

The competences for Community Learning and Development 2009

Summary of the process

In August 2008, the Interim Standards Council for Community Learning and Development (CLD) commissioned a refresh of the CLD competences. This work was undertaken by Linked Work and Training Trust leading a consortium of Youthlink Scotland, Avante Consulting and SCDC. The brief was to update the competences in line with recent research and changes in the policy context and CLD field since they were written in 1995. The approach involved direct participation in discussions by 161 CLD practitioners and survey responses from 255.

Methodology

The research was designed to include qualitative and quantitative approaches and was based on four areas of investigation, with fieldwork linked to three stages in developing the refreshed competences and literature being reviewed throughout. The first stage was focused on drafting refreshed competences and involved facilitating nine Dialogue Sets, with 77 participants involved in three hour discussions on the competence requirements of CLD, and a review of some of the CLD literature. The findings from this were used to shape draft refreshed competences for the testing stage.

Three one day national seminars involved 75 participants and explored how the drafts related to their experience and competence needs. An online survey attracting 255 respondents ran in parallel to this, followed by a further exploration of the literature. The findings were used to redraft the competences. Finally, an expert panel involved 9 participants in one day discussion of the redrafted competences, with a focus on current competence needs of CLD and the identification of trends that might impact on CLD in the future.

The competences were then finalised for consideration by the CLD Standards Council for Scotland. The information collected throughout the research process was reviewed to ensure that the findings fully informed the final version.

Stage One: The drafting stage

The literature review highlighted that significant changes had taken place in relation to practice developments and the policy context since 1995. There are now, for instance, expectations of CLD in relation to Community Planning, regeneration and skills development. Practice supports and guidance tools such as *Working Together Learning Together*, *LEAP* and *HGLIOCLD?2*, have been produced alongside increased requirements for evaluation, evidencing outcomes and changes in the funding and location of CLD practice. Employers' expectations have focused on a number of areas of practice, for instance the growth of partnership working, a focus on literacies and numeracy work, ESOL and family learning. Employability, accreditation and access to qualifications have created a more formalised expectation of learning outcomes. Meanwhile the social benefits expected of CLD practice have moved through active citizenship to social capital accumulation and have been seen to be important to individuals, communities and active democracy. This is set within a requirement to deliver on the Scottish Government's strategic priorities for CLD, which are:

- Achievement through learning for young people
- Achievement through building community capacity
- Achievement through learning for adults

Participants in the Dialogue Sets highlighted a number of points that they felt needed to be taken into account within the competence refresh. These included:

- the complexity of partnership working;
- recognition of the processes, skills and knowledge related to needs identification;
- risk management;
- conflict management and understanding;
- presentation of research evidence and its assistance in building evidence-based practice.

There was a strong interest in ensuring that policy expectations were taken into account, given their impact on the context in which practice is undertaken, managed and measured. The participants wanted the refresh to clarify and make explicit the purpose, impact and outcomes, values and principles and core activities of CLD. Participants also wanted the competences to demonstrate the aspirations of practice, and in turn to demonstrate to employers the importance of investing in CPD activities so that they could maximise their own impact. There was a strong interest in ensuring that the refreshed competences would provide practice support for practitioners, managers and policy makers as well as well as providing the basis for pre-qualifying, qualifying and post qualifying training. This context was the basis for the first draft of the refreshed competences.

Stage Two: The testing stage

There was disagreement about where the values should be made explicit, with some participants feeling they should be embedded in the competences and others that this made them too value laden and difficult to demonstrate. The need to show the importance of critical thinking and reflection provided a further framework for redrafting. This was done in the context of a positive response to the survey, which found that:

- 71% (181 respondents) felt that the draft refreshed competences represented the areas required to demonstrate generic competence for those working in CLD
- 18.4% (47 respondents) said they were unsure; and,
- 10.6% (27 respondents) felt they did not.

The large number of comments noted through the electronic survey (over 500 across all questions) reinforced some of the points from the discussions at the events. These included:

- the need for a clear definition of CLD as an introduction to the competences;
- an interest in retaining the empowerment competence; and,
- using language that is aspirational, positive and accessible but reflects the complexity of practice.

The importance of competence in understanding community, social relationships and partnership working was also highlighted.

Participants and respondents felt that levelling, with examples of competent practice and a route map to the national occupational standards (NOS), would help them to understand and demonstrate competence in generic CLD. Making sure that the competence framework linked to CPD was highlighted. The dissemination strategy that is developed by the CLD Standards Council to launch the refreshed competences was seen as a way of raising awareness with CLD and CLD stakeholders. Survey respondents gave over 50 comments on how they felt this could be achieved.

The findings from the testing phase were used to further redraft the refreshed competences.

Stage Three: The refining stage

Participants felt it was important to strengthen the values and purpose statement and that it would be useful to clarify the key process points that were being made in the introduction. A focus for testing the final refreshed competences was suggested. This involved considering why practitioners might need to be competent in an area of practice, what they would do and what it would achieve. A number of other points were identified as important to ensure that the refreshed competences reflected the complexity of the roles of CLD workers. Panel members suggested the language should be active and the interdependence of the competence framework should be shown. They felt that the refreshed competences should support practice based around the impact of CLD, practitioner self-awareness and understanding of the value base and language that reflect the aspirations of CLD practice.

Future trends that participants felt should inform the refreshed competences included awareness of the political dimension and the implications changes of government and government priorities might have, identifying the increased emphasis on localism and community involvement in decision making around local services. They also noted the emphasis on evidence and need for inquiry skills, understanding the changing dimensions of relationships in an IT society, alongside the need to a focus on the role of direct engagement and social interaction.

They felt the sector had to:

- develop its leadership role in working with others,
- build links with other public services, such as education and health,
- take steps to ensure CPD for the whole workforce
- own its development by being creative and innovative and adapting to change.

Panel members also felt that the relationship between the NOS, SCQF and levelling were important and suggested looking at the Scottish Social Services Council Continuous Learning Framework and the adult literacies framework.

Stage Four: The literature

The recent workforce survey (LLUK, 2008) highlighted the diversity and breadth of people active in CLD, the high proportion of unpaid and volunteer practitioners who support activities, especially around achievement through learning for young people. It identified the mixture of qualified and unqualified practitioners, highlighting the importance of training developments that offer a continuum of learning for people seeking to extend their knowledge and skills so that they can extend their practice.

In recent years, there has been a growth of evidence on the impact of CLD with individuals, groups and in communities. There is a more explicit understanding that communities are complex and there are competing needs and interests. Practice developments such as the social practice model approach to family learning and the outcomes of investment in adult literacies work provide strong supporting material for a learning continuum that will support practice and practitioner development.

A theoretical perspective of CLD highlights the importance of practitioners being aware that learning has a number of purposes and processes that will vary according to the understanding and motivating factors of providers and learners, as well as the policy aspirations behind provision. One element of the distinctiveness of CLD is based on the relationship between learners and CLD practitioners, where the learning agenda is defined and shaped together. The processes that underpin this

approach are based on the intended outcomes and understanding of learning linked to the theoretical perspectives of the practitioner.

There is also a growing evidence base on the relationship between learning and:

- personal change
- social change
- democratic action
- regeneration
- health and well being
- employment
- environmental action
- economic development

These connections inform a broad understanding of the impact of CLD practice and of the importance of principles and values as a driving force for CLD.

Tensions have been identified between community-focused policy expectations and some of the assumptions and language with which they are framed. For instance, a deficit model is seen in terms such as 'community capacity building' and 'community empowerment' with the implication that local and national government agendas rather than community agendas are the outcomes expected of community capacity. It is important to understand the power, social connections and impact of cultural norms on individual and community knowledge.

Competence can be understood as an integration of skills, knowledge and experience in the context in which professional activities are undertaken. National occupational standards are the detailed elements of the skills and knowledge needed. This indicates the importance of both in relation to this refresh. The aim is to develop a competence framework that is value-based, relevant to technical skills developments and linked to the self-evaluation processes and standards of CLD. The broad experience base of those involved in CLD activities means that clarity of the competence areas that make up generic CLD needs to be achieved before levelling around beginner, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert practice expectations can be agreed. These can then be effectively informed by SCQF developments, relevant NOS and practitioner and trainer perspectives.

The CLD Competence Framework (2009)



The competences for Community Learning and Development (2009)

Competence in Community Learning and Development

Community learning and development is learning and social development work with individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. A common defining feature is that programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants

(Scottish Executive, 2004)

Community Learning and Development aims to:

...develop the capacity of individuals and groups of all ages and through their actions, the capacity of communities, to improve their quality of life. Central to this is their ability to participate in democratic processes.

(Scottish Office, 1998)

Values

The values of CLD are¹

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

Competent CLD workers

Competent CLD workers will ensure that their work supports social change and social justice and is based on the values of CLD. Their approach is collaborative, anti-discriminatory and equalities-focused and they work with diverse individuals, communities of place or interest and organisations to achieve change. They can influence or lead people, understanding when this is or is not appropriate. Central to their practice is challenging discrimination and its consequences and working with individuals and communities to shape learning and development activities that enhance quality of life and sphere of influence. They have good interpersonal and listening skills and their practice demonstrates that they value and respect the

¹ Taken from the Interim Standards Council's proposals

knowledge, experience and aspirations of those involved. They will initiate, develop and maintain relationships with local people and groups and work with people using:

- non-formal contact;
- informal support; and,
- informal and formal learning and development opportunities

Competent CLD workers will also have self-management skills, such as time management and communication, that are appropriate to the level at which they are practising. While these are not detailed in the competences, they are covered through the SCQF framework and the National Occupational Standards.

Critically Reflective CLD workers

CLD practitioners are aware of their values and principles and critically reflect on their practice and experience so that they integrate their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes and use these effectively in their work. They use self-assessment, participative processes and evidence of the impact of their work to plan and manage their activities.

These are essential to their ability to develop and manage their own practice and identify their own learning and development needs.

The CLD competences

- Know and understand the community in which we work
- Build and maintain relationships with individuals and groups
- Provide learning and development opportunities in a range of contexts
- Facilitate and promote community empowerment
- Organise and manage resources
- Develop and support collaborative working
- Evaluate and inform practice

The full list of indicators underpinning these may be found on the following pages.

Competence: Know and understand the community in which we work

Purpose: so that practitioners can work with individuals and communities to identify and plan action based on knowledge of some of the internal and external influences at work.

Context: understanding the context within which our work takes place will be based upon our knowledge of social, political and wider environmental influences on communities. Competent CLD practitioners are aware of the relevant global and local factors that impact on the community with which they work.

As a competent practitioner with an understanding of the community/ environment in which you work, you will be able to demonstrate that you can:

- conduct an external community/ environment assessment, considering the political, economic and social context of the community;
- investigate internal views and information relating to the area within which you work;
- critically analyse internal and external factors impacting on individuals and communities;
- identify needs, assets and opportunities using relevant information and evidence;
- involve other stakeholders in identifying and agreeing needs and local priorities;
- evidence an awareness of challenges relating to barriers to participation within the local community/environment;
- ascertain conflicting needs and demands.

Competence: Build and maintain relationships with individuals and groups

Purpose: so that people's ability and opportunities to work together are enhanced.

Context: CLD is built upon the interactions between people, be these community members, activists or those working with organisations offering support. These relationships provide the basis to support learning and engage people in action to support change within their communities.

As a competent practitioner able to build and maintain relationships with individuals and groups you will be able to demonstrate that you can:

- seek out and engage with individuals, groups and communities;
- practise in different roles, such as facilitating, supporting, leading, advocating, that are appropriate to the work in which you are involved;
- use informal dialogue in individual relationships and within groups;
- handle challenges and opportunities constructively;
- understand and deal with the underlying dynamics at work within relationships and groups;
- work towards the resolution of conflict;
- recognise the power dynamic and action needed to equalise power relationships in decision making;
- facilitate endings for individual and group relationships where appropriate.

Competence: Provide learning and development opportunities in a range of contexts

Purpose: so that people can identify and achieve their individual and collective goals.

Context: CLD is based on providing learning and development opportunities that are accessible and responsive to individual and community priorities. These opportunities create personal and community benefits such as improving self-confidence and skills and enhancing employment opportunities, as well as supporting health and well-being, community regeneration and individual and community activity.

As a competent practitioner able to provide learning and development opportunities in a range of contexts you will be able to demonstrate that you can:

- provide education and development opportunities that are developed in dialogue with individuals and communities;
- generate learning opportunities that will stimulate personal and community change;
- tackle barriers to participation;
- develop, design and deliver learner-centred programmes;
- take advantage of learning and development opportunities in everyday situations;
- use appropriate methods and techniques;
- support progression and transition;
- use appropriately targeted methods to promote learning and development opportunities.

Competence: Facilitate and promote community empowerment

Purpose: so that people can take individual and collective action to bring about change.

Context: CLD practice is built on critical analysis of internal and external factors that influence individual and community priorities and has a distinctive role in working with people to take action to identify and influence decisions that impact on the quality of individual and community life.

As a competent practitioner able to facilitate and promote community empowerment you will be able to demonstrate that you can support individuals, groups and communities to:

- analyse and understand power dynamics and decision-making processes;
- use community action as a means to achieve change;
- be inclusive and involve the wider community;
- interact within and across communities;
- participate in decision-making structures and processes;
- campaign for change;
- identify and manage community assets.

Competence: Organise and manage resources

Purpose: so that individuals, communities and organisations can achieve effective management of community assets and resources, services and organisations.

Context: CLD practitioners need to understand the culture of organisations, the responsibilities of those involved and how organisation and management styles, practices and governance relate to sustainable organisations.

As a competent practitioner with an understanding of planning, organising and managing resources you will be able to demonstrate that you can:

- develop and plan programmes and project activities;
- manage and monitor programmes and project activities;
- promote and manage a culture based on equality;
- organise, deploy and monitor resources effectively;
- recruit, manage and support people (staff, volunteers);
- identify and access funding/ resources;
- understand and manage risk;
- interpret and apply relevant legislation (e.g. equalities, Child Protection, Health and Safety).

Competence: Develop and support collaborative working

Purpose: so that people can enhance decision making and collaborative activities that impact on the quality of life of individuals and communities.

Context: CLD practitioners need to understand, recognise and value the benefits of collaboration and build appropriate and effective alliances, networks and other forms of working together.

As a competent practitioner able to develop and support collaborative working you will be able to demonstrate that you can:

- develop and support collaborative working within your own organisation;
- initiate collaborative working with relevant organisations;
- participate in partnership and collaborative working;
- support community participation in partnership and collaborative working;
- clarify and articulate the role of your own organisation and that of others;
- negotiate and agree roles in collaborative and joint work, taking a leadership role where appropriate;
- identify, put in place or provide appropriate training and development opportunities for collaborative working;
- challenge and be challenged on issues undermining effective partnership working being aware of tensions and conflicts;
- manage the ending of collaborative and joint relationships.

Competence: Evaluate and inform practice

Purpose: so that robust evidence can sustain, inform, influence and change policy and practice.

Context: Competent CLD practitioners require to build evidence-based practice based on an appreciation of the value of research and evaluation. They need a knowledge of the methods and techniques commonly used and an understanding of the current issues and challenges in evaluation, quality assurance and performance measurement in CLD.

As a competent practitioner with an ability to evaluate and inform practice you will be able to demonstrate that you can:

- understand the differences between research, evaluation and associated concepts;
- employ appropriate tools, frameworks and methodologies in the evaluation of practice;
- draw on evaluation findings to inform your own practice;
- use participative evaluative processes;
- promote and support community led research and evaluation;
- analyse policy, research and evaluation evidence;
- learn from other perspectives and challenge your own assumptions;
- interpret and use evidence related to outcomes and impact;
- present evidence to a range of audiences using appropriate tools and technologies.

The Next Steps

The breadth of experience of those active in CLD makes it important that the next stage of the refresh looks at how evidence of competence for differently experienced practitioners should be developed and supported. A number of National Occupational Standards (NOS) have been created, which cover key areas of work in different activities within CLD. These include standards related to youth work, community development work and family learning. There are also occupational standards that are not specific to CLD, such as management standards, but which are important to how somebody might want to develop their practice and roles. It is important to look at these standards to work out how they link to the CLD competence framework. This will help practitioners to understand how they can use the different NOS to describe their competence in CLD by creating a route map for practitioners to use.

By using the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which identifies different qualification levels and what would be expected of people as they achieve these, alongside the route map to the NOS, people will be able to identify and evidence their achievements. This will help to establish the competences as a tool for practice and continuous development by helping practitioners to understand what can be expected of them and how they might develop their practice; employers to manage effective and continually improving practice; and training providers to develop material and support practitioner competence developments.

These competences and indicators should be read in conjunction with the definition of a competent CLD worker.