

Scottish Parliament Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

Written submission by the CLD Standards Council Scotland

About Us

The CLD Standards Council Scotland is the professional body for people who work or volunteer in community learning and development (CLD) across Scotland. CLD is a field of professional practice which has three integral domains of practice; adult learning, community development and youth work. As a member-led organisation we have a growing membership of over 3325 members (inclusive of CLD: Youth Work practitioners), an executive committee and three functional committees which are made up of members from across the CLD sector in Scotland.

Our approach and work plans to deliver our core responsibilities are defined by our member committees and based on feedback from the wider membership.

Our ministerially set core responsibilities are:

- Deliver a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses, and development opportunities for everyone involved in CLD
- Maintain a registration system available to practitioners delivering and active in CLD practice
- Develop and establish a model of supported induction, professional learning, and training opportunities
- Improve and develop our organisational capability; and
- Collaborate and contribute to relevant CLD policy and workforce development information.

Vision

“Our vision is that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners that are recognised as competent, confident and committed to equality, empowerment and life-wide learning for all.”

Mission

“Our mission 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.”

The CLD Standards Council works with a wide range of organisations across CLD and education sectors, nationally and internationally. We are members of a number of organisations, some we have specific partnership or framework agreements with, and we engage and work with many others.

Organisations we have formal agreements with:

- AIEB (All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training)
- COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
- Education Scotland
- GTCS (General Teaching Council Scotland)
- JETS (Joint Education and Training Standards – UK & Republic of Ireland)
- SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries)
- Volunteer Scotland

Organisations we have membership of:

- BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland)
- CDAS (Community Development Alliance)
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland
- IACD (International Association for Community Development)
- Inclusion Scotland
- PARN (Professional Association of Research Networks)
- SCDI (Scottish Council for Development & Industry)
- SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
- TAG:PALYCW (The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work)

Key Stakeholders and Partner Organisations:

- Alliance of Commonwealth Youth Work Associations (ACWYA)
- CLD Managers Scotland
- CLD Professional Learning Networks
- College Development Network
- CWA (Community Work Australia)
- LEAD Scotland (Linking Education and Disability Scotland)
- Learning Link Scotland
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Open University
- SCDC (Scottish Community Development Centre)
- SCDN (Scottish Community Development Network)
- Scotland's Learning Partnership
- The Young Women's Movement
- YMCA Scotland
- Youth Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland
- Youth 1st (Fife)
- Youth Highland
- Young Scot

About Community Learning and Development in Scotland

The Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector, which is a unification of the 3 professional practice disciplines of Adult Learning (Including ESOL), Community Development and Youth Work, is an integral and essential part of Scottish education, as recently reported in [Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development \(CLD\)](#), which was undertaken by Ms Kate Still, as part of Education Reform, and commissioned by Mr Graeme Dey MSP, the Minister for Higher and Further Education, and Veterans.

The CLD sector across Scotland is receiving considerable amount of attention at present, with the aforementioned recent Independent Review of CLD publishing the Still report [Learning: For All. For Life](#), (June 2024) and the HMIE producing the [Evaluation of Community Learning and Development in Scotland](#), alongside the wider piece around [Education Reform](#) in Scotland.

CLD has its origins in the period of change that swept through society in the 18th and 19th centuries. New industries, and changes in science, technology, land use and education dislocated or smashed traditional forms of family and community life, with the history of youth work starting with voluntary action through faith organisations. Over time, we saw the further development of adult and young people's education with development of the [Workers Educational Association](#) and the National Council of Labour Colleges, and then the growth of community development as a response to the "rediscovery of poverty" in the 1960's. The Alexander Report – [Adult Education: the challenge of change](#) (HMSO 1975) was a response to the persistent issues of disadvantage, and advocated that "Adult education should be regarded as an aspect of community education and should with the youth and community service, be incorporated into a community education service". In 1998, Mr Brian Wilson MP established a working group to "*consider a national strategy for community based adult education, youth work and educational support for community development in the light of Government priorities in relation to social inclusion and lifelong learning*" ([Communities: Change Through Learning. P14](#)). In 2004, the Scottish Executive published [Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities](#), stating "*Community learning and development should incorporate the best of practice undertaken in the fields of 'community education' and 'community development'. It should enable individuals and communities to make real changes to their lives through community action and community-based learning. CLD is an approach which enables agencies to work with communities and provide access to their involvement in learning, action, and decision- making.*" These advancements were fundamental in bringing about the birth of CLD in the form it has grown into in the 21st century.

Community Learning and Development (CLD) – A Strategic Professional Discipline

CLD is a field of professional practice that is critical in the achievement of any policy and legislation that requires community engagement, development, and learning as it supports the learning, growth, empowerment of individuals and communities, as well as supports the delivery of other services. From CLD supporting climate action change, sustainability and protecting our environment, as well as developing neighborhoods, community empowerment and community support groups, to

working with young people and adults regarding enablement and citizenship and improving literacy and numeracy within Scotland's communities which impacts on economy, health, and wellbeing.

CLD empowers individuals across Scotland to identify both personal and collective goals, take action to drive change, and ultimately achieve these objectives. By utilising a combination of formal and informal learning methods and social development approaches, CLD programmes are designed through direct engagement with communities and participants. These learning initiatives specifically support those who are often excluded from decision-making processes that impact their lives. In doing so, CLD practice enhances democratic participation and broadens its influence.

The three domains of CLD (Adult Learning, Community Development, and Youth Work) work in unison to deliver [Scotland's National Outcomes](#). As a single, unified professional discipline, CLD is a vital educative force, and its impact should be strengthened through focused legislation.

Guided by the [National Performance Framework](#), these domains are deeply interconnected — each reinforcing the other to create lasting change for our communities across Scotland. For example, youth work on employability or equalities has far greater and more sustainable impact when complemented by community-based adult education and community development initiatives that engage families and whole communities to lead change.

Fundamental to the practice of CLD across all settings are these values which have been identified by the CLD Standards Council:

- **Self-determination** – respecting the individual and valuing the right of people to make their own choices.
- **Inclusion** – valuing equality of both opportunity and outcome and challenging discriminatory practice.
- **Empowerment** – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities through individual and/ or collective action.
- **Working collaboratively** – maximising collaborative working relationships in partnerships between the many agencies which contribute to CLD, including collaborative work with participants, learners and communities.
- **Promotion of learning as a lifelong activity** – ensuring that individuals are aware of a range of learning opportunities and are able to access relevant options at any stage of their life.

In Scotland, Community Learning and Development has a legislative underpinning through the implementation of the [Requirements for Community Learning and Development \(Scotland\) Regulations 2013](#), which are located as part of Section 2 of the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). These Regulations require each local authority to [publish a 3-year plan](#) that details the delivery of CLD activity in the local authority area, as stipulated in the [community-learning-development- plans-guidance-2024-2027.pdf](#).

The following diagram was used in the 2012 Strategic Guidance on CLD for Community Planning Partnerships to illustrate the policy context for CLD in Scotland. and continues to provide a useful picture of the pivotal role of CLD and CLD: youth work.



This response was compiled following consultation with members of the CLD Standards Council and staff team.

Assumptions:

It is important to recognise that this CLD Standards Council response provides an insight into the views and experiences based on the those mentioned above. The membership consultation data provided a valuable insight into the experiences based on the views of the member participants. This response is not representative of the entire CLD sector across Scotland or the full CLD Standards Council membership.

Response from the CLD Standards Council to The Scottish Parliaments consultation on Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill

This consultation response assesses whether sustainable development and wellbeing should be embedded as primary considerations in public policymaking, following consultation with members of the CLD Standards Council. It does not directly answer the individual questions set out by the consultation but examines the policy objectives of the proposed Bill and explores the potential role of a Future Generations Commissioner in Scotland. It also offers considerations regarding definitions, structural implications, and financial impacts, with a focus on opportunities for CLD to contribute to these goals.

Need for Embedding Sustainable Development and Wellbeing

Consensus was that yes, there is a critical need for this and more must be done as Wellbeing and Sustainability are often secondary considerations in policy implementation. It was hoped that the development of this Bill would work towards establishing them as primary, statutory obligations to:

- Ensure long-term policy coherence beyond political cycles.
- Protect the interests of marginalised and future communities.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration and holistic decision-making. CLD practitioners, with their community connections, are ideally placed to help translate these priorities into practice.

“Climate Action Hubs, already funded by Scot Gov could have a role to play here. Many are working hard already to encourage partnership work and impacts within sustainable development.”

Policy Objectives of the Bill

It was felt that the Policy Memorandum’s objectives — embedding wellbeing and sustainability in public body operations and establishing a Future Generations Commissioner — are strongly aligned with inclusive governance. They reinforce prevention-focused policymaking and provide an accountability structure for long-term outcomes.

Members acknowledged that [CLD competences](#), ethics and values, such as empowerment, self-determination, inclusion, collaboration, and the promotion of lifelong learning, should be embedded in any guidance and ultimately the implementation of this Bill to ensure that public body approaches and developments align with best practices and meet community needs. By utilising these competences with policy makers, as well as communities and developers, Scotland’s communities will be better understood, and individuals will have the opportunity to develop the necessary skills before any decisions are made which will impact the wellbeing and sustainable development of their communities.

Duty of Public Bodies

Members believed that the requirement for public bodies to have “due regard” for promoting wellbeing and sustainable development is essential. It was also felt that this duty should be backed by clear and detailed implementation guidance, measurable indicators, and accessible reporting mechanisms, as well as linking to the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#).

“..there’s expectations on us with Population Health Framework and Good Food Nation to ‘meaningfully’ with communities/vol orgs/partners but may not have the community development workforce capacity to ensure community led development, participation and capacity building, This may help understanding how important it is to have a community health development workforce”

Definition of “Public Body” and Need for Statutory Definitions

- Public Body: The definition appears adequate in scope.
- Statutory Definitions: Yes, clear legal definitions of “wellbeing” and

“sustainable development” are necessary to avoid inconsistency and ensure accountability across sectors.

It is critical that these definitions are consistent with other Scottish Government community development strategies and policies as noted later in this response.

Definition of “Sustainable Development”

Suggestions were made that the definition should integrate environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions equally. It should also recognise local context so that CLD can support tailored community-led sustainability initiatives. We would suggest consideration be given to how this would look in reality, across Scotland’s vastly differing rural landscapes and communities, and suggest that specific thought be given to strategies such as [Islands \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#), [Rural Delivery Plan](#), [Community Right to Buy](#) (which is currently under review), and [The National Plan for Scotland's Islands](#).

Definition of “Wellbeing”

A statutory definition should be broad yet measurable and grounded in lived experience. Within CLD practice, wellbeing encompasses:

- Social: Inclusion, community cohesion, and active citizenship.
- Emotional: Mental health, resilience, trauma-informed approaches.
- Economic: Access to learning, employment, and financial stability.

“important to ensure definitions are workable - clarity would be helpful and could support allocation of resources BUT we must be careful about what is not included and could be neglected. Wide definitions sometimes allow more innovative work and wider impacts - Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund is a good example of this.”

“Can we prevent Economic Development always trumping the others....there needs to be a fair balance”

Establishment of a Future Generations Commissioner

There was strong support for creating such a role, with a view that the Commissioner would be acting as a catalyst for cultural change across the public sector and ensure policymaking is future- focused, inclusive, and accountable. It is critical that CLD practitioners are embedded within the Commissioner’s advisory panels. Their direct experience of working alongside diverse communities will ensure that national policies are consistently informed by community realities, strengthening both the credibility and effectiveness of decision-making, with suggestions for CLD collaboration being:

- Jointly conducting community consultations using participatory methods.
- Co-delivering youth-led policy forums.
- Embedding CLD expertise within the Commissioner’s advisory structures to ensure grounded, community-focused input.

Functions, Powers, Structure, and Duties

Discussions around the key priorities for the Commissioner were:

- Championing marginalised voices in decision-making.
- Providing long-term oversight and avoiding short-termism.
- Facilitating collaboration between policymakers and CLD practitioners.
- Disseminating best practice and promoting professional learning.

Financial Implications

While the Bill will create new costs (staffing, operations, programme development), potential savings arise from:

- Preventing crisis interventions through early, sustainable action.
- Reducing policy duplication and inefficiency. The long-term economic case for prevention and sustainability is strong.

CLD Opportunities and Challenges

- Opportunities: Co-delivering community consultations, youth-led policy forums, and environmental literacy programmes.
- Challenges: Balancing urgent needs with long-term goals and ensuring practitioners have sufficient resources and training.

Gaps and Recommendations

- Include a clear implementation roadmap.
- Define accountability mechanisms.
- Commit sufficient resourcing for delivery and oversight.
- Provide continuing professional development for practitioners.
- Use participatory methods to ensure inclusive policy engagement.

Government's Policy Role in Scotland

Scottish Government have a wealth of policies, strategies and guidance supporting community engagement, development, and empowerment but often these are deficient in connection, approaches and aims and therefore producing barriers to supporting communities to grow and develop together. We also find that these documents often have a considerable lack of attention and detail regarding the people, human resource and skills required to achieve these community based aims.

As a professional sector working across communities in Scotland, CLD understands firsthand that gaining a true understanding of community needs for wellbeing and sustainable development—along with the ways in which human aspects, location, and infrastructure interact—requires the active engagement, knowledge, and drive of individuals within those communities. By providing support from the public bodies, specifically the CLD sector, to facilitate skills development, communities can engage more meaningfully, ensuring that data collection reflects genuine, ground-up perspectives on local needs.

We would like to provide references to key documents that we believe would be valuable to review and give consideration to:

- [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
- [Community Wealth Building](#)
- [Democracy Matters 2](#)
- [Community-led regeneration - Regeneration - gov.scot](#)
- [Empowering Communities Programme - Community empowerment - gov.scot](#)
- [The Place Standard Tool](#)
- [Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026 - gov.scot](#)
- [Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Plans](#)
- [Community benefits from net zero energy developments](#): consultation - gov.scot
- [Social capital and community wellbeing in Scotland](#) - gov.scot
- [National strategy for community justice](#): delivery plan and updates - gov.scot
- [Participation handbook - gov.scot](#)
- [Just Transition](#): draft plan for transport in Scotland - gov.scot
- [Human rights - gov.scot](#)
- [A Human Rights Bill for Scotland](#): consultation analysis

Conclusion

Community Development, as part of CLD, is an approach to achieving social change. It is action taken through supporting community activists to organise while building learning and power within communities in order to promote democracy, sustainable development, equality and social justice. It builds community capacity and influence by enabling people to develop the confidence, understanding and skills required to influence decision making and service delivery.

The proposed Bill represents a significant opportunity to embed wellbeing and sustainability within Scotland's public sector; however, the focus must firmly remain on **actionable**, **accountable**, and **inclusive** change. The Bill could offer a transformative opportunity to align Scotland's policymaking with the needs of both present and future generations. Whether through a new Commissioner or expanded roles for existing offices, it was strongly agreed that success will hinge on practical delivery, statutory clarity, inclusive engagement, investment, and strong collaboration with CLD.

Next Steps and Ongoing Engagement

The CLD Standards Council and its membership would welcome the opportunity to remain engaged as the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill progresses. We are keen to receive updates on its development and to contribute practitioner perspectives at key stages.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch should further discussion or input be of value. The CLD Standards Council offers continued support the embedding of wellbeing and sustainability principles across Scotland's public services by ensuring that CLD

practitioners, community voices and lived experience remain central to policy and practice.