decision-makers, organisations with a direct or indirect interest in CLD, professionals and volunteers working in other services related in some way to CLD services. For example, employability, mental health and well-being, youth justice, money advice, etc.

- Please complete the survey online if you can.

- Consider our suggested replies to each practitioner question as a helpful template for responding. We encourage you and your organisation to reply in a manner that suits you and/or use our sector-led comments as a guide.

Alternatively, you can send your thoughts to the CLD Review mailbox: cldindependentreview@gov.scot

- If you decide to use the mailbox, please consider structuring your input in line with the online survey questions and consider how the youth work practitioner suggestions we have collated can help you to do so. This will help ensure your contribution is not missed and crucially counted in the consultation analysis.
- Keep an eye out for partner engagement events, especially those from the [Independent Review Team](#)). We encourage you or a team member to attend and discuss and feedback with colleagues from the session to help you form your replies.

Reporting

- The report of the Review will be sent to Scottish Ministers in June 2024 and published online, setting out key findings and recommendations.
- We encourage member organisations and stakeholders to be part of it by replying to the consultation and engaging organisations and young people to do the same.
- The youth work sector, voluntary and statutory, represents a vital part of the wider CLD field, serving over 400,000 young people. It is important therefore for your voice to feature in this review.



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