

# Cross-Party Group on Skills

Friday 28 February 2025 (0930-1030)

Minute

Present

MSPs

Pam Gosal MSP  
Stephen Kerr MSP

Invited guests

Steven Mclennan, CLD Standards Council Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland  
Vikki Manson, Federation of Small Businesses  
Ibiyemi Omeihe, University of the West of Scotland  
Lauren Pennycook, CITB  
Victoria Manson, Federation of Small Businesses  
Kate Young, Enginuity  
Georgia Marks, UCAS  
Jason Miles-Campbell, Jisc  
Robert Bruce, Enginuity  
Rachael Nicholls, University of Strathclyde  
Katherine Shaw Nelson, Scottish Parliament  
Aimee Logan, Universities Scotland  
George Brown, SQA  
Kellie Zdanowicz, Scottish Training Federation  
Alix McDonald, University of Strathclyde  
Pauline Ratcliffe, SCQF Partnership  
Barron-Majerik, Lantra Scotland  
Kevin Kelman, NHS Education for Scotland  
Kirsty Summers, The Scotch Whisky Association  
Fiona Harper, Sectt  
Greg Cullen, ITC Training Academy  
Keith Robson, The Open University  
Iain McCaskey, Building Engineering Services Association [BESA]  
Calum McNairney, Scottish Funding Council

# Apologies

Beatrice Wishart MSP  
Michael Marra MSP  
Alan Sherry OBE, CLD Standards Council  
Dale Thomson, Snipef  
Kirsty Conlon, Universities Scotland  
Claire McPherson, Universities Scotland  
Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation  
Marie Hendry, CDN  
Geoff Campbell, Nithcree Training  
Yvonne Wilson, Select  
Kate Young, Enginuity  
Shona Matthews, Chartered Banker Institute  
Ishabel Bremnar, Argyll and Bute Council

# Welcome

The group's Convener, Pam Gosal MSP, opened the meeting and noted apologies.

# Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2024 were approved.

# Presentations

The topic for this meeting was how Community Learning and Development supports skills, education and training across all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland and a presentation was heard from:

- Steven MacLennan, Development Officer, CLD Standard Council Scotland.

# Discussion

Steven MacLennan gave a presentation on behalf of the CLD Standard Council, firstly providing an overview of the Council which was established in 2008 by Scottish Ministers and is the only professional body for community learning and development (CLD) in the world. They represent practitioners across Scotland who work in the areas of adult learning, youth work, and community empowerment and planning. Membership and services are free for practitioners.

He said they have 3,143 members although the overall CLD workforce is considerably larger. He stated that there are around 21,000 full and part-time paid practitioners in CLD roles across Scotland in Public (from the 2018 [Working with Scotland's Communities | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#) report), Private & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector and that practitioners have a wide variety of training and job titles, which makes it difficult

to identify as a profession. He noted that male practitioners are under-represented and there is a lack of diversity within the sector.

He said that the Council's work includes not only professional learning but also national occupational standards, workforce standards and training, further and higher education programmes, Modern Apprenticeships, and research. He noted that CLD qualifications are recognised, not just in Scotland but across the whole of the UK and Republic of Ireland.

In terms of delivery, he said the workforce is focused on a wide range of activity including literacy and numeracy, youth achievement awards, adult achievement awards, ESOL, employability support, family learning, healthy eating, and mental health and wellbeing.

Steven said that KPI data found that almost 14,000 young people and over 2,000 adults achieved accredited awards, estimating that value to be around £4m. Steven said that latest HMIE evaluation of CLD recognised the important role it plays and it's life changing impact on learners. In terms of challenges, it noted that it is not easy to track success in the way that other parts of the education system can and that the way CLD is governed and resourced varies across the 32 local authority areas.

In terms of the policy landscape, Steven said that the landscape is not neat in that CLD covers three Ministerial portfolios. There has also been an [Community learning and development \(CLD\): independent review - gov.scot](#) published in July 2024 and before that a number of strategies directly impact on CLD such as the Adult Learning Strategy, Youth Work Strategy and the Volunteering Strategy. Steven stated that the recommendations of the 2024 review's 20 recommendations are largely accepted across the sector and that these provide a way forward.

A Q&A followed. Stephen Kerr MSP asked if the £4m was a complete data set and how much funding CLD attracts. Steven said that the calculation was based on the Scottish Funding Council's Band A credit price group and taken from the CLD Managers Scotland KPI data of Adults achieving accredited awards and Young People achieving accredited awards so the actual figure could be more – agreements vary across local authorities so it's not easy to track. In terms of funding, Steven said that it's a total of \*£98m across 31 local authorities and that a number of organisations receive grants. \*this data is taken from the CLD Standards Council Budget Reports from Local Authorities: [Council reports and papers | CLD Standards Council for Scotland](#)

Stephen Kerr MSP also asked whether the fragmented structure was a strength or a weakness. Steven said that recent reports have shown that service have been protected but that the lack of clarity around where CLD sits within local authorities is a hindrance as is the archaic language around regulations.

Alix McDonald said that access to funding for part-time learning seems to have shrunk and what if anything might replace that? Steven said that it wasn't just about professional approval as CLD Standards Council offer three levels of approval and that they have worked with Queen Margaret University on a micro credential and Glasgow University deliver a community based Acivate programme which is linked to

articulation. He noted that for their HNC Working With Communities, the part-time fee grant doesn't cover the entire amount as the student is required to pay a portion themselves, and colleges are asked to put in place a payment plan but course fees still needs to be paid which causes tension in the system.

Pauline Ratcliffe noted that SCQF Partnership are supportive of part-time learning that the economy needs but it needs to be credit rated and so it can be transferrable – it's vital to the National Improvement Framework and will be important with an ageing population.

Kellie Zdanowicz noted a whole host of changes to the employability landscape but it feels like a postcode lottery. She asked if the changes have impacted uptake. Steven said yes but that it really depends on the local authority – there is an increased demand for services, but they have to be delivered in a certain way and it doesn't always fit, for example, literacy and numeracy as people need these skills to progress.

Jason Miles Campbell asked how technology affects CLD. Steven said that at the start of Covid, in most local authorities services stopped for five days then transitioned wholly online and people were supported to get onto an platform. He noted that the third sector organisations such as Scouts Scotland engaged with members online during the pandemic and Lead Scotland currently deliver online courses, but this has usually been self-funded by the organisations themselves to enable this capability. He also noted that Glow is not available to adult learners, only schools.

Kevin Kelman noted that the system should meet the needs of local communities as it's a challenge for individuals to access learning.

Pam Gosal MSP asked if it was a challenge to work across three Ministerial portfolios. Steven said that if they had one portfolio and one policy team, that would clarify their position. He said that the recent independent review of CLD provided 20 recommendations which are clear and generally accepted about the direction of travel that needs to happen. He said the workforce is driven and passionate to deliver for Scotland.

## Close

With no other business to conduct, the meeting was brought to a close.