

## Partnership For 21<sup>st</sup> Century Lifelong Learning

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As we move to the next stage of the [Scottish Government route map to recovery](#) there is an opportunity consider how the renewal phase is one which maximises the use of public resources and supports effective partnership working. The Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector contends that the renewal phase is dependent on the key role which it has in ensuring that no-one or community is left behind as Scotland seeks to address the challenging civic and economic environment which is both the legacy and continuing reality of the pandemic.

There is now an opportunity arising from the pandemic to create an integrated tertiary education sector which provides a national resilient, systemic approach to support both individuals and communities. This approach to 21<sup>st</sup> century Lifelong Learning would utilise all three aspects of CLD (adult learning, community development and youth work) supporting Scottish Government policies while obtaining maximum benefit from the public investment in education.

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### **i) Adult Learning**

The latest Nomis labour market data has over 700,000 adults in Scotland with no, or level1, qualifications. It is anticipated that the economic downturn will have the greatest impact on this cohort with a substantial rise in unemployment anticipated.

The importance of ensuring that these individuals have access to appropriate learning opportunities is one of the key lessons from previous recessions. The failure to protect community-based adult learning during earlier recessions has resulted in wider deep-seated socio-economic deprivation as individuals have not been able to acquire the skills required to engage in further study or sustainable employment while limiting opportunities to support mental health and well-being..

The CLD sector has a long standing and effective track record of delivering community-based adult learning which enables individuals to acquire the meta-skills identified by Skills Development Scotland as central to employer needs for

Industry 4.0. Community-based learning, including literacy and ESOL provision, is often the most effective means of engaging successfully with those who have had a previous negative experience of education and/or have held job roles where there has been no formal training. In addition, local access to learning removes the need to travel the cost of which is often a major barrier to individuals in the most deprived and rural communities.

Therefore, CLD providers working with colleges and SDS should establish an agreed community-based learning programme for adults which supports the acquisition of the skills required for further study or employment. This curriculum offer should be linked to the development of an agreed approach to the co-creation of micro-credentials using the SCQF. Delivering a programme such as this in each college region would provide a systemic and coherent approach which would effectively support progression and articulation pathways to employment and/or further study

Furthermore, the importance of Family Learning has been highlighted as a means of not only supporting the attainment of young people while also providing adults with the skills they need to progress into further study or employment.

## **ii) Community Development**

The importance of effective communities has been highlighted by the pandemic and the basis for the response of both local authorities and third sector organisations has been effective local networks.

An article in *The Lancet* published in May 2020 identified that grassroots movements were central to the response to previous pandemics. However, it highlighted that:

*Good mechanisms for community participation are hard to establish rapidly. High-quality co-production of health (education themes) takes time. Meaningful relationships between communities and providers should be nurtured to ensure sustainable and inclusive participation.*

Currently the view of public health experts is that Covid-19 is likely to be a constant in the near to medium term and therefore the building of community capacity to address this threat requires to be a key strand of Scottish Government public health policy and is reflected in the Public Health Scotland strategic plan. The benefit of a CLD approach in this area would not only be in the context of public health but also in the development of the skills required for wider community empowerment/engagement and, for individuals, the acquisition of key meta-skills. Working with regional Health Boards and local communities the CLD workforce would support engagement on health related topics and improvement programmes in the first instance related to the Covid-19 pandemic and mental health however recognising that there are other health issues which require to be addressed.

## **iii) Youth Work**

There has been considerable emphasis on the need to support young people during the pandemic and to put in place structures which will seek to address the impact of school closures. An effective Youth Work curriculum has a major role to play in supporting schools and colleges by providing a range of learning opportunities which supports the development of meta and citizenship skills. It will also provide opportunities for young people to gain certification in areas not covered by the traditional curriculum offer.

Through the Regional Improvement Collaborative framework, CLD providers would have the opportunity to design and deliver both family learning and youth work programmes which supported the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the widening access agenda using a range of non SQA qualifications.

In addition there is critical requirement that CLD representatives have the opportunity to support the development of a National Digital Strategy for Education as proposed by ScotlandIS in order to create a coherent approach to the delivery of on-line learning for all aspects of education which reaches those who are currently digitally excluded. The pandemic has highlighted both the scale of digital poverty and the need for a systemic national initiative to address this issue.

The value of a professionally qualified CLD workforce has been made even more evident by the current pandemic and their skills will have a central role to play as we enter the renewal phase. It is evident that the impact, both in terms of health and economically, of the virus has fallen disproportionately on the most deprived in society therefore it is essential that going forward no individual or community is left behind and that the best use is made of scarce resources to deliver the maximum benefit for all. In partnership the CLD workforce is committed to playing its part.