

Draft National Youth Work Strategy

Response from the CLD Standards Council

In setting out a direction for youth work for the next 5 years, the strategy and the implementation plan that is to be attached to it are key documents for the CLD field.

The Standards Council welcomes the Draft Strategy's reinforcement of the Scottish Government's commitment to youth work and to the wider field of CLD as a whole. We see the intention, included amongst the intended outcomes, that "youth work, through the CLD Guidance and CLD Regulations, is firmly embedded within the broader field of CLD within Community Planning arrangements", as a very positive one.

The Standards Council's own main focus in commenting on the draft strategy and implementation plan is on the ambition to "build workforce capacity". Members have raised issues about this and other aspects of the draft strategy that are reflected in these comments.

One overall point that has been raised is whether the draft Strategy is ambitious enough. This should not be taken as a comment on the overall "ambitions" stated, but as an important question about the degree to which the general ambitions have so far been translated into challenging concrete milestones and a framework for practical actions.

Ambition B: we will ensure Scotland is the best place to be young and grow up in.

Comments from members highlighted the importance of working with parents, in particular those whose own experiences of school were negative, and to maximise resources for the earliest possible intervention.

Comment also highlighted the potential for linking up young peoples' development through involvement in youth work and progression into voluntary and paid work in youth work contexts with pathways into employment in the care sector. Inter-generational work provides particular opportunities for these types of linkage. Given the growth of employment in the care sector the opportunities for young people could be significant.

Ambition D: we will build workforce capacity

We see it as fundamental to the success of the strategy and implementation plan that they should, first, clearly embrace the development of a learning culture involving youth workers at all stages of development; and, second, set out key roles and milestones for putting this into practice.

The draft strategy refers (p.13) to building capacity "and the provision of relevant quality training and development". Our view from a Standards Council perspective developed through dialogue with the field is that the emphasis needs to shift from the provision of training and development for and to practitioners to continuing professional development as a partnership between practitioners and employers, in which both have key roles and responsibilities.

Q15 How can we individually and collectively realise this ambition?

By developing a learning culture involving youth workers at all stages of development, including young people as youth leaders and peer educators, volunteer and sessional youth workers, and qualified CLD practitioners working in a youth work context. The means to achieve this include:

- Promotion and support of the use of the i-Develop CPD framework by the CLD Standards Council and all partners, to enable practitioners (in all settings and including part-time, sessional and volunteer practitioners as well as those employed on a full-time basis) to reflect critically on their own practice and take responsibility for their own CPD and employers to support practitioners to do this.
- Support for practitioners to progress through clearly articulated, accessible and flexible learning pathways.
- The use of the Standards Council Standards Mark as a key means of supporting improvement in the quality of CPD opportunities available to youth workers at all stages of development, and in particular at the “first steps” level with volunteers fully recognised as part of the workforce.
- Consistent use of the CLD Competences and Code of Ethics, underpinned by reference to the shared values and principles of CLD, to provide a framework for CPD.
- A greater emphasis on developing opportunities to enhance peoples’ learning through reflection.

By ensuring that training at developmental and degree level supports the building of workforce capacity.

By strengthening the national framework of CPD opportunities available to youth workers at all stages of development, and in particular at the “first steps” level.

By ensuring that workforce development initiatives are inclusive of smaller youth work providers.

Through the development of standards and quality in the provision of fieldwork placements as a key element of training at developmental and degree level.

By making use of relevant CPD materials developed in other contexts involving work with young people, for example materials on management and supervision.

All of this needs to be underpinned by establishing a profile of the workforce, across sectors and settings, based on reliable data, including numbers of practitioners, where they are located, who employs them, the scope of their remits, where there are gaps and shortages, and initial training and CPD needs. The profile may need to be developed incrementally but with realistic plans for comprehensive coverage and maintenance.

Q18 What needs to be the contribution of partners in achieving these outcomes for young people?

Employers and partnerships need to ensure that CPD is an integral part of strategies for and delivery of youth work, including the CLD plans required under the CLD Regulations.

Taking forward action to ensure the continued development of CPD partnerships involving CLD providers across sectors and across local authority boundaries, with youth work issues as an integral part of their agenda and access to a range of opportunities for youth workers.

Ambition E: we will ensure we measure our impact

The development of a profile of the workforce, highlighted under D above, is equally important in relation to measuring and understanding the impact of youth work.

General comments

The Strategy needs to connect with elected politicians and officers in local authorities and elsewhere who may not be familiar with the language of CLD, youth work or in some instances the education world, while having a view about the impact required. The language used in the Strategy should reflect this.