Item 15
For Discussion and Noting

Glasgow Kelvin College

Learning and Teaching Committee Meeting of 11 September 2024

Independent Review of Community Learning and Development

Report by Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement

1. Introduction

In July 2024, the Scottish Government published the attached Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD) across Scotland. This report highlights key findings from the review.

2. Independent Review of Community Learning and Development

Following the independent reviews led by Professor Ken Muir (*Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education*), Professor Louise Hayward (*It's Our Future: Report of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment*) and James Withers (*Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation*), the Scottish Government commissioned a further review specifically focussing on Community Learning and Development (CLD). The rationale given was that Ministers considered it necessary to have a more focused review of CLD to ensure full consideration of its role in an integrated lifelong learning system.

The attached final review report presents findings from the review with 20 recommendations made in regards to leadership and structures, overarching policy narrative, delivery, budgets and funding, developing the workforce and standards, and demonstrating impact.

The report repeated highlights and evidences the positive and unique impact of CLD activity.

In summary, the review calls for stronger strategic leadership from the Scottish Government, supported by more equitable and sustainable funding arrangements. Additionally, the review makes recommendations to support improved workforce development and the reporting of CLD impact in a consistent and nationally comparable way. The report also highlights the issue in meeting the significant demand for ESOL at a community level which is particularly relevant to Glasgow.

As a CLD provider and trainer of CLD staff, the College submitted evidence to the review and going forwards, we will continue to engage with work to progress these recommendations.

3. Impact on Students

CLD activity provides a person-centred approach to learning and plays a key role in delivering an inclusive curriculum accessible to a wide range of potential students.

4. Resource Implications

The review calls for improved and longer term funding for CLD activity generally, and highlights the critical shortage of community based ESOL.

5. Equalities

There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

6. Risk and Assurance

No risks are identified from this College activity.

7. Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising directly from this report.

8. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

i) note the contents of this report and attached review.

9. Further Information

Members can obtain additional information on the contents of this report from Robin Ashton, Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Enhancement.

Glasgow Kelvin College
RA
04/09/2024

Learning: For All. For Life.
A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD)

Kate Still

Independent Reviewer of Community Learning & Development

July 2024

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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> Learning is a basic characteristic of life and man can learn as a result of every experience he undergoes. Education is a more organised or structured form of learning, by no means always associated with an institution."
>
> **The Challenge for Change ('The Alexander Report'), 1975.**[1]

> Education is a fundamental right, not a privilege: everyone must have the opportunity to succeed. Community learning and development can be a first step along that path, through supporting some of our most vulnerable people ... There is no wrong or less-esteemed path, whether that path is via college, school, work, university or a community initiative. They are all essential parts of a modern education and skills system."
>
> **Graeme Dey MSP,**
> Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Veterans,
> 5 December 2023.[2]

> It is never too late to learn, every day is a school day!"
>
> **Adult Learner. February 2024**

1 Scottish Education Department. (1975). Adult Education: the challenge of change. Report by a Committee of Inquiry (the Alexander Report). Edinburgh: HMSO.
2 Meeting of the Parliament: 05/12/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website

Introduction

My Role

When I was invited by the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Veterans, Graeme Dey MSP, to undertake this review I quickly said yes. Although daunted by the scale of challenge in carrying out a review of such a wide and varied area in such a short timeframe, any misgivings were overcome by my clear understanding of how important Community Learning & Development (CLD) can be for so many of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and communities in Scotland.

Similarly, knowledge that the extremely difficult financial context for the Scottish Government and Local Authorities means that there is little chance of additional budget resource being made available, while disappointing, didn't dampen my enthusiasm.

There was still a considerable amount to be gained by examining the extent to which CLD is delivering positive outcomes, and to consider where things could be improved to maximise those positive outcomes even within existing financial constraints. In doing so, I was determined that hearing from and reflecting the views and experiences of the learners themselves had to sit at the very centre of the review.

I want to thank the Minister for asking me to take on this role. I was struck by something the Minister said when we discussed my appointment. He was clear in his view that government has a 'moral obligation' to the people who currently use CLD, or might do in the future, to ensure they are getting the support they need. I agreed then and I agree even more now.

I'm also grateful to the Minister for his commitment to consider my recommendations alongside the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA). What I've learned about the challenges facing the CLD sector and the learners it serves, strongly suggests that it will take a collaborative and sustained effort – involving government at national and local levels, together with key stakeholders and delivery partners – to tackle.

Given my position as Scotland Chair of the National Lottery Communities Fund, it won't come as a surprise when I say that people and communities matter to me. That's not a recent development. I started my career in the 1980s as a secondary school teacher at a time when many of Scotland's towns and cities were experiencing the significant challenges of deindustrialisation. I left teaching to work within the skills system supporting young people to access apprenticeships. The impact of deindustrialisation on individual lives and across our communities is well-known and, in too many cases, has endured. It spurred me on to work in community regeneration. These experiences directed the rest of my career to supporting people and communities develop their potential and become more empowered to drive the change that they want to see. This review of CLD fits within that desire to hear directly from people about their experiences and what needs to change.

So, I understand and care about the sector, but I am not part of it. From reading how CLD has developed since 1975, I can see there has been a passionate debate about whether it should be seen as a 'service' or as an 'approach'. I don't bring any preconceived ideas on that issue. What I have seen and heard during this review leads me to conclude that it is essentially both, and I've used the terms interchangeably throughout this report. It can be a 'service' delivered by CLD teams in Local Authorities, a key premise of the Alexander

Report, or an 'approach' (as highlighted in the 1988 Osler Report[3]) being employed by a wide range of delivery agents and partners, including Colleges, Universities and the Third Sector. It can be done by employed staff or by volunteers. Surely, the most important thing to consider is the extent to which the learner can be reassured that those who are delivering CLD are doing so in a 'professional' way, underpinned by a set of values, ethics and principles, and are meeting standards designed to provide greater consistency and quality irrespective of who is delivering. Ultimately, the learner shouldn't need to think about any of this. Let's agree that CLD is underpinned by a philosophy that is community-driven and people-centred and can be a 'service' or an 'approach'. Both of which need to be taken forward in line with accepted standards and by suitably trained, experienced or qualified staff and/or volunteers.

> I have more confidence being around people again and the social aspect of it is good. It is teaching me skills and I learn from people when I am teaching them. It is giving me a purpose."

Adult Learner and volunteer.

Five decades after the Alexander Report

It is now almost half a century since the work of the committee, led by Sir Kenneth Alexander, resulted in the publication of The Challenge for Change. As some recognised at the time, and many more have subsequently realised, the accepted recommendation from that report, which led to the incorporation of adult education, 'youth and community service' into a single Community Education Service, put Scotland in a position as pace-setter and thought leader for many other countries. Even today, the joined-up nature of CLD in Scotland attracts considerable international interest. Whilst each component part of CLD: Youth Work, Adult Education/ESOL and Community Development come from different historical origins and have specialist knowledge and skills, there is a unifying CLD ethos of core values, ethics, underlying principles and "approach".

Reading the Alexander Report today, it is striking how familiar many of the drivers for change, together with the aims set for the Community Education Service, remain relevant even now. The technological basis for our society; the 'dehumanising' nature of many areas of work; the impact of the mass media, all tending to 'erode individuality', and 'increase a sense of isolation and alienation'. Alexander was clear in what he described as 'the growing need for opportunities which enable individuals to develop their capacities for a full and rich personal and social life and for educational provision to be directed at reducing to the minimum impediments to this development". 'Reaffirming individuality' should be as much of an aim for our 2024 Lifelong Learning system as it was for Alexander's suggested Community Education Service nearly five decades ago (although we would be more likely to use the term 'person-centred' today). Similarly, flagging as 'more essential than ever' the need to ensure 'that people have

3 Communities Change Through Learning (Osler Report) Edinburgh: HMSO, 1998

the necessary skill and knowledge to use to the full the resources of society', to deal with the consequences of modern technology and complex bureaucracies, still resonates today. As does the aim of fostering 'the pluralist society', which essentially supports the aim of people contributing to their communities and wider society – individual resilience and community resilience are mutually reinforcing! Alexander's final identified aim of 'education for change itself' comes in response to a challenge that remains acute as we approach the second quarter of the 21st century:

> The institutions of society are undergoing continuous transformation and, while on some occasions these changes are willed by the individuals and groups most affected, on other occasions these individuals and groups are the reluctant victims. In both cases new ways of acting and new ways of learning must be developed."

The impetus for change highlighted in the Alexander report related to two broad aims; ensure local communities were given greater encouragement and support to shape social change; and deliver equality of opportunity by tackling educational disadvantage. It seems to me that both aims are still relevant today.

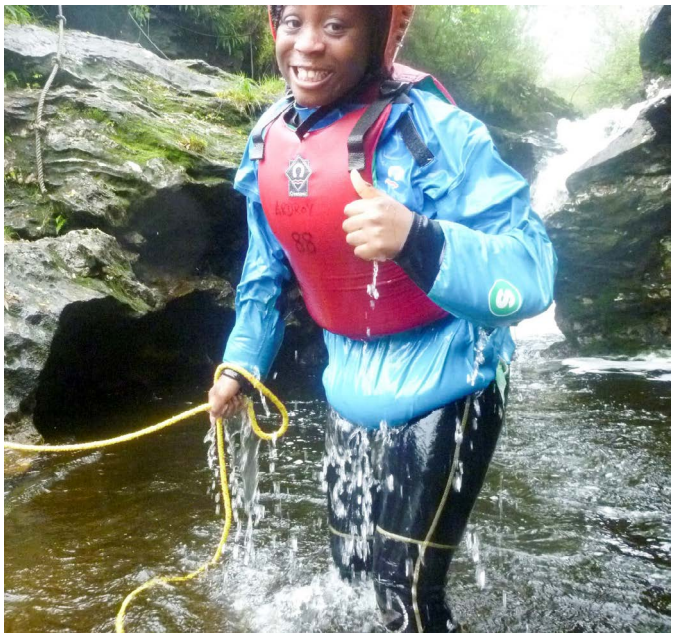
My intention is not to overplay the comparisons with Scotland of the mid-1970s. So much has fundamentally changed since then, not least of which is the fact that this current review has been commissioned by a Minister in a Scottish Government, which is accountable to a Scottish Parliament. Nevertheless, the continuity underpinning the need for CLD is plain, and has been set out in subsequent government publications.

The Alexander Report publication coincided with the comprehensive reorganisation of Local Government in Scotland, which saw the introduction of Regional Councils, who embraced CLD by tackling poverty and inequalities through learning and development. Whilst regional authorities were subsequently removed in the return to unitary authorities in the 1990s, CLD continues to be delivered to some extent in line with the aim of addressing poverty and inequalities.

One of the things that I have found most striking in my engagement with a wide range of stakeholders throughout this review, is the extent to which new, and often overlapping, structures are being put in place with the aim to improve coordination in a certain policy space beyond the scope of a unitary Local Authority but below the national level e.g. Regional Improvement Collaboratives, skills planning, employability, etc. Clearly, there is little prospect of a return to Regional Councils, but I do want to highlight the need for Scottish Government Ministers, together with CoSLA, to consider a more strategic approach to the structures – ad hoc or otherwise – being put in place to meet what appears to be a growing need for more effective join-up and coordination at the regional level and at the local community level. As I hope becomes clear in what follows in this report, the regional level is crucially important when it comes to ensuring better coherence and consistency of CLD provision across Scotland as a whole. Evidence from the review highlights that planning, delivery and evaluating the impact of CLD provision requires an integrated system of decision-making encompassing national, regional and locality-based stakeholders.

Structure of the report

The report that follows will begin by setting out what I was asked by the Minister to do, before I go on to explain why the review is important and why CLD is even more so, given the range of policy challenges it can and does help to address. The report then sets out what I've seen, heard and discussed throughout the short but intensive evidence-gathering stage of the review. I have been really struck by the high levels of enthusiastic engagement from learners, potential learners, practitioners and stakeholders.



Drawing on the evidence gathered, I have considered what I believe needs to be done to tackle some of the acute challenges facing CLD in Scotland. The financial backdrop is not a positive one, and that has been a consideration throughout this review. The vast majority of those who I've heard from in recent months have expressed deep concerns about the current situation and the future of CLD provision, but remained hugely positive about what CLD is and does.

> I thought retirement was going for a dog walk or out in my campervan – I spend more time at the Shed – it has given me a new lease of life. Life moves on and I am using the bit between my ears more."
>
> **Adult Learner**

What I've sought to do with this report is to focus on those things that can still be done to allow CLD to **continue to transform** and, in many cases, **save lives**.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who have given their time and energy to help undertake this review, and to deliver this report on time.

Specifically, I am grateful to Education Scotland and CLD staff working in Local Authorities and the Third Sector for their assistance in putting together our face-to-face sessions in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee; our virtual sessions with the Highlands & Islands, and Third Sector Interfaces; and arranging for me to meet and hear from CLD learners and potential learners from many communities across Scotland both in-person and virtually via online meetings.

Grateful thanks are due also to the Scottish Government Lifelong Learning & Skills Directorate for providing me with a dedicated Secretariat team, and to Janet Sneddon, Steve Scott and Craig Robertson who were part of that great team and for being so supportive. I am also very grateful to the Scottish Government's Advanced Learning & Skills Analysts team for all their help and support, particularly on the focus groups with learners and the Literature Review. Similarly, I would like to thank Craigforth for producing a comprehensive Evidence Report.

The extent of engagement with this review has been simply incredible, and I want to place on record my appreciation to all those who agreed to meet with me or invited me to meet with them.

Lastly, and most importantly, a massive 'Thank You!' to all the CLD learners who have engaged with this review. Hearing your inspiring and powerful stories reinforced my determination to produce a report and recommendations that can help you progress on your journeys and provide the encouragement for others to follow in your footsteps.

What the Review was asked to do and why it matters

> Some thrive in school some don't. Too much theory work and not enough practical – people need both. Learning needs to be approached differently in schools as to how people learn and do things. Take the stigma away from adult learning. I am not thick or stupid, I just learn in a different way."

Adult Learner

Purpose of the Review

The Terms of Reference[4] (ToR) for the review are clear that the impetus behind it results from the wider process of education reform being driven by the Scottish Government. Recent reviews and allied reports on career advice, education, qualifications, and skills acknowledge the importance of community learning. These include recommendations for continued support for the CLD Standards Council from Professor Ken Muir as part of his comprehensive review of Scottish education[5]. Reporting on the Skills Delivery Landscape Review[6], James Withers highlights the benefits CLD can bring to lifelong learning beyond time spent in school or Higher Education, for both young people and adults. Professor Louise Hayward's Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment[7] recommends the concept of a personal pathway, offering scope for a more tailored approach that provides for broader learner interests that may align with social, cultural, and other community-based activities. Each prior review emphasises learner experience and the need for skills development and related support for practitioners delivering learning. Central to the Scottish Government's Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills[8] is the need to:

"… ensure that people, at every stage in life, have the opportunity and means to develop the skills, knowledge, values and attributes to fulfil their potential and to make a meaningful contribution to society."

> It was a personal thing. I was ready to go. Physical health and neurodiversity. They called beforehand to speak to me, and opened-up a side room to meet first. There is no pressure to speak or even say hello. You can just exist and be an active member of society. I am not physically able to be on my own for a long time without consequences, but I feel safe even though I am not physically comfortable due to my disability. I deserve the space, even if I am not talking."

Young Learner

4 Independent Review of Community Learning and Development: terms of reference – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
5 Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
6 Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation: Skills Delivery Landscape Review – Final Report (www.gov.scot)
7 It's Our Future – Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: report – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
8 Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills (www.gov.scot)

Notwithstanding the references to community learning in those earlier reviews. Ministers considered it necessary to have a more focused review of CLD to ensure full consideration of its role in an integrated lifelong learning system. Having immersed myself in the work of the sector during this review, I wholeheartedly agree it was a gap that needed filling.

I was asked to consider 'the extent to which CLD is currently delivering desired outcomes and how it is placed to contribute towards … an education system that is fit for the future'; to make recommendations on the changes that may be required to deliver those outcomes and to do so within the very difficult budgetary backdrop, whilst being ready to meet known and unknown future challenges. Emphasis was placed on consideration of:

"… the extent to which CLD is contributing to delivering positive outcomes in line with Scottish Government priorities, including examination of the respective roles and responsibilities of those involved".

Specifically, I was asked to offer information and recommendations on:

1. Effective and consistently measured outcomes delivered through CLD and reported across the sector. This includes data on the CLD workforce, engagement opportunities and outcomes for learners.
2. Delivering positive outcomes and improved life chances for marginalised and vulnerable learners in communities, in the context of wider education reform and public finance constraints.
3. A strong and suitably professionalised CLD workforce equipped to deliver high quality outcomes for learners.

Limits to the Terms of Reference (ToR)

Given that the wider education reform agenda has driven the decision by Ministers to establish this review, the focus in the ToR on the 'learning' element of CLD appears logical. However, an early message from practitioners, stakeholders and learners – repeated throughout the review – was that the focus is too narrow. Failure to consider the community empowerment and development element, which it was argued is inseparable from, and indeed mutually reinforces, the learning element, would lead the review to see only a partial picture.

I sought to deal with this by inviting those who felt strongly about the need to consider CLD in a more holistic way to make their thoughts known in the consultations, meetings, focus groups, etc. From the scale of those contributions, the strength of feeling on this issue is clear. Suffice to say that there was an almost universal understanding of CLD as much broader than learning new technical skills or brushing-up on existing skills as part of a pathway to a recognised qualification or employability (important as that is).

Why CLD matters

The evidence gathered throughout this review is clear – CLD is valued by learners and it works! What follows below is a summary of the social and economic challenges that CLD contributes to tackling. The potential for those challenges to become increasingly acute is also worthy of note. As the next section of this report will show, there is already a significant gap between 'need' and the resource available to meet it. The gap is likely to widen, and potential societal consequences worsen, in the years ahead unless the necessary first steps are taken now and co-ordinated policy planning and resource investment is considered in the medium to longer term.

> They listen to what we want to do here and give you the choice."
>
> **Young Learner**

CLD is an approach, built upon a philosophy and a set of values, ethics and underpinning principles, that are community-driven and person-centred. There is no 'CLD curriculum' as such, and every learner's journey starts from where the learner finds themselves, rather than having set expectations about the level of prior learning or experience required to engage in new learning. The course of the journey is largely determined by the learner, as is the pace. It's also not necessarily linear, with incremental progress towards the goals set by the learner potentially impacted by both personal and external challenges that they may be facing. The evidence gathered about what works demonstrates that the engagement of learners in provision is highly dependent on a person-centred approach.

There are plenty of good descriptions of CLD as an approach to working with some of the most vulnerable, disengaged and disadvantaged people – young and adult – in our society. I won't repeat them here. However, it is worth noting that, to be effective, those staff and volunteers working in CLD need to provide a safe, supportive and non-judgmental environment, taking (often considerable) time to build trust with learners and to learn about the learner's individual circumstances. In a period when budgets are under severe pressure, and in a wider policy environment which demands well-defined, measurable outcomes to show value for money, the extent of time required, the intensity of engagement, and the unpredictability of what some might describe as 'fuzzy' outcomes, may lead some to consider CLD provision as an add-on or expensive. Everything I have seen and heard throughout this review reinforces my view that this is a wrong-headed assessment. Extensive evidence – some set out below and more in the annexed evidence and literature summaries – shows that CLD provides a positive return on investment in the medium to longer term by developing critical thinking, personal and social skills, widening access to lifelong educational attainment and employment prospects; improving people's health and well-being; and encouraging active citizenship and participatory democracy.

In addition to CLD as an approach, it is also a profession and a service provided through Local Authorities, Colleges and Universities, and the Third Sector. This review will touch on all three of these dimensions of CLD, with more of a focus on service provision and the profession.

As noted above and elsewhere in this report, CLD provision across Scotland is facing some very serious challenges, meaning that there is an increasing gap between provision and identified need for those services. A modest estimation of unidentified need makes the gap even greater. Nevertheless, to some degree, in every part of Scotland and across all our communities, CLD is making a difference to the lives of many people. I heard repeatedly that CLD support had not only enabled people to transform their lives for the better but had, for some, saved their lives – underlining the positive health and well-being impact of the service.

> I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for these classes."
>
> **Young Learner**

Working to improve basic skills, such as literacy numeracy and digital; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); boosting self-confidence and general life skills, CLD is supporting many learners who are having, or have had, negative experiences with the more formal education system. This is important for the individual learners, of course, but it is also often part of the necessary first steps on a journey towards employment (or a better paid and more secure job) and/or further study at College or University. Many of those undertaking ESOL learning (and many of those thousands currently waiting to have the opportunity to do so) will have technical or professional skills that may be in short supply across Scotland. Without access to the ESOL learning, those skills cannot be put to best use. The economic benefits to the country and the individual are clear yet the lack of available ESOL provision is a significant barrier.

However, CLD is more than that. It's more than learning just to get a job or a career. The CLD approach supports a whole range of Scottish Government policy objectives, including in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and contributes to delivering outcomes across the National Performance Framework[9]. Indeed, the proposed revised National Outcomes[10], where the Education Outcome will emphasise the significance of all forms of learning, throughout life, would suggest an even greater role for CLD.

> I would not be able to do this a year ago – sitting on a call with people I do not know. It is a confidence builder and makes me less frightened about the world."
>
> **Young Learner**

Evidence from my engagement across the country shows that CLD is critically important in supporting those facing or recovering from mental ill-health and issues such as anxiety and self-harm; for improving self-confidence and sense of identity; tackling loneliness and social isolation; making friends and having fun; fostering community safety and cultural cohesion, building capacity and confidence; encouraging greater civic engagement and participation, equipping people to engage with services, such as health and welfare, including supporting people by providing them with the necessary digital skills to avoid them being excluded in a world where online access is becoming the norm.

9 National Performance Framework | National Performance Framework
10 Consultation with Parliament in connection with the Review of National Outcomes | National Performance Framework

> In my former employment I struggled with a safety test which was digital, because I didn't know how to use a mouse. So I had to learn new IT skills to be able to pass a test. Now I have an SQA qualification and know how to use Zoom to speak to my grandkids overseas."

Adult Learner

CLD is providing essential help throughout the Cost-of-Living Crisis, by providing opportunities to learn about budgeting. Putting on a programme of cookery classes or sessions to foster cultural interchange between New Scots and their new neighbours may, to some, look like extravagance when local and national budgets are under severe pressure, but when you consider the positive outcomes they deliver for community cohesion (as well as improving language skills) and in tackling health challenges – now and in the future – arising from poor diet and unhealthy eating, then the 'return on investment' is clear. Family Learning sessions not only enable adults to improve their skills and mean they can help their children with homework, they send a positive message to the young people involved about the value of learning.

> We have the opportunity to share our culture with each other at the classes – this is good to experience and learn in addition to language and making social connections."

ESOL Learner

Any aspiration for Scotland to become a true Lifelong Learning nation needs to understand the critical role that CLD plays at all life stages.

CLD helps to tackle many current challenges

The evidence presented in this report, together with that set out in the accompanying Evidence Report and Literature Review, demonstrates how CLD can be highly effective in helping some of Scotland's most vulnerable and disadvantaged people to identify and address many of the barriers they face in their day-to-day lives, often at an early enough stage to prevent those barriers growing in scale or number. By doing so, CLD is making a critical contribution in meeting those challenges at a wider, societal level. This 'preventative' element to what CLD delivers is very much in line with the change recommended more than a decade ago by the Christie Commission:

"A clear conclusion that we draw is that, if public services are at once to promote social justice and human rights and to be sustainable into the future, it is imperative that public services adopt a much more preventative approach; and that, within that, they succeed in addressing the persistent problem of multiple negative outcomes and inequalities faced by too many of the people and communities of Scotland."[11]

Some of the challenges that CLD is helping to address are worth briefly summarising.

Personal, Social and Community Challenges

Migration and Integration: Making your life in a new country will always present challenges, particularly if the impetus for you to do so, or the nature of the journey you have been forced to make, have been traumatic. Finding suitable work and engaging with your new neighbours and wider community will be much more difficult when your English language proficiency is low or non-existent. Migration has been the main driver of population growth in Scotland in recent decades. All of Scotland's future population growth is projected to come from inward migration, both from other parts of the UK and from outside the UK[12]. Some of those who have come, and others who will follow, bring with them skills that can benefit Scotland's economy and society. Others will have come with an ambition to develop and refine skills to allow them to maximise their contribution. For many arriving from outside the UK, the single biggest challenge they face in doing so will be to bring their English language skills to a level that allows them to participate in civic life and for many to work in a role that utilises their talents to the full. **ESOL** (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is a CLD approach to learning English that allows for different starting points, destinations and pace of learning. It also allows for the fact that many of those learning the language may still be managing the impact of trauma. As the Literature Review notes, studies show how getting speedy access to ESOL learning benefits the individual learner, their family, and the economy and society of which they are now part.

11 Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
12 Migration and population – Building a New Scotland: migration to Scotland after independence – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

> I go to the post office, the GP and can now explain in English what I want and what is going on, It makes life easier for me and I can enjoy life much more because of it."
>
> **ESOL Learner**

Poverty: It is estimated that just over one out of every five people in Scotland live in relative poverty (after housing costs), with more than 900,000 living in absolute poverty in 2020-2023 (after housing costs). Just under a quarter of children in Scotland live in poverty.[13] We all know of examples where growing-up in such circumstances may act as a spur to achievement and to advance out of poverty for the next generation. However, the reality for many will be growing-up in an environment where ambition and expectation of attainment goes unsupported or is swept away by the need to focus on just surviving day to day.

On top of this existing, seemingly insoluble challenge, and the fall-out from the Covid-19 pandemic, the **Cost-of-Living Crisis** continues to have a negative impact. Low-income households are most at risk, especially those with particular characteristics, such as single person or lone parent families, disabled households, households in receipt of means-tested benefits, and gypsy/traveller households. Data shows that women and minority ethnic groups are overrepresented in those particularly at-risk households.[14]

Over the five year period 2018-23, people from non-white minority ethnic groups were more likely to be in relative poverty after housing costs compared to those from the 'White – British' and 'White – Other' groups. Minority ethnic households are more likely to have deeper levels of poverty and a greater proportion of their income is spent on essentials that are subject to inflation.[15]

Poverty rates remain higher for households in which somebody is disabled compared to those where no-one is **disabled**.[16]

The cost-of-living crisis has also placed significant additional pressures on **public and Third Sector services**. Demand is increasing for Third Sector services at a time when the cost of delivering services is rising and as such public and Third Sector services have come under sustained pressure to deliver current services and to develop and deliver additional support to those most in need. This includes CLD service provision, happening at a time when the need for CLD support – which we know can make a difference in helping those most at risk – is already at a high level.

As access to more and more services, both private and public, moves towards an 'online by default' approach, the potential for those with low or **no digital skills** to be excluded increases. The potential implications for many older adults and already disadvantaged groups have been noted by the Equality & Human Rights Commission and Age Scotland, amongst others.[17]

Those living in rural settings told me of their concerns about **transport infrastructure and internet connectivity issues** that make it difficult for them to access or progress to formal educational institutions or employment opportunities.

13 Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2020-23 (data.gov.scot)
14 Chapter 6: The Impact on the Delivery of Public and Third Sector Services – The Cost of Living Crisis in Scotland: analytical report – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
15 Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2020-23 (data.gov.scot)
16 Ibid.
17 Blog: 'Digital by default' – what a digital society might mean for older people (agescotland.org.uk); ehrc_submission_-_scottish_government_digital_strategy_consultation_dec_2020.docx (live.com)

Health and Wellbeing Challenges

Nowhere better illustrates the importance of our public services adopting a preventative approach than the provision of health and social care. Messaging about the longer-term consequences of actions we take or situations we face today has been a mainstay of public health messaging for decades. Now, with pressures and costs continuing to grow to meet increasing health, wellbeing and social care demands, the supportive and preventative role that CLD can play needs to be better considered.

> Coming here has improved my mental health and to cope with situations."
>
> **Young Learner**

Obesity and 'lifestyle' illnesses can have a significant bearing on some individuals, and can often result from low income, lower levels of health literacy and/or mental ill-health. It can also have wider impacts on Scotland's economy[18].

Suggestions of a **mental health 'crisis'** were already being made prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and we are now seeing the additional impacts of that period feeding through into the data around mental wellbeing in Scotland. Once again, the impact is likely to be disproportionately felt by some groups, including those living in more deprived areas. In the last quarter of 2023, more than 9500 children and young people were referred to Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Scotland, an increase of just over 16% on the previous quarter. In the same period, approximately 4,500 children and young people started treatment at CAMHS in Scotland, and by the end of December last year, more than 5,500 children and young people were waiting to start treatment.[19]

Scotland's population is ageing. There are more people in the older age groups than ever recorded in Scotland's Census, and projections suggest this will increasingly be the case[20]. This is likely to place growing pressures on families, and health and social care services across the country.

> It is endless learning – I am learning something new all the time and I really enjoy it."
>
> **Adult Learner**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when people were asked during the Covid-19 pandemic whether they felt lonely, around half the people surveyed reported feeling lonely at least some of the time in the previous week. Around 1 in 7 people reported being lonely most, almost all, or all of the time. The groups identified as experiencing

18 Counting the cost of obesity in Scotland | Nesta
19 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) waiting times – Quarter ending December 2023 – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) waiting times – Publications – Public Health Scotland
20 Scotland's Census 2022 – Rounded population estimates | Scotland's Census (scotlandscensus.gov.uk)

the highest rates of reporting **loneliness** were 16-24 year olds, disabled people, those on lower incomes, and those with a pre-existing mental health condition.[21]

> Our adult education services need to be proactive in highlighting the cognitive and health benefits of participation in learning and leisure activities. We are facing a crisis of care with too many older members of our society becoming infirm, suffering memory loss, loneliness and boredom. This isolation and lack of mental stimulation hastens cognitive ageing but we can take steps to help people to enjoy an active old age. Adult education can make a substantial difference by promoting the benefits of learning and related social engagement."

How Adult Education can help fight dementia – TES Magazine, 21 February 2017

As the above excerpt from the TES magazine and the accompanying Literature Review and Evidence Report set out, there is significant evidence showing the positive impact that CLD delivers in terms of extensive health and wellbeing benefits, including enabling access to mental health support for young people to manage anxiety, suicide prevention and encouraging healthy eating; physical health benefits from Adult Learning, including in relation to cessation of smoking, access to cervical screening, better nutrition and other health services. ESOL can enable New Scots to improve awareness of and access to healthcare. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that Youth Work organisations are well placed to offer support in relation to sensitive health issues such as sexual health and substance abuse[22].

Educational and Economic Challenges

I was very surprised to learn that there are no up-to-date statistics to show **levels of literacy, numeracy or digital skills** in Scotland. The most recent Scottish Government survey on literacy in Scotland took place 15 years ago[23] and, as far as I can ascertain, there has never been a Scottish Government survey of numeracy skills in Scotland. This strikes me as a significant policy-making 'blind spot'. Unlike England and Northern Ireland, I understand that Scotland (and Wales) have never participated in the regular OECD International Survey of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), meaning that we don't know Scotland's starting point in terms of tackling challenges around basic adult competencies. Although figures for the number of adults with 'low or no qualifications' are often used by the Scottish Government to show the skills profile of people in Scotland, it doesn't provide the data to show specific challenges around literacy, numeracy or digital skills.

The 2009 Adult Literacies survey tells us that one out of every four adults could face challenges or find their opportunities are constrained due to difficulties in reading and writing. The survey also sets out the link between deprivation and lower literacy levels. Unfortunately, there is no up to date data to evidence if the situation has improved or worsened in the past 15 years. My engagement with front-line CLD staff and volunteers would seem to suggest that it has not improved.

21 Section 3 – Our starting point: How connected are we now? – Social isolation and loneliness: Recovering our Connections 2023 to 2026 – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
22 See European Commission (2014). Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. youth-work-report_en.pdf (europa.eu) and McGregor, C. (2015). Universal Youth Work: A Critical Review of the Literature. University of Edinburgh. Youth_Work_Literature_Review_Final_May_2015.pdf (ed.ac.uk)
23 Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies 2009: Report of Findings (ioe.ac.uk)

In 2022, the independent charity, National Numeracy, and the data company Experian, worked together to produce a UK-wide map of UK numeracy skills[24]. The picture across the UK was not positive, with about half of the working-age population having the expected numeracy level of a primary school child. Some Scottish Local Authority areas featured heavily amongst those identified as having the greatest need for support to boost low numeracy levels. Improving numeracy rates is likely to have wider economic benefits for Scotland, and the positive impacts at the individual and family level are also clear, including through helping to tackle financial exclusion.

> I just want a career and this is good for my kids to see me learning."
>
> **Adult Learner**

The Scottish Government deserves credit for recognising the need to take action to close the '**poverty-related attainment gap**', thereby addressing the cycle of disadvantage still faced by too many people in Scotland. The ambition is clear from the Scottish Government's vision for Scottish education to:

"… deliver excellence and equity for all, with the defining mission of closing the poverty-related attainment gap, ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed." [25]

This is being backed by significant funding commitments – £1bn of Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) investment during the current parliament. Whilst progress continues to be made, it has not been as fast or as far as would be hoped. As Audit Scotland's 2021 report noted:

"The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government's aims. Improvement needs to happen more quickly and there needs to be greater consistency across the country." [26]

Research evidence highlights that the impact of poverty continues to manifest in lower levels of literacies and numeracies[27].

More recent figures underline the continued scale of the challenge. Commentary on the figures by Save the Children put it bluntly:

"… those from poorer backgrounds are STILL 20 percentage points behind their better off peers despite significant investment. Progress on 'closing' the gap is staggeringly slow."[28]

Whereas the role of CLD/Youth Work in helping to drive-up attainment amongst disadvantaged groups has been recognised and built into the SAC to some extent, it is arguable that its value in reaching those young people for whom the traditional school learning experience is not a good fit remains under-appreciated, and therefore under-resourced. Similarly, the role-modelling and engagement shown by parents and grandparents undertaking Adult or Family Learning activities, particularly when their experience of the more formal school environment may not have been a positive one, can have a significant positive impact on children and young people.

24 Revealed: First ever detailed map of UK numeracy skills | National Numeracy
25 Executive Summary – Closing the poverty-related attainment gap: progress report 2016 to 2021 – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
26 Improving outcomes for young people through school education (audit.scot)
27 Borgonovi, F. and Pokropek, A. (2021). The evolution of socio-economic disparities in literacy skills from age 15 to age 27 in 20 countries. *Br Educ Res Journal*, 47: pp.1560 – 1586. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3738; Bruine de Bruin W, Slovic P. Low numeracy is associated with poor financial well-being around the world. *PLoS One*, 22;16(11):e0260378. Low numeracy is associated with poor financial well-being around the world – PubMed (nih.gov)
28 Why we can't wait for progress on closing the attainment gap (savethechildren.org.uk)

> My Youth Worker knows more about me than my teachers do."

Young Learner

Recently published Scottish Government statistics[29] show that in some Local Authority areas more than half of secondary school pupils are '**persistently absent**'. If this isn't enough to ring alarm bells, then cross-referencing this data with the numeracy levels data noted above, which shows a significant overlap in those areas most affected, certainly should. Similarly, the data shows that young people with additional support needs and those from more deprived areas are more likely to be excluded. We can also see that the number of young people with additional support needs in Scottish schools continues to increase (up from 10% of the school roll in 2010 to 34% in 2022)[30].

Pupils living in the most deprived areas had lower attendance rates in all sectors than those living in the least deprived areas. This effect was the greatest in secondary schools.

It's easy to point from the sidelines and talk about how too many of our young people are being 'failed by the system' and highlight all the problems that brings in trying to tackle wider economic and societal challenges. To my mind, it's far more productive to approach it from the perspective of the need to understand that CLD can provide alternative and/or supportive learning routes for those who may need them.

> Youth Work has made a big positive difference to my mental health. School has had a bad impact causing lots of stress. Youth work doesn't have this and it has a community/ family feel. I have lots of different conversations and engagement here that I do not get at school."

Young Learner

This is not an exhaustive list of the policy challenges that CLD can – and does – play a role in tackling. Space constraints don't allow for this. Nevertheless, I'm confident that readers of this report will be able to identify others that don't feature above. I wouldn't claim to be an expert in the policy issues set out above, and nor do I have a crystal ball, but I do recognise that the scale of these problems is already considerable and is expected to get worse. I'm not suggesting that CLD is the 'silver bullet' to solve these problems, but the role it currently plays in tackling them can often go unrecognised and its potential for doing more tends to be missed. That needs to change. It is an issue of equity and social justice. We need to re-shape our learning system to meet the societal and learning challenges and potential opportunities of the 21st century, including unlocking potential to assist employers to fill vacancies, providing an active volunteer

29 Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland 2023 Supplementary Statistics Published – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
30 Classes and pupils – Summary statistics for schools in Scotland 2023 – gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Introduction – Pupils with complex additional support needs: research into provision – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

base of people positively contributing to wider society, and generally helping us to deliver on our ambition for a well-being economy.

The amount of public money to be spent each year to support learning in Schools (approximately £7bn[31]), Colleges (more than £600m[32]), Universities (£1bn[33]) and support for students in Higher Education (£1.5bn[34]) each dwarf the amount spent by Local Authorities on CLD learning (approximately £100m[35]). Indeed, the Scottish Government budget for 2024-25 shows that more than five times that sum will be spent by the Directorate for Learning on Workforce, Infrastructure and Digital[36]. The Scottish Government's Education Reform budget on its own is broadly equivalent to total CLD spend across Scotland[37]. More than double the amount spent by Local Authorities on CLD will be provided to Skills Development Scotland this financial year[38]. More than £10bn of public investment in education and skills will be made this year. CLD spend totals to about 1% of that amount.

Given the scale of the challenges set out above, **my recommendations include a call for an urgent and overdue reassessment of the current balance of spending across all dimensions of learning in Scotland**. Given the contribution that CLD is making towards delivering wider positive outcomes, there also needs to be a fresh look at how other policy areas, such as Health or Social Work, contribute financially to supporting preventative CLD interventions.

The next section of this report will explain how I went about hearing from learners, practitioners and stakeholders as part of the review process, before summarising what I learned. It then goes on to explain what I believe needs to happen for CLD to be able to maximise the positive impact it makes as part of Scotland's overall education and learning system, and in tackling some of our country's biggest and deepest-rooted economic and social problems.

31 Council and school funding (ifs.org.uk)
32 Scottish Budget: 2024 to 2025 – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Report on Local Authority Community Learning and Development Budget Allocation 2023/24 (cldstandardscouncil.org.uk)
36 Scottish Budget: 2024 to 2025 – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.

As noted in the previous section, I was specifically asked to provide information and recommendations on the following:

1. Effective and consistently measured outcomes delivered through CLD and reported across the sector. This includes data on the CLD workforce, engagement opportunities and outcomes for learners.
2. Delivering positive outcomes and improved life chances for marginalised and vulnerable learners in communities, in the context of wider education reform and public finance constraints.
3. A strong and suitably professionalised CLD workforce equipped to deliver high quality outcomes for learners.

To do this in a way that was consistent with my determination for the review to look at these points through the lens of a CLD learner or potential learner, I decided to structure my evidence-gathering around four key themes (as set out below – with some of the questions I was looking to answer in bullet form):

Theme 1 – Visibility & Awareness:

- Do people understand what CLD is and does;
- How visible is CLD (and its component parts) to potential learners, decision-makers, budget-holders and other related service providers;
- Is there sufficient awareness amongst potential learners, decision-makers and budget-holders on the positive outcomes that CLD can help to deliver;
- If somebody could benefit from CLD services, how do they know this and how do they find out what might be available;
- How is CLD – as a profession, approach and service – seen by decision-makers, budget-holders and related service professionals?

Theme 2 – Accessibility & Availability:

- If someone wants to do CLD learning, how likely are they to find what they need or want, and at a time/setting that suits their circumstances;
- Do we have a clear picture of what the need for CLD is;
- What are the main barriers to someone accessing CLD or continuing their CLD learning journey;
- Is it effective in reaching out and meeting the needs of the 'voices seldom heard';
- In a time of very tight budgets, is it possible to get the right balance between universal and targeted provision;
- How sustainable and predictable is the learning on offer?

Theme 3 – Support & Learning:

- Are CLD staff and volunteers sufficiently trained/qualified to support a learner's journey towards achieving high-quality positive outcomes;
- How are CLD staff and volunteers seen by other related professionals;
- Is learning taking place in a safe and welcoming environment;
- How open is CLD provision to learners from more diverse and marginalised backgrounds;
- How 'joined-up' are CLD services to other related services, such as schools, mental health support, benefits/money advice, Colleges, Universities, employability services, etc;
- How integrated is CLD into the wider education and skills system?

Theme 4 – Pathways & Progression:

- How do learners know and record the progress being made;
- How do we best measure (locally and nationally) the positive outcomes that CLD is delivering;
- What, if any, are the challenges for a CLD learner moving to the next stage of their learning, and how are they overcome?

The accompanying Evidence Report summarises the feedback across these themes, which I have drawn on, alongside the Literature Review and other relevant reports and statistical data, to produce this CLD Review Report.

Before moving on to summarise what I have heard, read and seen throughout the intensive evidence-gathering phase of the review, and prior to setting out my recommendations on what needs to be done, there's an important general point to make right from the start.

The CLD Review was asked to consider alignment with the findings of the wider education and skills proposed reforms. Much of what is in this report builds upon and aligns well with the findings of both the Withers and Hayward reviews into skills and education. In addition, evidence from this review leads me to recommend the development of a clear and cohesive Scottish Government policy narrative on Life-Long Learning. One that goes beyond the hitherto focus on careers and employability (crucially important as they are) and accepts that there will be different motivations behind why people want to learn. Moreover, not everyone will learn well within the current institutional structures, so alternative or additional approaches need to be available.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a lot of great CLD work going on across the country, with people's lives being transformed as a result. Nevertheless, lack of strategic leadership, fragmentation, unclear roles and responsibilities, tight budgets and workforce limitations are bumping against an increasing need for the support provided through CLD, meaning that CLD, as a service and a profession, is at a critical tipping-point.

If we want CLD to continue to be available as an approach that delivers positive outcomes for some of our most vulnerable and marginalised people, then urgent steps need to be taken to stabilise the current situation. This needs to be followed-up with a sustained, clear, measurable and inclusive effort to ensure that CLD can fulfil its potential to tackle many of Scotland's most acute social and economic challenges.

What the Review Learned

Visibility & Awareness

Overall, whilst some feedback highlighted good visibility and awareness of CLD in their local areas, the visibility of the CLD sector is limited across the wider public due to it being poorly defined, the relatively vague nature of the existing CLD Regulation, the term CLD not being understood, a low policy profile nationally and fragmented delivery provision.

Although there is widespread understanding amongst learners and others about what the component parts of CLD (e.g. Youth Work, Adult Learning, etc) are for and what they set out to deliver, the term 'CLD' is much less widely understood (with many still referring to it as 'Community Education'). It's difficult to be clear on cause and effect, but what appears to be an increasing tendency in Local Authorities not to have an identifiable 'CLD service', or for CLD services to sit in or be spread across a wide range of areas, including housing, education, communities, planning or in an 'arms-length external organisations (ALEOs)', illustrates the challenge for CLD to be seen as a holistic and visible service. Relatedly, staff

working to provide CLD services will often have different job titles, and possibly salaries, depending on which Local Authority they work for. Similarly, the levels of experience and/or qualifications and/or Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements can also differ. This appears to place additional pressure on staff who are spending time and resource educating managers about CLD where they are not familiar with the service or approach. This issue around varying job titles and salaries would appear to be replicated across the Third Sector, where the majority of the CLD staff and volunteers can be found.

Throughout the evidence-gathering phase I heard regularly about how CLD staff in Local Authorities, in partnership with local voluntary organisations, played an absolutely critical role in reaching out and serving communities during the Covid-19 pandemic, with many describing it as a 'crisis' or 'emergency' response role. Now, as budgets have become increasingly challenging for Local Authorities and the Third Sector, CLD services and staffing numbers are being squeezed, perhaps more so than services that have a tighter statutory underpinning. Clearly this impacts on the range of CLD opportunities that can be provided by Local Authorities and the Third Sector (more on that in the Availability & Accessibility section below). However, it also impacts negatively in terms of service visibility and awareness for potential learners. I have heard that outreach work, undertaken by CLD staff and volunteers who know the communities in which they are based, is a key step in identifying those who could benefit from Youth Work, Adult Learning, ESOL, etc. This often needs to be followed by a process of trust-building and confidence-building to help the potential learner take the next steps. It takes time (which is difficult to quantify from the outset) and it takes people. The message I heard repeatedly is that workload pressures mean that much of this outreach and nurturing work cannot be given the attention it truly deserves.

Many of the learners I met told me that their first awareness of CLD services came through visits to local libraries and community centres. The potential for Local Authority budget pressures to lead to reduced hours, and possibly closure, of these community resources is also likely to impact on CLD visibility. Some Local Authorities are seeking to raise awareness and visibility through online means, including social media. That is welcome and good practice could usefully be shared with other Local Authorities and with the Third Sector. However, if it becomes the only or predominant means of communicating opportunities, then some key CLD target groups, such as those with limited digital or English-language proficiency, or those living in rural settings with limited access to internet connectivity, could find themselves excluded.

I was surprised to hear that word of mouth was often the way that people found out about CLD provision, along with references to attending courses or volunteering at local community groups and information via educational establishments. It seems to me to be an unsystematic approach to accessing services that depends on the learner having to be clear on what they want from CLD and then knowing how to navigate their way through to access provision. As a result, reaching some of our communities that could benefit from CLD remains a challenge.

In my discussions about learners' needs I asked about equity of access to CLD, and the need to tackle equalities-related barriers. Stakeholders referred to a wide range of protected characteristics and other groups who may face particular challenges in accessing CLD, including people from minority ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities, refugees and those in asylum hotels, and those in deprived and/or rural locations where digital poverty may be a significant issue. There is limited evidence on the groups who may find it more difficult to access CLD, and the form

that those difficulties may take. This suggests a need for further work to be done. Potentially, this is a task that could be undertaken by establishing a CLD Equalities Forum.

When asked why they accessed CLD services learners told me they wanted to learn new skills and languages; socialise and have fun, feel safe and be listened to, get involved in volunteering and community work, improve their mental health and well-being and improve their employment options. Learners want CLD to be accessible to all and free at the point of contact. Cost was noted as a significant barrier particularly for young people, those with disabilities and those living in rural areas. The provision of food and subsistence, childcare and device connectivity have enabled access.

Some learners noted how it can be difficult for them to be aware of learning opportunities, or for their prior learning to be fully recognised, when they move to a different Local Authority area.

I heard how a reducing role for direct provision through Local Authorities is leading to increased demands being placed on Third Sector and voluntary organisations. These organisations have played, and will continue to play, a crucial role in delivering CLD services across Scotland, often doing so to groups with specific needs or characteristics. So, the increasing reliance on them to fill gaps left by less Local Authority provision is understandable. It does, however, further illustrate the fragmentation of provision; the challenge of coordination; and the potential for learners to remain unaware of opportunities that may be open to them. Similarly, there appears to be an increasingly wide range of job titles and responsibilities, together with variations on pay and conditions across the voluntary sector CLD workforce, and limits on career development and progression pathways.

It's now 20 years since The Big Plus was launched in Scotland. This awareness raising campaign targeted adults who might be unable to achieve their aspirations due to a lack of literacy and/or numeracy skills. The campaign has not been active for several years, although Skills Development Scotland, as part of its career services, has a role in signposting to local adult literacy and numeracy support. It does this online and through referrals by its helpline and careers advisers. SDS does not provide the learning directly or track learner numbers or their progress.

Many of the practitioners and stakeholders I spoke to commented on how the launch of The Big Plus was the last time they could recall a Scottish nationwide adult learning campaign enjoying such a high profile, with some going on to flag the contrast with the more recent UK Government publicity campaign promoting the Multiply numeracy programme, funded by the UK Government and delivered by Scottish Local Authorities and the Third Sector. It does strike me as odd that the most high-profile publicity campaign in the past two decades for adult learning in Scotland – which is an area devolved to the Scottish Parliament – is being undertaken by the UK Government to promote a UK Government-funded programme.

My discussions with learners, stakeholders, decision-makers and budget-holders repeatedly returned to a similar theme – the need for a much more strategic leadership approach to CLD across the country as a whole. In my view, this needs to be driven by the Scottish Government, working in partnership with CoSLA, and involve key CLD stakeholders, with an enhanced role for the CLD Standards Council. This leadership approach needs to be shaped and tested on an iterative basis by learners themselves. It needs to be sustained and resourced. It needs to counter the current impression felt by many in and around the sector of 'directionless drift'.

Given the important role that CLD is already playing to deliver positive outcomes in line with the National Performance Framework, and the potential for it to be doing more in tackling many of Scotland's biggest challenges, many of those I spoke with expressed disappointment

and frustration at what they argue is a lack of attention and support for CLD from the Scottish Government. The decision by the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Veterans to launch this review was warmly welcomed by those involved in the CLD sector, viewing it as a positive indication of a renewed interest and awareness from the Scottish Government. Nevertheless, many have remarked on the split between the 'learning' and 'community development' elements of CLD across different Ministers and policy areas of the Scottish Government which, they argue, sends a confused message to the local level around the importance of seeing CLD in a holistic way. Similarly, the absence of sustained and resourced Scottish Government leadership and vision for CLD has also been a theme across input received during this review. While reading a history of CLD, written in 2015, I came across the following description of the attention given to CLD when Communities Scotland was abolished in 2008 and policy responsibility shifted to the Scottish Government:

> CLD was seen as peripheral within a Directorate heavily focused on the areas of large-scale public expenditure on higher and further education, and which, despite its name ... was not strongly influenced in its day-to-day work by an overall concept of lifelong learning.'[39]

Many in the sector will be of the view that not much has changed for the better since then.

Although the May 2022 publication of Scotland's first ever Adult Learning Strategy was a significant and welcome development, the absence of funding to support its implementation and the delays in putting in place its governance structures, have since led to deep disappointment. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic clearly played an important part in the delay, but it is now also almost five years since work on a new Youth Work Strategy got underway, yet there is still no clarity on when, or if, it will be published. Budgetary pressures within the Scottish Government are such that, even if it is finalised and published, there is unlikely to be any new financial resource to support its implementation. Therefore, the imperative should be to consider how existing resources could be used better to ensure progress is made and sustained.

There is scope for greater clarity on respective areas of responsibility for CLD across government and associated bodies. I accept that might be challenging at the present time due to uncertainty over the future of Education Scotland, but it needs to be done as soon as possible. The CLD Standards Council, given the limited resources supporting its work, does a good job in raising standards across CLD, raising its profile and supporting those working in the sector. As I will set out in future sections, there is more that it can be asked to do. It will need to be suitably resourced if it is to do so. All of which ought to help improve the visibility and raise awareness of CLD.

Given the central and statutory role played by Local Authorities in securing CLD provision, the Minister's agreement to consider the recommendations of this review alongside the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) is welcome and important. As I understand it, there is no single CoSLA lead for CLD. However there are various spokespersons who have an interest in CLD for their portfolio interest. It might make sense for CoSLA to look at this as it engages with the Scottish Government in following-up on this review.

My remit for this review doesn't include all elements of CLD (although I have considered input which argues strongly for the learning and community development elements to be

39 Course: Influencing Change: CLD in Scotland, 2001-2015 (i-develop-cld.org.uk)

seen as mutually-reinforcing), let alone other elements of the education and skills system. I was, however, asked to consider how CLD can continue to play a critical part of the wider system as it evolves to meet the needs of the people of Scotland. As noted above, the biggest challenge in doing so is the absence of a clear, over-arching policy narrative which sets out the Scottish Government's vision for education and learning as a whole.

This review comes on the back of earlier reviews into other aspects of the education and skills system, and whilst all those reviews are making an important contribution, there is a need for the Scottish Government to develop a narrative to pull together the various strands. The narrative I am suggesting is necessary is one which should better reflect that people will need or want to learn throughout their lifetime, and that they will benefit from that learning in multiple ways. So, rather than talking about a 'Learner Journey', we need to see it as a true **'Life-Long Learning Journey'**, during which the individual will have different motivations for learning needs and wants, and the system needs to be ready to support that. This should also be based on an understanding that not everyone will flourish in 'traditional' or 'formal' education settings, and that those settings may not always be best able to provide additional support to those who need it. In setting it out in this way, the critical and integral role of CLD becomes very clear. It should also be helpful in reconsidering the existing balance of funding across all learning settings.

Availability & Accessibility

It is, of course, right for Local Authorities to secure provision of CLD in a way that best suits local needs. However, divergence in approach, service naming, staff designation and roles, mean that the overall picture is a bit confused. The view I've heard expressed by learners and potential learners across the country is that there is a strong element of 'chance' and 'postcode lottery' in terms of CLD service availability.

The growth in online provision necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic has improved overall availability. I heard from learners in rural areas, those working unpredictable hours and/or those with caring responsibilities about how important the online offer can be, but it won't be suitable for everyone, and it can make it more difficult in terms of the personal engagement underpinning trust-building between the learner and the CLD professional or volunteer. There are also equity issues around the costs associated with getting online, together with practical digital connectivity challenges in some of our more rural and island communities. It will become an increasingly important means of delivering CLD learning, but it needs to be part of a wider package of flexible and adaptable learning opportunities. The need for local community-based provisions remains critical – especially in rural areas.

Evidence from the Literature Review and throughout the wider evidence gathered has highlighted that the key enablers to participation in CLD include:

- Flexibility and adaptability
- Culturally competent and empathetic practitioners
- Safe, trusting environments
- Localised delivery and proactive outreach
- Partnerships between CLD providers and other services
- Learner-focused delivery

The Literature Review specifically highlighted three different categories of barriers to participation in CLD. Firstly, dispositional – lacking confidence, concerns about age or personal abilities, previous poor experience of the education system. Secondly, situational – personal family circumstances and responsibilities such as caring responsibilities, the need for childcare or looking for provision to fit around work commitments. Lastly, institutional/structural factors – how socio-economic factors and poverty manifests in lower levels of literacy and educational attainment.

One of the biggest and most-often heard challenges for learners to access learning was a structural barrier related to a lack of suitable public transport options. It may strike some as an obvious barrier to learning for those living in Scotland's rural and island communities but come as more of a surprise to learn that it was also regularly flagged as an issue for those living in urban areas. Cost, frequency and reliability are issues affecting many learners and potential learners across the country. It goes without saying that public transport performance is beyond my remit, but for me it underlines the importance of trying to keep the CLD offer as local as possible.

> The public transport infrastructure makes it difficult to travel across the city and the cost is very expensive unless you have an exemption card or are on certain DWP benefits (to get free travel). I feel stuck here living in Glasgow due to the cost of transport. This makes it harder for potential learners to reach areas where the learning is taking place, especially if this is a specific skill they are trying to develop or a specific learning they are looking to invest time in."
>
> **Adult Learner**

Similarly, the difficulty of being able to engage with CLD learning in the absence of, or with limited opportunities for, childcare was regularly flagged to me in my discussions with learners. Once again there are clear limits to what I can recommend to help tackle this issue. Budgets are tight and are likely to remain so for some time to come. Nevertheless, I would ask that full consideration is given to the needs of those with child-care (or other caring responsibilities) when Local Authorities are developing and implementing their CLD Plans.

When asked what could improve their CLD experience many learners cited the need for a greater range of provision at no or low cost and access to welcoming and safe local community-based spaces.

The financial context also effectively rules out any prospect to reverse the reduction in Local Authority provided or funded designated community facilities, such as Community Centres. In addition to helping raise awareness of CLD services provided through those centres, their visible presence in the heart of Scotland's communities make accessibility less of a challenge. In the absence of a programme to support and restore these facilities, the next best alternative is for Local Authorities to improve access and availability to local schools for CLD activities and learning. I appreciate there are costs involved, and that some non-CLD, paid-for activities that currently take place in school generate income for Local Authorities. Nevertheless, it strikes me as a considerable missed opportunity for these facilities not to be more routinely available for CLD learning (although it is worth recognising that many CLD learners or potential learners may not have had positive experiences in those school settings). Collaboration with the voluntary sector to access community-owned or managed venues could be the right alternative option in some localities.

Data recently collated by the CLD Standards Council shows that the quantum of Local Authority funding going into CLD is diminishing, as are the numbers of staff employed by Local Authorities to deliver it[40]. In 2018 the "Working

40 Report on Local Authority Community Learning and Development Budget Allocation 2023/24 (cldstandardscouncil.org.uk)

With Scotland's Communities" report by Rocket Science[41] estimated a CLD Workforce of 21,000 (full and part-time) paid practitioners across Scotland with 3,100 employed by Local Authorities. The most recent source of data on the Local Authority CLD workforce in Scotland is a CLD Standards Council report on Local Authority CLD budget allocations and staffing. The report found that there were 1057.5 FTE CLD staff employed in Local Authorities. This significant level of resource reduction has undoubtedly had an impact on the delivery of provision by Local Authorities and whilst the Third Sector and volunteers have stepped in where possible to meet local need, it has led to patchy provision across Scotland – a postcode lottery. I do not think this is acceptable given that those in need of CLD are some of the most marginalised and vulnerable young people and adults in our society.

As I have said throughout the review, any suggestion of it leading to significant additional funding for Local Authorities or the Third Sector to deliver CLD is unrealistic. New or changed priorities will need to be funded through shifting existing resource or from making that resource work more efficiently.

As can be seen by its actions on the expansion of childcare entitlement, the Scottish Attainment Challenge funding, and on Widening Access to Higher Education, the Scottish Government is committed to supporting people from more disadvantaged backgrounds to realise their full potential. This needs to be taken further. Underpinned by the acceptance that not all young people will flourish in the classroom setting, and that Youth Work can help them to develop the life-skills they will need to 'get on in life'; that to many of those young people the idea of going to University or College simply won't feature on their radar; and, that ongoing access to learning throughout someone's life brings economic, social and personal benefits, the Scottish Government needs to look again at the balance of funding currently supporting learning across the board.

Getting accurate figures for total annual expenditure on CLD – through Local Authorities and Scottish Government – is a challenge, but as I noted earlier, it is safe to say that it is very small relative to spending on schools, Universities and Colleges respectively. We need to be realistic in understanding this is always likely to be the case, but there is an urgent need to reconsider the current weight of funding to ensure CLD learning receives the resource it requires to deliver the positive outcomes we know it can. Whilst recognising how important wider Youth Work activity is in drawing young people into an environment where more tailored learning can be agreed (and the same can be said for Adult Learning), a good first step would be to encourage greater use of Scottish Attainment Challenge/Pupil Equity Fund (SAC/PEF) funding to provide dedicated and professional Youth Work support in our secondary schools.

A frequently raised concern throughout the CLD sector is the tendency in recent years for funding to be project-based and often short-term. The UK Government Multiply funding has provided a funding boost to adult learning across the country and is clearly meeting a need. However, it may not reflect local priorities for Adult Learning, and it remains time-limited. I heard from many stakeholders about how it has led to a refocusing of local attention towards numeracy learning to benefit from the additional funding available. The concern raised was about a short-term focus on a priority that has been set without taking account of local need, which could have longer-term negative impacts on the shape and size of the wider CLD offer.

There is a widespread view that much greater use of single year funding for projects is having a deep detrimental impact on staff recruitment and retention. Delays in agreeing final budget

41 Working with Scotland's Communities 2018 Summary Report (cldstandardscouncil.org.uk)

figures will often mean that decisions to recruit or retain staff or volunteers won't be made until well into the financial year. Clearly, this leaves less time for the recruited staff member or volunteer to make the expected contribution to delivering outcomes, and in the knowledge that they will be expected to do so with no or limited guarantees over the project and/or their role being funded into the next financial year. Leaving aside the personal pressure this puts on the individual, the challenges it poses to the organisation in terms of recruitment and retention of qualified/experienced staff and volunteers are obvious. We wouldn't expect those delivering learning in our schools or Colleges, or those providing professional social work support across our communities, to operate on that basis, and I don't see why it should be the case for professional CLD staff delivering learning to some of our most marginalised and disadvantaged learners. Funding to teach our young children how to read and write isn't tied to a specific and time-limited project, so funding to teach older learners how to read and write should be provided on the same basis.

If a shift away from project funding towards additional core funding for Local Authorities to use on local CLD priorities is not possible, then greater efforts need to be made to provide for multi-year project funding – which would allow for the longer-term planning necessary for the longer-term engagement that is central to the CLD approach.

ESOL is a particular concern for me. While I have seen for myself some of the life-changing work providing English language training for our New Scots, it has been clear from the very start of this review that there is an ESOL crisis. As I mentioned earlier in this report, a lack of support to learn English means that New Scots will be limited in how well they can integrate into their new communities. It will impact on the type of work they will be able to do and their ability to engage with service providers, including health services, teachers, housing officers, employers etc.

I was struck by the experience of one young New Scot, who had only been in the country a short time and took a very severe asthma attack late on a Friday night. He knew to dial 111 but his English language skills were such that he wouldn't have been able to explain his symptoms or underline their severity to the call handler. He was fortunate in being able to reach a friend who had a higher level of English and who was able to call for help on his behalf.

As the example given elsewhere on this page shows, we have a good – if potentially tragic – example of how CLD learning has the potential to not only transform lives, but to save them too.

However, I heard from those working on ESOL that there are thousands of New Scots currently on the waiting list for a place on an ESOL course in Glasgow alone (with circa 400 more being added every month). The scale of the waiting list would suggest that the current approach is simply not fit for purpose. As I understand it, over the years there have been different arrangements for funding community-based ESOL. Since 2018-19 community-based ESOL activity has been funded from core college teaching funds provided through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and there are no separate ring-fenced funds. Colleges also deliver ESOL from their core teaching funds.

As outlined in SFC's credit guidance[42], colleges, local authorities and community partners should discuss the provision for their region and/or community; how local need is met; funding contributions from partners; and set this out in joint delivery plans. This makes it very difficult to be clear on what positive outcomes are being delivered from this investment.

42 https://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications/credit-guidance-for-colleges-2024-25/

I know from speaking to those involved in delivering ESOL in Colleges that there is some fantastic work going on, including combining ESOL learning with developing vocational skills, such as social care, to maximise the potential job opportunities for the ESOL learner. However, I heard that the current SFC funding model is a constraint on what Colleges can deliver. There needs to be improved transparency on how much of the money provided by SFC to individual Colleges is being spent on ESOL provision, together with the number of ESOL learners who benefit from it and how they benefit.

I heard regularly about the need to adopt a more informed approach to the diversity of ESOL needs. I met a number of New Scots who were highly-educated, sometimes with skills in high-demand in Scotland's economy and public services, who needed accelerated and accredited ESOL learning to reach and prove their knowledge of English at an advanced and/or technical level. Providing this in a College setting makes good sense. I also met many others who had different degrees of need, and vastly different starting points. Some placed an emphasis on day-to-day skills to be able to talk to neighbours; to speak to their children's teacher; to ring the local GP surgery; to buy a new phone, etc. In some cases, the starting point to learning how to read, write and speak in English was an inability to read and write in the language of their country of origin. If we are to deliver on the promises being made to our New Scots, to support integration from day one, then a much greater priority needs to be given to tackling the issues around ESOL provision.

There needs to be a better balance between formal, structured and accredited opportunities and more informal, day-to-day focused practical learning. The 2022 Adult Learning Strategy[43] promised a review of the previous ESOL Strategy, and stakeholders have told me of their disappointment that this has not happened. I don't think there is time to wait for that to happen. ESOL needs action without delay. During the review, I learned about the approaches taken by other countries in the support, including language assessment and training, offered to immigrants on their arrival to their new home country. I would encourage the Scottish Government and its New Scots partners to look closely at systems operated in countries like Finland or Sweden and to look to design a similar approach for Scotland[44].

In the meantime, steps must be taken to better identify and then meet the existing demand for ESOL. We must try to have a clearer picture of the different needs and starting points, and a wider and more varied offer of ESOL provision. Once again, the constrained financial context limits what can be done. In my view, the swiftest and most cost-effective way to inject sufficient additional resource to make a dent in the existing demand is to look at working with strategic partners and mobilising volunteers, potentially drawn from New Scots who have a more advanced level of English, to undergo some basic tutor instruction before leading groups of ESOL learners across Scotland to gain conversational skills needed in basic day to day life.

Central to the CLD approach is the focus on those who are most marginalised and disadvantaged. I have seen excellent examples of projects, with dedicated staff and volunteers, doing just that. Transforming lives and saving lives, and very often using their own lived experiences to make the connections and build the trust to allow them to do so. I've been able to meet many front-line CLD staff and volunteers over the course of this review – all of them inspiring, dedicated and committed, and almost all of them white. I understand that this lack of ethnic diversity has already been flagged by the CLD Standards Council some

43 Adult learning strategy 2022 to 2027 – gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
44 Language Training Services for Adult Immigrants in the Nordic Countries (norden.org)

years ago, so I hope my view on this doesn't come as a surprise. My concern is that the lack of people of colour working in CLD may mean that some groups in Scottish society – from all age groups – are perhaps unaware of what CLD can offer and/or face additional barriers to engaging with it. It's an issue that can't be solved overnight, but the sooner it is tackled the more confident we can be that CLD is seen as accessible to all of Scotland's population.

A final point on the Availability & Accessibility of CLD relates to determining needs to be met. As I set out above, it should continue to be for Local Authorities, fulfilling their statutory obligations under the 2013 CLD Regulations as they evolve in line with recommendations elsewhere in this report, to work with partners to identify local need and to secure provision to meet it (also identifying where it hasn't been possible to meet some need). However, to help them do so, and to ensure that strategic priorities at the national and regional level are informed by the best available evidence, action is needed to build that evidence base.

Learning & Support

Whilst there has been some critical feedback, the overwhelming view expressed by the learners I've engaged with and heard from throughout this process has been a very positive one in terms of the learning and support they have received from CLD staff and volunteers across the country. The latest round of HMIE Progress Visits to Local Authorities present a primarily similar positive picture, with areas of concern being clearly flagged for action and follow-up. This should provide reassurance to Ministers that the standard of CLD learning opportunities – delivered by dedicated CLD staff and volunteers – is generally very good.

In addition to setting out the quality indicators it uses to undertake professional evaluations during inspections and reviews of Local Authorities, the HMIE framework 'How good is our community learning & development?'[45], is also available for practitioners, managers and leaders to self-assess, evaluate and report on quality and improvement. The framework is helpful, and it should continue to be monitored and updated as required by the planned new independent Inspectorate. The approach of undertaking a programme of inspections and/or progress visits to all 32 Local Authorities takes considerable time and resource, and the use of the findings do not currently receive any real strategic consideration beyond the Local Authority concerned. It would make more sense, together with a better use of resources, for HMIE to adopt more of a 'risk-based approach' to inspections and/or visits, focusing on where a potential slip in standards might be taking place. This should allow resource to be freed-up to engage in more strategic inspections i.e. looking at issues which may apply across all providers e.g. approaches to integrating minority groups into CLD planning, etc. The primary audience for all HMIE CLD reports should be the proposed Strategic Leadership Group.

Throughout the evidence-gathering phase I heard frequently about how CLD provision is not always delivered or managed by professionally-qualified or suitably-experienced CLD staff or volunteers. The recent pattern of Local Authorities shifting away from having a distinct CLD service towards embedding CLD within other service areas, such as housing, together with the proliferation of job titles for those working in CLD, is not only impacting on the visibility of CLD – it may also be obscuring an inadvertent dilution of professional standards. The situation outwith direct Local Authority provision may be better or worse. We simply don't know enough to be sure.

45 Introduction | How good is our CLD | How good is our Community Learning and Development? | Inspection frameworks | Inspection and review | Education Scotland

When is a professional not a professional? Notwithstanding the similar professional qualification requirements, there would appear to be no parity of esteem between CLD professionals and teachers or social workers. It's difficult to know why that is the case, but it does significantly underplay the skills and professional attributes required to be an effective paid CLD worker. It may be a consequence of the greater use of volunteers to provide CLD services – although this, to me, is one of CLD's great strengths. It may be due to the absence of a compulsory professional regulatory body, such as the General Teaching Council for Scotland. It may simply reflect the relative lack of visibility and awareness of what CLD actually is and delivers. It's something that needs to be addressed.

Recent years have seen a reduction in the number of routes for people to become professionally-qualified CLD workers, although the use of Modern Apprenticeships is a welcome development that should be encouraged. I also heard suggestions that the existing provision may not be sufficiently flexible to account for those who want to learn to become qualified whilst working, or to reflect differing entry points for those who may bring significant prior practical experience. A number of practitioners raised doubts over the readiness of newly-qualified CLD professionals to work 'in the field', with some suggesting that the syllabi need to be refreshed.

As already set out above, the relative lack of people of colour working in CLD in Scotland is a concern. The potential for this to be establishing a further hurdle for some of Scotland's communities to access the CLD support that they may need or want should not be ignored.

Pathways & Progression

In a modern policy world where hard and fast measures of progress are usually expected, CLD presents quite acute challenges. The CLD approach takes time. It's learner-driven. It can be non-linear. It may not always be learning for a specific 'purpose'. That doesn't mean progress is not being made or that lives are not being transformed as a result. It just makes it trickier to be able to demonstrate that concisely and comparably.

Hearing direct from those whose lives have been transformed (or even saved) through CLD can really help. It needs to be backed, however, by better and more comparable data across the board, including clarity on inputs like spend and staff resource, and on outcomes and impact delivered.

The entire CLD sector needs to get better at broadcasting its successes. As one practitioner put it to me:

"CLD is the invisible glue that holds so many of our communities together."

Yet, it often doesn't get the recognition it merits. Some of that must be down to the different data collected and/or how it is presented. This needs to change. We need to be clearer on what it is that CLD is setting out to deliver and get better in gathering the data to show if expected outcomes are indeed being delivered. In short, there's an urgent need for an overall CLD shared outcomes and measurement framework. This doesn't need to be built from scratch, with the existing National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework[46] and the KPI data collected by CLD Managers Scotland providing a very good starting point for a national CLD framework that can be adapted to include adult and family learning.

I understand that there is no single system used by Local Authorities to record progress by individual learners or towards agreed overall outcomes. That really doesn't help in being able to tell if CLD across the country is doing what we know it can do. Sunk costs in the systems

46 Youth Work Outcomes & Skills Framework | YouthLink Scotland

being used by Local Authorities clearly limit any suggestion to move immediately towards a single system used by all. Nevertheless, I am hopeful that this shouldn't be an insurmountable obstacle to getting greater consistency in recording and reporting once a shared outcomes and measurement framework is agreed.

The evidence I've heard in recent months would suggest that those learners who feel ready and want to move on to do new or more advanced learning, or to embark on employability support or find work, usually get the help and support they need to allow them to do so. However, the challenges of availability and accessibility, already set out above, may limit what new CLD learning is on offer. For others, who are moving into a College or a workplace setting, the absence of the support provided by CLD professionals and the flexibilities of CLD learning may prove challenging. There are also challenges around recognition and acceptance of awards received during the CLD learning. There would appear to be scope for more to be done to better map those awards to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, and for more flexible micro-credentials that can be recorded to reflect personal attributes and achievements. These potential issues add to the more practical issues around availability and cost of transport, etc. We need to ensure that all learners across Scotland have an opportunity to fulfil their potential while contributing their talents which should be recognised.

Specifically, on ESOL, we need to better recognise that there are many highly-skilled New Scots whose skills and experience are currently going to waste. Providing them with the right opportunities to get their English language skills to the appropriate levels is absolutely essential, but so is the early identification of those skills, which can then be backed by a tailored approach to prepare for them to be used in and for Scotland's economy and society.

Where do we want to be?

It's usually helpful to know your destination before you plot the next stages on your journey. With this in mind, below I suggest some outcomes, towards which the recommendations and key actions in this report should assist in taking us.

By 2026:

- There is a clearly discernible strategic direction being set for CLD, covering all its elements, at both the national and sub-national levels;
- Learners and potential learners are aware of the opportunities presented by CLD, and can access those that they wish to undertake in a way that meets their needs;
- The design and delivery of CLD strategies and plans is informed by input sought from learners and potential learners;
- CLD enjoys good recognition amongst learners, potential learners, decision-makers and budget-holders as an approach to tackling a wide range of (sometimes inter-related) social and educational challenges, which spans three core elements – Youth Work, Adult Learning (including ESOL and family learning), and Community Development/Empowerment;
- Those involved in CLD are fully aware of the outcomes they are setting out to deliver;
- There is a consistent approach to gathering data and reporting on outcomes which allows for an overall national picture to become clear;
- That learner progress and awards can be better mapped to the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework;
- That decision-makers, budget-holders and planners have a comprehensive picture of the need for CLD, and are regularly horizon-scanning to be well-placed to adapt should that become necessary;

- Roles and responsibilities, including accountability, are clearly established and transparently set out, with the legislative underpinning for CLD supporting this as required;
- CLD workers and volunteers are widely-recognised as effectively qualified, experienced and trained, with qualified CLD staff enjoying parity of esteem with similarly qualified counterparts, such as teachers and social workers; and
- That there is a recognised career pathway – mapped to qualifications – for those working in CLD, including the opportunity to move into senior education management roles within Local Authorities. And also for volunteers who wish to move into CLD as a career.

By the end of the next Scottish Parliament:

- There is a steady pipeline of people entering the CLD workforce, both as staff and volunteers, which reflects an increasingly diverse Scottish population;
- There is a more systematic approach to improving learners' and potential learners' awareness of and accessibility to CLD learning opportunities;
- There is a greater consistency across CLD providers in terms of delivery and workforce planning, with regular opportunities for sharing and learning from good practice across the country;
- Project and programme delivery plans for CLD activities have the stability and predictability of funding to allow them to be sure that the medium to longer-term interventions often required in CLD can be delivered; and
- That CLD's role within Scotland's overall Lifelong Learning system of education is fully recognised and is reflected in terms of the balance of government spending.

How do we get to where we want to go?

Having listened widely to learners, stakeholders, practitioners and decision-makers, and considered the evidence gathered and presented in the documents accompanying this report, I am making recommendations, with related priority actions, in six key areas.

1. Leadership and Structures

The sense of fragmentation, inconsistency, drift and decline needs to be addressed urgently. In my view there is a requirement for sustained strategic leadership, working to set out and deliver a clear, learner-centred, vision of what CLD is expected to do to provide the best outcomes for Scotland's communities and the individuals who make them up.

Recommendation 1.1

- By Autumn 2024, the Scottish Government and CoSLA should establish a **joint CLD Strategic Leadership Group (SLG)**.
  - To meet quarterly as a minimum;
  - Alternately chaired by lead Scottish Government Minister and the designated CoSLA lead;
  - Membership determined by Scottish Government and CoSLA, with all efforts made to ensure it covers the breadth of the CLD offer and establishes an associated Equalities Forum;
  - It should be an action-focused group;
  - It should be required to meet with a cross-section of CLD learners at least once every year to hear their views directly from them; and
  - A key goal for the group should be to consider how the structures emerging at the regional level, for example those relating to City and Region Growth Deals, could help in developing a more coordinated and integrated system of information/best practice sharing and decision-making for CLD planning and delivery.

Recommendation 1.2

- The work of the SLG should be supported by a working-level **CLD Strategic Delivery Group (SDG).**
  - Meets more frequently than the Strategic Leadership Group and ensures actions are progressed in-between meetings of the Strategic Leadership Group;
  - This should be a delivery focused group; and
  - It should be required to meet with a cross-section of CLD learners at least twice every year to hear their views directly from them.

Recommendation 1.3

- CoSLA and the Scottish Government need to **reconsider current arrangements supporting CLD policy and delivery**.
  - In order to support the work of the SLG and SDG;
  - Improve internal coordination and join-up, including ensuring the community development element of CLD is fully integrated in the work of both groups; and
  - In the spirit of the Verity House Agreement, full consideration should be given to the secretariat and support team for the groups being a joint Scottish Government/CoSLA one.

Recommendation 1.4

- CoSLA should initiate and lead a process to **improve consistency in terms of where CLD is situated within Local Authority structures** across all 32 Local Authorities.

Recommendation 1.5

- The **CLD Standards Council should be supported to transition towards an independent status** more akin to the General Teaching Council Scotland.

Recommendation 1.6

- Ministers should commit to providing **regular reports to the Scottish Parliament** about follow-up to this Review.
  - The aim should be for the first such report to reach the Parliament by end June 2025.

2. Overarching Policy Narrative

As I have highlighted throughout this report, there is a pressing need for the Scottish Government to take the findings from the many recent inter-related reviews in the education policy space, and to use them to synthesise a clear statement of what it wants in a true Life-long Learning system. This can be helpful in paving the way for a clearer statement of the role that the Scottish Government expects CLD to play within that system.

Recommendation 2.1

- The Scottish Government should develop and communicate a **clear and cohesive policy narrative on Life-long Learning**.
  - It should build upon the Purpose and Principles work for Post-School Education and Skills but should also cover learning at earlier stages in life and beyond Further and Higher Education.

Recommendation 2.2

- Informed by and consistent with the policy narrative recommended above, the Scottish Government should develop and communicate a **clear Statement of Strategic Intent for CLD**.
  - Developed with input from the Strategic Leadership Group and informed by the evidence presented throughout this review;
  - It should build upon strategic priorities across **all** dimensions of CLD (drawing on prior work relating to the Adult Learning Strategy, Youth Work Strategy, Community Development and the New Scots Strategy); and
  - This should include a commitment to work towards delivering by the end of the next Parliament an entitlement to Adult Learning and Youth Work.

3. Focus on Delivery
There is much that needs to be done, but not all of it can be done at once. Nevertheless, it will be important to develop and set-out a plan which shows what steps will be taken, and when, to deliver the changes required to ensure CLD continues to deliver positive outcomes. ESOL needs to be a priority.

Recommendation 3.1

- By the end of 2024, the Strategic Leadership Group should agree and publish a **detailed, prioritised and timed Delivery Plan**, with the following key priorities:
  - Developing a Routemap to amend the 2013 CLD Regulations in order to:
    - improve accountability and consistency by providing greater clarity on responsibilities across Local Authorities and Third Sector delivery partners;
    - include a requirement for local CLD Plans to be informed and monitored by input received directly from learners; and
    - set some minimum standards or requirements for CLD in Local Authorities e.g. % of education spend and/or ratio of staff to population.
  - Early identification of key actions required to deliver on strategic priorities across all dimensions of CLD, including community development, to deliver positive outcomes for learners;
  - The approach to be followed for the Strategic Leadership Group and Strategic Delivery Group to hear regularly and directly from learners, and from front-line practitioners, about their experiences to inform strategic decision-making and delivery plans;
  - Developing a cost-effective plan to publicise and raise general awareness of CLD and the learning offer, together with the positive outcomes it delivers; and
  - Considering ways to encourage wider interest in CLD across the Scottish Parliament e.g. supporting a cross-party group on CLD.

Recommendation 3.2

- The Scottish Government working alongside New Scots partners, Colleges and Local Authorities needs to take immediate action to **tackle the current ESOL crisis**, including:
  - Reintroducing ring-fencing for ESOL funding provided by SFC to Colleges, at a level consistent with current and predicted demand;
  - Using some of the funding provided to Colleges in 2024-25 to undertake a programme of urgent needs assessment for New Scots currently on ESOL waiting lists (or in the early stages of ESOL learning), and potentially sourcing a self-assessment online test to assist in tackling the backlog;
  - Work with existing voluntary ESOL providers and CLD Standards Council to develop a delivery model for new migrants to become equipped with basic, practical knowledge of the English language, related to everyday activities. This could potentially use volunteers and mentors from established New Scots from within existing networks already in communities;
  - The Scottish Government, working with its New Scots partners, should look closely at systems put in place by countries such as Finland or Sweden to help design an approach to providing support offered to New Scots, including language assessment and training;
  - Scottish Government and ESOL partners working intensively with SDS and other relevant bodies should develop a better system for the early identification of New Scots with 'in demand' qualifications, skills and experience to provide tailored support to them being fast-tracked to work in their professional roles; and
  - The CLD Strategic Leadership Group should be highlighting and sharing good practice of those employers offering or supporting ESOL learning for those with skills in high demand.

4. Budgets and Funding
I've been clear to learners, practitioners and stakeholders throughout this review about the need to be realistic about the likelihood of significant additional funding being injected into CLD in the short-term. Nevertheless, it will be important to consider what can be done now to address some of the long-standing budget and funding challenges across the sector.

Recommendation 4.1
- The Scottish Government should undertake an urgent and overdue **reassessment of the current balance of spending** across all dimensions of learning in Scotland:
  - It should be informed by the overarching true Life-long Learning policy narrative recommended above;
  - It should align with the recommendation that the Statement of Strategic Intent should include a commitment to an entitlement to Adult Learning (including ESOL) and Youth Work; and
  - An early and helpful step would be to encourage greater use of SAC/PEF funding to provide dedicated and professional Youth Work support in our secondary schools.

Recommendation 4.2
- Consistent with the Verity House Agreement, the Scottish Government and CoSLA should work together to **identify indicative allocations for Local Authority spend on CLD**.

Recommendation 4.3
- Wherever possible, funding should be part of core budgets rather than project related. If this is not possible, then **project funding should be provided over a multi-year period**, with an explanation provided if that is not the case.

5. Developing the Workforce and Standards
The CLD professionals and volunteers, working with people facing the biggest challenges, deserve better recognition than they currently enjoy. For those who are qualified CLD professionals, there is a pressing need to ensure parity of esteem with similarly-qualified professionals in related fields. As Scotland's population continues to change, there is a need for the CLD workforce to change with it.

Recommendation 5.1
- The Scottish Government should appoint a **Chief Adviser on Community Learning & Development:**
  - To undertake a similar role to the Chief Social Work Adviser i.e. advising Ministers and policy teams with an interest in, or responsibility for, aspects of CLD services and practice.

Recommendation 5.2
- The CLD Standards Council should lead work **to develop a CLD Workforce Plan** for consideration by the Strategic Leadership Group. It should consider:
  - Identifying a standardised approach to grading and job titles for those working in CLD roles, including across the wider voluntary sector;
  - Developing a programme of outreach to encourage more people of colour to consider a career in CLD or to become volunteers (with a particular early emphasis on supporting community-based ESOL activities in line with the recommendation above);
  - If budget can be found, putting in place a bursary scheme to support people of colour to train for careers in CLD;
  - Reviewing existing routes to professional status in CLD, with a view to ensuring that the offer is fit for the future;
  - Clarifying and, where possible, simplifying professional job roles and career paths;

- A role for the Standards Council in setting and monitoring minimum Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements for CLD professionals and volunteers; and
- Exploring the possibility of mutual learning exchanges being built into CPD requirements for CLD professionals, teachers and social workers.

Recommendation 5.3

- There should be a progressive requirement for all those working or volunteering in CLD roles to be members of the CLD Standards Council:
  - With differing types of membership available to account for the continued importance of volunteers and to reflect the need to take prior experience into account.

Recommendation 5.4

- Consideration of HMIE CLD inspection report findings should be a standing item on the Strategic Leadership Group agenda.

6. Demonstrating Impact

If anyone, after reading this report, still harbours doubts about the life-changing nature of CLD, I would strongly encourage them to sit down and listen to the learners whose lives are changed for the better (or have been saved). Many of the practitioners I heard from accepted that CLD needs to get better at telling its stories and demonstrating impact. Collectively, we need to get better at recognising and celebrating what CLD does.

Recommendation 6.1

- The Scottish Government should fund Scotland's **participation in the OECD International Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)**:
  - Unless we know the scale of the challenge, we won't know where resources need to be directed.

Recommendation 6.2

- Existing outcome measures, including the Youth Work National Outcomes and Skills Framework and the CLD managers Scotland KPI data, should be used as the basis to **develop a shared CLD Outcomes and Measurement Framework** for use across the sector:
  - This will require consideration of what data needs to be consistently gathered to show progress on delivering outcomes.

Recommendation 6.3

- There should be an **annual celebration of CLD successes**, in the shape of a CLD Annual Report and CLD Awards event:
  - To recognise achievement from learners and performance from staff and volunteers; and
  - This could potentially become part of an annual Celebrating Community Learning & Development Week.

Conclusion

Answering the Questions

As a reminder, the Minister asked me to provide recommendations in relation to:

1. Effective and consistently measured outcomes delivered through CLD and reported across the sector. This includes data on the CLD workforce, engagement opportunities and outcomes for learner.
2. Delivering positive outcomes and improved life chances for marginalised and vulnerable learners in communities, in the context of wider education reform and public finance constraints.
3. A strong and suitably professionalised CLD workforce equipped to deliver high quality outcomes for learners.

I can say, without hesitation, that there is strong evidence showing that CLD is delivering positive outcomes and improved life chances for marginalised and vulnerable learners up and down the country. With the recommendations set out in this report, I am confident it can do even more. To help us ensure that it does, action needs to be taken to develop a clear and consistent framework of outcomes, together with a more standardised approach to reporting on those outcomes across the country. All of this can only be done with a workforce of staff and volunteers, who are clear on the standards expected of them, and supported to ensure that they can meet those standards.

Plus ça change ...

Reading through the many accounts setting out the history and development of CLD from 1975, I was struck by the recurrent concerns expressed over the situation it faced, both in terms of provision/service and profession. Even more striking was the substantial overlap between issues identified in the past and those impacting on CLD today. The short time given for doing this review meant that I had to develop my framework for gathering evidence in parallel to progressively immersing myself in the history of the sector. Deciding to frame the review against the four key themes: Visibility/Awareness; Availability/Accessibility; Learning/Support; and Progression/Pathways, turned out to have mapped well onto what I was learning about the challenges this sector has faced for quite some time. Sporadic strategic leadership. Lack of clarity of purpose and policy cohesion. Poorly resourced and fragmented delivery infrastructure. Overly dependent on annualised and short-term project funding, making it difficult to undertake long-term planning. Lack of parity of esteem and the challenge of 'professionalising' a sector where so much delivery depends on volunteers. The absence of a shared framework to measure and report on the positive outcomes we know that CLD delivers. All have featured regularly in the CLD discourse since the 1970s and are central to what I have learned through this review of the current landscape.

On a far more positive note, those working and volunteering in the sector remain resolute in their conviction about the role that the CLD 'approach', underpinned by a set of values, ethics and principles, can play in tackling the challenges faced by many of those who need the most support. That conviction is universally backed by the messages from learners received as part of this review and the research evidence of what works. I was heartened – and pleasantly surprised – to see the extent of engagement from learners in the online survey and was often moved by the deeply personal individual stories I heard in the learner focus groups explaining how services transform lives for the better and for some it's a 'life-saver'. It all lends weight to the already strong arguments in support of CLD.

Why it's time to act and to keep going

So, if the challenges and the positives are relative constants, what has changed in order to lead me to conclude that immediate and sustained attention is required? Speaking to many of the front-line professionals and volunteers, some of whom have worked in the sector for decades, I got a sense of an existential crisis. A prolonged period of extremely difficult budgets, and all that goes with it, together with an increasing demand and widening scope for where CLD can provide support, have the potential to create a 'perfect storm', a 'tipping point' of potential collapse of a sector that has never enjoyed the investment that would provide the stability and recognition it merits.

In an ideal world, there would be early and significant additional financial resource made available to the sector, but we know that is unrealistic in the current budget context. However, the policy rhetoric about the need to address the attainment gap in educational outcomes, due to the impact of poverty, needs to be backed up by a fairer distribution of existing budget resources. Scotland has been rightly proud of its education system, its schools, Colleges and Universities, with a strong focus on and investment in the formal education sector, which has historically benefited from 99% of all public expenditure on Education.

Unfortunately, investment in the 'informal' education sector seems to be an afterthought, even though we've known since the early 1970's that not all individuals thrive within the formal education system. The evidence demonstrates that those with additional support needs, or from more marginalised communities, require access and support to alternative CLD provision that potentially more readily meets their needs and lifelong learning goals. CLD offers this. I would argue that there needs to be greater equity of resource distribution within a joined up formal and informal lifelong learning system that gives parity of esteem to those being educated as well as educators.

Furthermore, as I hope my recommendations make clear, there are steps that can be taken to help address some of the current challenges and to put the sector onto a more stable footing for the future. Many will seem familiar to those who have been around CLD for a while. That's fine – it simply reflects the fact that previous attempts to 'fix' the problems have not been sustained. For me it is the need for clarity of purpose and sustained strategic leadership that is key. This is required at national and regional levels, as well as more locally. Indeed, the examples of where CLD works at its best all note the importance of collaborative strategic leadership.

As I'm sure most of those who have produced similar independent reviews in the past will recognise, a regular fear throughout this process is that the finished review report sits on a shelf and the recommendations go nowhere. If that happens in this case because my review falls short in some critical way, then I apologise in advance. However, the scale of engagement and the extent of the evidence presented, make me confident that this report presents an accurate picture of the strengths and challenges across CLD. I am also confident that my recommendations flow logically from that. It is now for the Minister to consider them – and I'm pleased that he has committed to do so alongside CoSLA and I would hope that he would want to engage with key stakeholders too – and then decide what happens next. If the Minister accepts the recommendations, then I would caution everyone to not expect to see the problems facing CLD disappear overnight. There is likely to be a prolonged journey to put CLD onto a firmer footing and to deal with the legacy of recent years. Maintaining focus, measuring progress and minimising further disruption are likely to be essential.

Nevertheless, I sincerely hope that anyone looking at the CLD landscape on the 60th anniversary of the Alexander Report in 2035 will see that the challenges highlighted in this report have been successfully addressed, and that the potential for CLD to be doing even more in helping to deliver positive outcomes for many of Scotland's most marginalised and vulnerable communities has been fully recognised and acted upon.

It will take sustained strategic leadership to get us to the above position by 2035, and I hope the evidence gathered during this review shows why that's an important goal for us all. I noted in the introduction about the Scottish Parliament being an important difference between the Scotland of the 1970s and the Scotland of today. It too needs to be involved in this process, which is why my recommendations include providing regular updates to it on progress in following-up this review.

Concluding Remarks

So much of 1970s Scotland has long since gone, and sometimes our sense of nostalgia can perhaps blind us to the fact that much of this change will have been positive. Nevertheless, the persistence of some of the country's most acute economic and social problems remains striking. In communities up and down Scotland, from rural and island areas through to ex-Council housing estates in or around our towns and cities, dedicated and committed CLD staff and volunteers are doing all they can to help people in need to identify that need, before working with them to agree on how they can best go about meeting it. Often, they are doing so under difficult circumstances and in inadequate settings. For those who are paid to do it, the financial reward compares poorly with similarly qualified or experienced counterparts in other services. For many within the sector the real reward is to see the progress being made by the learners. Often this won't be clear to the learner at the

time. I often heard learners and practitioners speak of the 'lightbulb moment', when a learner recognises – possibly many years after being involved with a Youth Group or Adult Learning class, etc – that the positives in their current lives (or perhaps the absence of negatives) can be traced back to their CLD learning. The learner is responsible for the change, but the CLD worker has facilitated it.

As I've said before, CLD is not a 'silver bullet' to deal with the complex problems that have featured throughout this report, and I apologise if my enthusiasm for what it can and does contribute has inadvertently given that impression at times. The past few months have been a real roller-coaster of emotions as I've had the privilege of undertaking this review: sadness that there are still too many people in Scotland who are struggling to survive; fear that the current cost of living crisis and accumulated impacts of austerity are making things worse; alarm that we appear to have neglected a key tool effective in helping tackle those problems; and, pride that there are inspiring professionals and volunteers prepared to 'go the extra mile' to help those who need our help the most.

> People here understand what it is like to be me and I meet people here who are like me and I have got to know them well."
>
> **Young person**

As the work of this review draws to a close, my overriding emotion is hope. It's a hope engendered by the examples set by the learners I have met and listened to. Their strength, stamina and commitment in identifying, meeting and overcoming difficult challenges is a lesson to us all!

Recommendations

1. Leadership and Structures

1.1	• By Autumn 2024, the Scottish Government and CoSLA should establish a **joint CLD Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) including an Equalities Forum**.
1.2	• The work of the SLG should be supported by a working-level **CLD Strategic Delivery Group (SDG).**
1.3	• CoSLA and the Scottish Government need to **reconsider current arrangements supporting CLD policy and delivery**.
1.4	• CoSLA should initiate and lead a process to **improve consistency in terms of where CLD is situated within Local Authority structures** across all 32 Local Authorities.
1.5	• The **CLD Standards Council should be supported to transition towards an independent status** more akin to the General Teaching Council Scotland.
1.6	• Ministers should commit to providing **regular reports to the Scottish Parliament** about follow-up to this Review.

2. Overarching Policy Narrative

2.1	• The Scottish Government should develop and communicate a **clear and cohesive policy narrative on Life-long Learning**.
2.2	• Informed by and consistent with the policy narrative recommended above, the Scottish Government should develop and communicate a **clear Statement of Strategic Intent for CLD**.

3. Focus on Delivery

3.1	• By the end of 2024, the Strategic Leadership Group should agree and publish a **detailed, prioritised and timed Delivery Plan**.
3.2	• The Scottish Government working alongside New Scots partners, Colleges and Local Authorities needs to take immediate action to **tackle the current crisis in ESOL.**

4. Budgets and Funding

4.1	• The Scottish Government should undertake an urgent and overdue **reassessment of the current balance of spending** across all dimensions of learning in Scotland.
4.2	• Consistent with the Verity House Agreement, the Scottish Government and CoSLA should work together to **identify indicative allocations for Local Authority spend on CLD**.
4.3	• Wherever possible, funding should be part of core budgets rather than project related. If this is not possible, then **project funding should be provided over a multi-year period**, with an explanation provided if that is not the case.

5. Developing the Workforce and Standards

5.1	• The Scottish Government should appoint a **Chief Adviser on Community Learning & Development**.
5.2	• The CLD Standards Council should lead work **to develop a CLD Workforce Plan** for consideration by the Strategic Leadership Group.
5.3	• There should be a progressive requirement for all those working or volunteering in CLD roles to be members of the CLD Standards Council.
5.4	• Consideration of HMIE CLD inspection report findings should be a standing item on the Strategic Leadership Group agenda.

6. Demonstrating Impact

6.1	• The Scottish Government should fund Scotland's **participation in the OECD International Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)**.
6.2	• Existing outcome measures, including the Youth Work National Outcomes and Skills Framework and the CLD managers Scotland KPI data, should be used as the basis to **develop a shared CLD Outcomes and Measurement Framework** for use across the sector.
6.3	• There should be an **annual celebration of CLD successes**, in the shape of a CLD Annual Report and CLD Awards event.

Appendix:
Approach and Methodology

Putting Learners at the centre of the review

When thinking about how best to tackle the challenge of carrying-out an independent review of Community Learning & Development (CLD) across Scotland, in line with Ministerial expectations as set out in the review Terms of Reference (ToR), and to the very tight timescale, my starting point was that learners – their interests and perspectives – had to be central to it. That remained my approach throughout.

Hearing from many and diverse voices

My approach and methodology – how I went about doing the review – had to make sure that there was enough information from a wide and varied range of sources to allow me to provide recommendations to Ministers on the specific points set out in the ToR:

[to] provide information and recommendations relating to:

- Effective and consistently measured outcomes delivered through CLD and reported across the sector. This includes data on the CLD workforce, engagement opportunities and outcomes for learners.
- Delivering positive outcomes and improved life chances for marginalised and vulnerable learners in communities, in the context of wider education reform and public finance constraints.
- A strong and suitably professionalised CLD workforce equipped to deliver high quality outcomes for learners.

Engaging with Integrity

In carrying out the review, both I and the secretariat supporting my work, adhered to the Principles of Public Life in Scotland. This included acting with objectivity, openness, honesty and respect, and upholding and acting in accordance with the law and public trust.

Literature Review

Following consultation with me and my secretariat, analysts from the Scottish Government's Advanced Learning & Skills Analysis team prepared a Literature Review, which provided helpful insights into prior studies relating to CLD in Scotland, and to approaches/ lessons from a range of other countries.

Gathering Evidence

My approach to gathering evidence and opinions about the areas covered by the ToR was based around 4 Key Themes:

- Visibility & Awareness of CLD
- Availability & Accessibility of CLD
- Learning & Support in CLD
- Pathways & Progression

The themes were used as a guide for designing the online survey questionnaires; formed the basis of structured discussions with stakeholders; and provided a framework for the focus groups with learners and potential learners.

Citizen Space Consultations – I took advice from professional social researchers to help design an online questionnaire for CLD learners and potential learners (see Independent review of community learning and development: Call for evidence – Learner and Potential Learner – Scottish Government consultations – Citizen Space. A BSL version was also prepared, together with translations into a number of languages to encourage participation from those who do not have English as their first language. An MS Word version of the learner questionnaire was also made available on request to assist those who could not complete the survey on Citizen Space, along with the option of submitting the returns to the CLD Independent Review email inbox.

In parallel to the consultation intended for learners/potential learners, a further set of questions was developed for answer by CLD practitioners, stakeholders, decision-makers, budget-holders, and those working in related service areas. See Independent Review of Community Learning and Development: Call for Evidence – Practitioners – Scottish Government consultations – Citizen Space.

Both online surveys were hosted on Citizen Space, running from 22 January to 3 March.

The CLD Independent Review email inbox was made available for learners and stakeholders, etc to submit survey responses and any additional relevant information or data. My team and I encouraged them to do so. 292 submissions were received through the Inbox, of which 201 were completed learner/potential learner surveys.

The response to both surveys exceeded expectations:

- 717 learner/potential learner responses were received;
- 423 responses were received from practitioners, stakeholders, etc.

Regional Engagement Events – Given their statutory role in securing the provision of CLD within their geographical areas, it was essential for the review to hear directly from CLD practitioners in Local Authorities (LAs), together with their LA colleagues involved with Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and/or Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs). Representatives from all Local Authorities were invited to attend one of a series of Regional Engagement Events in the course of February 2024.

Separate in-person events for CLD and CPP/RIC representatives practitioners were held in Glasgow (for LAs in and around Glasgow/West), Edinburgh (for LAs in and around Edinburgh and the Borders), and Dundee (for LAs in and around Dundee).

Unfortunately, logistical challenges and the potential for highly-unpredictable Scottish weather in February meant that I was unable to meet and hear in-person from CLD practitioners and CPP/RIC representatives in the Highlands & Islands. I am grateful to those working in those areas for their understanding, and for their engagement in the virtual events that were put in place.

Online sessions with Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) from across Scotland were also held.

Focus Groups with Learners & Potential Learners – It was a great pleasure and privilege to be able to meet with and hear directly from a cross-section of CLD learners and potential learners in a series of focus groups across the country. For simple logistical reasons, some of these had to be held online via MS Teams, whilst others were face-to-face. I'm grateful to all those who participated and shared their (often emotional but uplifting) CLD learning journeys. A total of more than 110 learners and potential learners – including those involved with Youth Work, Adult Learning, family

learning, ESOL, literacy, numeracy, digital skills, etc – participated in the groups. My thanks also to Scottish Government professional social researchers who helped by facilitating discussions in the groups.

Given the timescale for the review, it was always going to be difficult to hear from as many learners and potential learners as I would have liked. In addition to the focus groups noted above, I also strongly encouraged CLD practitioners working in LAs and in the Third Sector to host their own learner focus groups, and to include the notes from those groups in returns to the online surveys or direct to the review email inbox. Topic guides, information sheets and consent forms were shared by the secretariat to help with this.

Structured Discussions with Stakeholders – The review has also benefited from more than 40 separate group or individual discussions I have had with stakeholders (including those who wouldn't identify themselves specifically as CLD stakeholders), decision-makers, policy-makers, and budget holders from a range of different organisations and bodies. Notes were made by the secretariat during those discussions, which were subsequently shared to ensure that key points were accurately recorded.

Analysis of the Evidence

To guarantee an objective and holistic process, and in accordance with the Scottish Government's Procurement Strategy, Craigforth Consultancy and Research were contracted to analyse the survey responses, meeting and event notes, and additional relevant information and data submitted through the review inbox.

To ensure the Independent Review's recommendations were evidence-led, the contractors maintained weekly contact and provided emerging findings. Their full report has been published alongside this document.

Time and budget constraints for preparing the evidence report meant that the focus group notes were analysed by the Scottish Government's professional social researchers/ analysts who facilitated the groups on my behalf. The findings were provided to Craigforth and have been incorporated into the final evidence report.

Online Information Session

Craigforth presented the emerging findings from the evidence gathered at two separate online sessions on Thursday 16th May. More than 300 participants joined the sessions.

Appendix: Acknowledgments

In addition to those who engaged through the two online surveys, the following also provided input to this review.

Aberchirder Mens Shed
Adult Learning and Digital Literacies class, Helensburgh Library
Adult Learning and Family Learning class, Moray
Adult Literacies learners, Highland Life
Anne McTaggart, Convenor of Community Empowerment & Equalities, Glasgow City Council
Arbroath Learning Group, Arbroath Library
Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
At Home youth centre, Airdrie
Awards Network Scotland
Citizens Advice Burea, Bridgeton, Glasgow
Claire Donaghey, Glasgow ESOL Register
CLD Managers Scotland
CLD services in Local Authorities
CLD Standards Council
CLD Standards Council members
College Development Network (CDN)
Colleges Principals Group network
Community Link Workers Network
Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs)
Conor Maxwell, CLD Talks podcast
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA)
Craigforth Consultancy and Research
Education Scotland
Employability and adult learning class, Grain Exchange, Ayr
ESOL learners, Dundee
Fullarton Community Hub
Grahame Smith, Career Services Collaborative
Highlife Highland
HM Inspectors of Education
Intercultural Youth Scotland (IYS)
James Withers, author of Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape
Larbert High School
LEAD Scotland
Learners and potential learners across Scotland
Learning Link Scotland
LGBT Youth Scotland
Local Authority Youth Work Managers Network (LAYWM)

Appendix: Acknowledgments

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New Scots Refugee Integration Core Group
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Paul Zealey, Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs)
Representatives from adult learning third sector delivery organisations
Respondents to the Citizens Space consultations
Rowena Arshad, Chair in Multicultural and Anti-Racist Education at the University of Edinburgh
Scotland's Learning Partnership (SLP)
Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC)
Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
Scottish Government Advanced Learning and Skills Analysis team
Scottish Government Director for Education Reform
Scottish Government Director for Public Service Reform
Scottish Government Director for Jobs and Well-being Economy
Scottish Government Directors for Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate
Scottish Qualification's Authority (SQA)
Scottish Youth Parliament and MSYPs
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
The Learning Curve, AK Bell Library, Perth
The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE)
Workers Educational Association (WEA)
Youth Scotland
YouthLink Scotland
YT Club, Stirling

Appendix:
Related Publications

This document is part of a suite of publications related to the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD). This includes:

Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD) – https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836013723

Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD) – Learners Summary – https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836014904. A British Sign Language (BSL) version is also available via this link.

Community Learning and Development in Scotland and Internationally: Literature Review – https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836014911

Community Learning and Development in Scotland and Internationally: Literature Review – plain language summary – https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836015192

Independent Review of Community Learning and Development: a call for evidence. Analysis report of the evidence gathered during consultation – https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836015260

Community Learning and Development (CLD) – Statistics Brief presenting data relevant to CLD in Scotland – https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836015208

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