

Why does the Code of Ethics matter?

As CLD practitioners we see ourselves as part of a value-based profession and what we do as underpinned by a set of principles. And we see this as a distinctive feature of CLD practice, central to its effective operations and delivery. The principles and values have been articulated by the [CLD Standards Council](#) and in a variety of statements from the [Scottish Government](#) and others.

However, until recently, there has been no framework for *systematically* relating the values and principles to practice. There was no clear statement about the standards of professional behaviour that CLD practitioners, wherever and by whoever they are employed, should expect of themselves, and that others should expect of them. The [CLD Code of Ethics](#), together with the [Competences](#), provides the framework for thinking about how the values should impact on what practitioners do on a day-to-day basis.

The Code then first and most fundamentally matters because it is a key means of ensuring that the impact of CLD in the lives of the communities, young people and adult learners that we work with is positive and the quality of practice is of the best. Wide and effective use of the Code of Practice, in conjunction with the CLD Competences, is also essential if we aspire to CLD as a professional grouping having a central role in governing our own practice. Without an agreed and recognised reference point for the behaviour and competence of practitioners there is no means for this to happen.

Consideration of the Code of Ethics does not provide an alternative to practitioners' accountability to their employers; it does provide a means of ensuring that this accountability is governed in a way that is appropriate to the nature of CLD, and a point of reference for practitioners and managers in ensuring that employers recognise and understand the ethical basis of CLD practice.

Underpinning all of this, it is also designed to encourage practitioners to consider their own position in daily and ongoing practice contexts. It is not a set of rules.



Points for reflection and discussion

In what ways could it be viewed as important that there is a recognised statement of standards of professional behaviour for CLD practitioners?

To what extent should CLD practitioners as a professional grouping have a central role in governing their own practice?

What issues, concerns and advantages are raised if we consider that the statement of ethics for CLD practitioners should be at the core of our practice?

Consider situations you've been involved in or have observed – when would it have been useful to be able to reflect on recognised standards of professional behaviour for CLD practitioners?

The purposes and uses of the Code of Ethics

Ethics are often described as the standards of behaviour that govern the conduct of an individual or the members of a profession. The Code has a central role in defining and communicating what CLD work is; together with the widely-agreed [values and principles](#) and the [Competence Framework](#) it provides the foundation for improving standards in CLD and for strengthening the identity of CLD as a profession. One of the criteria for registration as a member of the Standards Council is a commitment to the Code.

The Code does not seek to provide a set of rules for the conduct of CLD practitioners. It sets out ethical principles and is deliberately expressed in positive terms to describe what we do. Of course

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this does also provide some strong indications of what we shouldn't do, but the Code has a strong emphasis on the responsibility of practitioners to make their own judgements on conduct guided by the principles of the Code.

The Code can be used to:

- Express the distinctiveness or identity of CLD;
- Articulate the shared value base that we have;
- Challenge, examine and reflect on our practice;
- Promote professional dialogue and understanding;
- Support and inform accountability;
- Offer reassurance and protection, within an informed perspective, for practitioners and for the people we work with;
- Help deal with tensions with other partners and define our limits in partnership work; and
- Support learning for students, new entrants, practitioners and managers.

The Code is intended to be useful to everyone involved in the delivery of CLD: to practitioners, to the young people, adult learners and communities we work with, and to all those with a role in managing CLD.



Points for reflection and discussion

What do you think the most important implications of the Code of Ethics are (in your own context, and more generally)?

Do you think the consideration and application of the Code of Ethics would be problematic in any of the areas outlined above?

Do you have ideas about what other purposes and uses the Code can be put to?

Can you identify any "health warnings" that should accompany use and application of the code?

How the Code of Ethics was developed

The Code was developed using an inclusive, participatory process, designed to ensure that it reflects the reality of our contexts and practice.

Initial work on a draft and an accompanying discussion paper was carried out by Professor Howard Sercombe and Peter Taylor. The draft Code was presented to a meeting of the Standards Council's Registration Committee in January 2010 and to a joint meeting of all members of the Standards Council's committees in March 2010.

An amended version drawing on comments from these meetings formed the basis for a wider consultation that involved eight events across Scotland and giving opportunities for practitioners with a specific focus on youth work, adult learning or community development to participate in a discussion relating the Code to that context. In addition there was an online discussion. For more information on discussion and issues raised, you can download the report on the consultation process here: http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/Registration/Code_of_Ethics/Code-of-Ethics

The Code was amended to take account of comments received through the consultation and the final version was approved by the Standards Council in 2011.

The Council agreed that the ongoing conversation around language, semantics and use of terms had been exhausted. The Code therefore carries a note of suggestion that individual practitioners must assume responsibility for interpreting terms from their own perspectives. This does not diminish the central message of any of the statements within the Code.

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Ethical Practice – Competent Practitioners

As noted above, the Code of Ethics does not provide a set of rules for conduct. Not only are the circumstances and issues that CLD practitioners (probably in common with any professional grouping) encounter too varied and complex for this to be feasible; it is also essential to ethical decision making that the individual takes responsibility for applying a set of principles to their own situation.

The purpose of this learning resource is to assist CLD practitioners, and everyone with an interest in CLD practice, to do this; to use the Code of Ethics to inform, develop and challenge practice; and to promote the use of the Code in their organisation (and with partners). Following on from this introduction, the material is presented in sections as follows:

- What do we mean by “ethics”? Theories, frameworks and professionalism;
- Ethics in CLD – boundaries, accountability and professional identity;
- Using the Code of Ethics in developing competent CLD practice; and
- Embedding the Code of Ethics in practice.

This learning resource provides material that can be used in a variety of ways. It provides information that should be helpful in thinking through how to use the Code of Ethics. There is a range of material from which you can select: to stimulate individual reflection; to promote discussion as part of a team, partnership or other meeting; or to provide the focus and content for a CPD session.



Key learning

What do you see as the main reasons for having a code of ethics for the CLD practitioner base?

In what ways is a statement of professional behaviours for CLD practitioners expressed through a Code of Ethics useful and important for you and your colleagues?

Do you have areas of concerns in relation to the Code of Ethics for CLD? What are they, and how do you think they could be addressed?

Points you record at this stage can form a point of reference as you use other sections of this resource.