

Introduction

The Big CLD Blether was an online discussion session with over 90 practitioners from the Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector, hosted by Education Scotland and The CLD Standards Council for Scotland. It was part of a series of one hour virtual events to support practitioners from across the education system to connect online ([#ESBigBlether](#)).

The themes for the CLD session were:

Theme 1 - Operational challenges - eg Redeployment or furloughing of staff; transferring services online etc.

Theme 2 - Engagement and learning - what's working well?

Theme 3 - Supporting the health and wellbeing of CLD participants and staff.

Theme 4 - Looking forward - CLD engagement after the lockdown.

Theme 1: Operational Challenges

Summary of questions from participants (24):

1. How are CLD practitioners engaging vulnerable learners during lockdown and beyond
2. What summer provision are CLD practitioners involved in?
3. How are CLD practitioners taking account of social distancing requirements in their planning?
4. What approaches are being taken to engaging communities during lockdown?
5. How are we planning to work with schools during the recovery phase?
6. How are we supporting CLD staff?

Contributions:

- Vikki Carpenter - Aberdeenshire Council CLD Vikki spoke about: Engaging vulnerable learners: specifically about our online ESOL, literacies and person-centred delivery successes; Supporting CLD staff with redeployment, and other LA staff who have come to CLD for online support about mental health and wellbeing due to their redeployment.

- Jim Duffy - The Awards Network. Jim spoke about the role of youth awards in supporting summer provision and partnerships with schools; the challenges of social distancing for many awards providers (eg outdoor learning providers); and the need for staff support and training
- Jackie Howie - Learning Link Scotland. Jackie spoke about the challenges of engaging vulnerable adult learners and support for third sector staff.
- Angela Morrell - Connected Communities in North Ayrshire Council. Angela provided an overview of CLD's response in North Ayrshire; how they are engaging communities in a range of ways; and planning with schools for the recovery stage. 'Virtual community centres' being developed.

Key points from discussion (Facilitated by John Galt; Susie Bissett; Colin Ross)

- Important to recognise that CLD providers are making huge contributions to support the changing needs of learners and communities.
- Youth awards like Saltire Awards are being widely used to recognise young people's volunteering during the crisis.
- Staff are involved supporting accredited learning for young people and adult learners
- We also know that many CLD organisations are dealing with significant pressures – some local authority CLD staff have been redeployed; some 3rd sector and college staff have been furloughed; some 3rd sector organisations are facing financial challenges; CLD organisations realigning services to deliver remotely; plus there is a real need to recognise and support the health and wellbeing of staff as well as learners.
- There is a wide range of different digital platforms being used to engage different learners in different activities. For example, Midlothian Council are engaging young people through Facebook, Encore 360 and Discord. Some local authorities have been very cautious about giving staff permission to use ZOOM. Sharing guidance, practice examples and training for staff all important.
- CLD workers are involved in school hubs in some areas. There has been professional appreciation evident of the skills of CLD staff. It is also important that CLD practitioners are being deployed in ways that use their skills to engage vulnerable learners.
- Even with the pressures they are under, many CLD practitioners are welcoming online opportunities (local and national) to stay connected with each other.

Resources to share:

- Youth Scotland Post Lockdown Readiness Guide
<https://youthscotland.org.uk/media/1866/youth-scotland-post-lockdown-readiness-guide-25-5-20.pdf>
- Digital Learning Scotland: <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/digilearn/>
- Digitally Agile CLD resources: <https://youthlinkscotland.wixsite.com/daclcd>
- Youth Scotland: Hi5 Award at Home: Hi5 during Covid-19: <https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/awards/hi5-awards/>

Theme 2 - Engagement and learning - what's working well?

Summary of questions from participants:

- Digital Platforms – which are being used, where are the challenges and what is working well?
- Digital Infrastructure – challenges and are there any solutions?
- Engaging and upskilling volunteers in using digital approaches
- Off screen resources – what is working well, are there any examples to share?

Contributions:

- George Cherrie – Youth Scotland. Awards Network toolkit activities
- Theresa Marsili – Stirling Council. Awards in action during lockdown
- Kelly Ross – D&G Council. Youth Work practice online
- Alan Milson – Glasgow Clyde College. Online college courses – what is working well.

Key points from the discussion: (Facilitated by Mandy Toogood; Susan Doherty; Dehra MacDonald)

- Chat pane had some use but generally people seemed to be focussed on listening to the presentation
 - This was mainly used to input technical issues from a few people.
 - Isolation packs for young people – participants keen to have these and Kelly shared contact info to follow up
 - Awards Network – interest expressed to follow up with George re further info.
 - Information re grants via Youth Scotland website was shared to support purchase of data packages for young people.
 - Some discussion around engaging young people who have not been in touch before
- Questions posed on chat pane to presenters:
 - George Cherrie – send out links to resources – these can be added to learning at home wakelet and Scotland Learns National Platform if possible? George will circulate.
 - Will the training for parents and carers cost families after September and if yes, how much? Notional date for revising may be extended but around £5– Zoom Training
 - Kelly Youth work – are the isolation packs being shared nationally? Can be if emails are sent through.
 - Theresa – was there any feedback from the families using the activities? If so, are you thinking of creating a case study? Yes, feedback is good, can be developed into case studies @stir_spyp

Theme 3 - Supporting the health and wellbeing of CLD participants and staff

Summary of questions from participants:

- How can we develop new health and well-being learning content in ESOL and ALN programmes to offer on-going support to learners?
- How can we best support the mental wellbeing of our children now, through online learning, and later, on return to school?

Contributions:

Kirsty Gemmell - CLD Standards Council. Kirsty gave an overview of the Standards Council's survey of CLD practitioners

Ally Hunter - YouthLink Scotland. Ally gave a summary of the views of young people from the *Lockdown Lowdown* survey

June Ford - Youth Work Manager, North Lanarkshire. June discussed youth work approaches to supporting young people's mental health

Emma Whitelock - LEAD Scotland. Emma gave an overview for LEAD learners and staff

Key points from the discussion: (Facilitated by Susan Epsworth; Kirsty Gemmell; Vince Moore)

Supporting the health and wellbeing of CLD participants:

- Youth work organisations are using breakdown of Lockdown Lowdown feedback to inform what they do.
- There is a range of online material to support young people's and adult's mental health (see links below)
- Youth Workers in North Lanarkshire are finding new ways of working with young people including: producing online animations; online 'cookalong' and 'campalong' sessions via social media.
- Youth Awards are being utilised to give routine and purpose to current context and recognise skills of young people
- Importance of maintaining relationships with young people, helping them to feel connected and have some routine to their day.
- LEAD staff have found that learners didn't necessarily want to learn but wanted to speak to people – so have extended befriending across whole of Scotland
- There is a focus on supporting young people through street work. Need to move quickly on this. Effective risk assessment and partnerships required (eg with Community Safety staff)
- There is a concern about how national and local staff can support autonomous / independent youth group management committees to ensure that they follow national guidance as we emerge from lockdown

Supporting the health and wellbeing of CLD staff:

- There have been positive and negative impacts on CLD staff during lockdown. For example: Pros – more flexible hours; greater access to technology (can be good and bad); increased sense of team. Negatives – feeling constantly on call, need to be at a screen all day; lack of informal contacts with colleagues
- You can't have a CLD service without supporting the health and wellbeing of staff. Staff's health and wellbeing has to come first
- Staff wellbeing support at LEAD– virtual coffee sessions; individual support; regular contact from management really helps people feel they can actually step away from the screen; provide CPD support and draw on all staff's experience. LEAD is offering free cyber resilience courses
- The increasing importance of effective CPD: We all need the tools AND the skills to do our jobs
- Peer support is important
- Keep getting feedback from staff and learners – eg what digital platforms are they using? Ask them!
- Focusing on effective risk assessments of post lockdown activities are important for staff & young people
- There are real concerns for the health and wellbeing of staff and learners as we move out of lockdown. Stress, workload etc

Resources to share:

- Standards Council survey results: <http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/the-cld-response-to-covid-19-survey-results-from-wave-1/>
- Link to Standards Council survey wave 3 (open):
<https://meet.google.com/linkredirect?authuser=0&dest=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.smartsurvey.co.uk%2Fs%2F6R65JN%2F>
- Lockdown Lowdown Survey results Breakdown: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/6R65JN/>
- YouthLink et al – resources to support children and young people:
<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/4455/covid19adviceforsupportingchildrenandyoungpeople-1.pdf>
- iDevelop: <http://www.i-develop-cld.org.uk/login/index.php>
- Public Health Scotland Resources to support mental health: <http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-topics/mental-health-and-wellbeing/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health>
Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk> Clear Your Head: <https://clearyourhead.scot>
- CLD Code of Ethics: 12 - Self Care: http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Code_of_Ethics_2017.pdf
- LEAD Scotland COVID info including free classes in online safety: <https://www.lead.org.uk/covid-19-information/>
- N Lanarkshire Youth Services Mental Health animations: <https://www.facebook.com/NLCYouthwork/videos/716909212182874/>
- Education Scotland: Health & Well Being resources: <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/scotland-learns/health-and-wellbeing-activities>

Theme 4 - Looking forward - CLD engagement after the lockdown.

Summary of questions from participants:

1. Community Development/Empowerment
2. Future opportunities for CLD
3. The role of the CLD workforce

Contributors:

- David Allan – SCDC: Community Development/Empowerment
- Darren Gillan YMCA Paisley: Future opportunities for CL
- Liz Fergus – North Lanarkshire Council: The role of the CLD workforce

Key points from the discussion: (Facilitated by Nicola Sykes; Marion Allison; Laura McIntosh)

1. Community Development/Empowerment

- How do we ensure that CLD continue to support our communities as we move forward?
- How do we sustain the communities activities and keep that drive when we enter the new normal?
- Our role in supporting established community groups to restart and evolve when COVID recovery requirements will put huge demands on volunteers.

Overarching needs are for:

- Support to (re) build community infrastructure
- Support to (re) build collaboration across communities and between community/voluntary/ statutory sector

Specific Responses:

- There will be 3 kinds of CLD responses that will help to address the above questions:
 - *Practical support:*
Training/mentoring support; access to resources (space, equipment, etc.); advice/support for funding bids; support for collaborative practice

- *Analysis/needs assessment:*
Identifying gaps, areas of weaker infrastructure, groups that need more support
- *Participation/involvement:*
Support for (re)establishment of participatory democracy – e.g. for PB processes that can help to drive community-led rebuilding, development of community-led action planning, and increased involvement of community in local governance

Levels of Support:

- Most of this will be at the local level but there will be an increasing need for CLD to enable wider collaboration (local authority-wide, regional, and national) to support the 'building back better' efforts.
- Collaboration between CLD, TSIs, CD Trusts, other Vol Sector, is necessary to ensure that resources are deployed to best effect.
- CLD has a catalyst role to support this process.

2. Future opportunities for CLD

- What does the future of CLD look like post lockdown?
- How can we plan to utilise our skills and knowledge (old and new) to full potential when the unlocking starts?
- Ideas what the new landscape will be and new priorities
- What will CLD look like post Covid-19?
- Keen to hear of any 'recovery planning' that colleagues are undertaking

- Likely to be lots of remote working, reduced running costs?, adjustment to delivery of learning in the digital age. Reference to International Security Journal (ISJ) article [[link here](#)]. Is there a role to support young people to learn skills as hackers to rebuild systems stronger?
- A recent [Google Mobility](#) report for the UK [[link here](#)] highlighted that 1.7 million people regularly worked remotely before COVID, and 8 million who worked at home occasionally. During lockdown 22 million people approx.(a third of the workforce) are working from home and not occupying offices or community centres. Impact of these changes are immediately visible on the ground. Coming out of lockdown – what could this mean - much higher percentage now engaged in distance interaction, with some services moved online.
- We can deliver a certain amount of CLD engagement from our houses, and there is a need to look at impacts of this on CLD practice and on outcomes for learners as we move forward?
- 57% working population no longer visiting their offices. Some may say, 'if I can work from home now, why not in the future?'- We may see a cultural shift, with online working increasing as lockdown continues.

- So, how do we support frontline activities in communities remotely? Case by case and what we deliver needs to be for the individual and needs led.
- Tackling isolation is likely to be a major issue going forward as well as mental health. Also digital exclusion is a major ongoing issue, as is limited employability opportunities for young people – firstly the impacts of Brexit and then COVID on the labour market. There are likely to be fewer opportunities in the job market in the near future.
- Rory Brown, Govan Housing Association, has quickly adapted services to go digital to meet immediate needs, with engagement informing longer term needs.
- Paisley YMCA - Makerspace@Home Kit: Young people, youth work staff and volunteers have all been working remotely to develop the makerspace home kit. The idea behind the kit is to closely replicate the experience and learning that young people undertake at our makerspace which is a DIY environment where young people come to develop and learn how to use hardware around the context of Science, Technology Engineering, Arts and Math's or (STEAM). The kit consists of a microcontroller such as a BBC Microbit or mini computer, activity sheets, electronic components and other maker materials. Through a dedicated help line to support young people through their challenges the kit is dropped off at their home during the lock down period so that young people can still take part in makerspace activity without being on our premises. The kit does not require WIFI or an Internet connection and has been designed specifically for digitally excluded young people.

3. The role of the CLD workforce

- How do we get CLD recognised nationally and locally as a core part of Scottish Education... it's not all about Teachers and Schools... #inthistogether
- How do we best support the most vulnerable families in the recovery phase following the COVID-19 pandemic?
- In what ways will CLD engagement differ after the lockdown? Have new and stronger partnerships been formed throughout the pandemic and will these new partnerships continue?
- How does CLD look moving forward and can we maintain some of the new processes we have put in place during lockdown?
- CLD is a core part of education – stronger partnerships at community level and across others such as Social Work and NHS - how will they continue and improve. How do we move forward as a body.
- Challenges present opportunities and highlights CLD adaptability workforce. CLD has to chase funding, goes through cuts but has responded to this crisis in positive manner and has changed delivery.

- CLD recognition should be continued to be highlighted. Strategic level. Various different CLD areas now, in Education Scotland, CLD Team in SG, Alan Sherry at Standards Council.
- Also, ensure we need to highlight the good work, both at local level and highlight this through the system, upper management, across CLD Partnership context. We need to 'blow our own trumpets' to promote the work we are doing across all sections, managers, key organisations, strategic leads and ground level staff.
- So many opportunities for CLD – outdoor learning, blended learning with schools, various accreditation offers, broad range of services, showcase ourselves.
- Digital excluded- dropping off craft activities for families, reaching out to socially isolated families, is an effective means of maintaining contact

Opportunities to share and learn from CLD impact during the crisis

- How do we communicate the value of good CLD work and the contribution it can make in the work to rebuild better as we emerge from the crisis
- How can CLD best listen and learn from all the fantastic work communities have been doing for themselves during this crisis?
- How do we make sure the work of CLD within the emergency response to Covid 19 is captured and recognised going forward.

Implications for practice

- How to move forward as a CLD service when restrictions are still in place and not everyone is online
- What will the future for adult literacies and employment look like?
- How will Adult Learning develop as we move beyond through and beyond Covid_19?
- How do you see the classroom or CLD and Adult learners going forward ?
- What will the CLD classroom look like when we return after lockdown?

Questions for Scottish Government

- COVID has arrived in midst of the 3 year planning cycle for the CLD Regulations. Given that most authorities will have to start planning and commence engagement for new CLD plans at the end of this year will additional time be given to undertake this thoroughly?
- Will there be any additional funding to support Post Covid CLD recovery available from Scottish Government ?
- Will funding support be given to redevelop the role of youth work and CLD to work with families over weekends and holiday periods to improve health and wellbeing and close the attainment gap.

Evaluative feedback:

Feedback from participants:

- 34 online evaluation forms were completed on the day.
- Overall rating of the event (scored out of 5) was positive: 32/34 respondents rated the session 3/5 or above.
(2/5 = 2; 3/5 = 10; 4/5 = 14; 5/5 = 8)
- 20 participants found it *Extremely Easy* to access the online platform; 11 found it *Somewhat Easy*; 2 found it *Difficult*; and 1 found it *Extremely Difficult*
- The aspects that participants enjoyed most included: Re-connecting after working from home (2); Hearing others experiences/thoughts/views/issues/pieces of work going well (22); the structure and content of the session (4); the digital platform used (3)
- Suggestions to improve the session included: More time (14); Focus on fewer themes (4); Time for networking (2); More detail about contributions in advance (3); a youth work session (1); a theme for digital issues (2).

Feedback from facilitators - debrief meeting on 29/5/20

- Our general view was that it went very well and that it was extremely useful to have PLL assistance with the session.
- Although there were one or two technical glitches for a few participants, on the whole we thought that the Google Meet platform worked well.
- I think that we experienced some of the same issues about the Big Blether format that others did. Our contributors were great but it did feel like a lot of content in one hour. This cut down on the opportunities for discussion and so a lot of participants ended up being a bit passive. Time didn't allow too much asking questions so the main focus was on the inputs which had been pre prepared.
- A few participants who didn't have the list of contributors in each group said that they found it hard to navigate their way to the group they wanted.
- We're keen for CLD Blethers to continue to be a partnership between ES and the Standards Council. Like other teams, we'd prefer to make use of the Wee Blether model in the future.

CLD Big Blether 28/5/20: Questions from Participants

Theme One: Operational Challenges

Engaging vulnerable learners during lockdown and beyond

1. How can we work together to support those who need it the most?
2. It has been difficult to contact some vulnerable young people due to digital barriers, what ways in the future can we promote digital inclusion and overcome these issues?
3. How are teams linking with the wider population of young people and community members who are not registered on their programmes or known to community workers?
4. How can we encourage young people to engage online when they have historically not engaged with services?
5. How easy is it to work with learners digitally if we haven't yet formed a face to face relationship?
6. What are the best ways to engage with people not on social media
7. As many of our core business has moved on to digital platforms, we need to ensure we are supporting digital access for our learners
8. What examples are there of ESOL or EAL online learning?
9. What is the long term impact of engaging young people who are resistant to mainstream services ?

Summer provision

1. What are other CLD workers/organisations planning to do to support families over the summer holidays?
2. How to support your people during the summer under social distancing ?

CLD and social distancing

1. What will be the priorities for CLD in recovery and how will we manage face to face work in a socially restricted manner
2. In a time of physical distancing, how we engage effectively with people who remain locked behind their doors?
3. How can we operate safely in youth club physical settings?
4. As practitioners, how do we encourage our community volunteers to become active members again after lockdown, when many will have many insecurities and fears about their own safety?
5. What are the implications for the physical spaces that CLD activities take place in?

Engaging communities

1. How are we engage with communities in the "new normal"?
2. How can we ensure that the community engagement standards are maintained given the communications obstacles within local authorities.

Working with schools during the recovery phase

1. How can youth work and schools most effectively collaborate to support young people during the transition from lockdown?
2. Interested to hear how systems will change and adapt to support & engage parents around helping children learn and increase resilience in families.

Supporting CLD staff

1. Keen to hear examples of practice in supporting staff CLPL in these times
2. It is clear from the most recent national CLD survey that digital learning was a skills gap for practitioners. Is this crisis an opportunity to take on the challenge to upskill the workforce and adapt some of our practice?
3. How best do we support practitioners to retain skills in CLD when many are seconded to other work or furloughed?
4. How have you managed the redeployment or furloughing of key CLD staff?

Theme Two: Engagement and Learning

1. What online platforms are people finding easiest to use and most successful for engagement of learners?
2. Has anyone developed any online sessions for Capacity Building/community development
3. What are the big positives that have come out of working from home for you?
4. What are the best platforms to use for online learning?
5. Can CLD not be given a version of GLOW to allow Adult Learners and Young People to work with CLD. Currently the requirement for a PVG for every adult accessing GLOW restricts it to workers and school staff. It also stops school leavers working with other young people in the same groups.
6. Evolving our digital offering into more accessible and meaningful ways
7. How best to encourage parents with their Gaelic Language learning at home?
8. Learning in the community
9. Overcoming challenges of online learning. CLD offers more than learning and it is about human connection and tackling social isolation.
10. Moving CLD services online - what is out there that is working well
11. What digital platforms are considered secure , and user friendly for online learning and community engagement, and what examples are there of these being used successfully by local authorities.
12. What digital skills areas would practitioners like support/training on?
13. Delivering learning to learners without internet access

14. How is Scottish Government supporting the infrastructure to enable access to digital learning and support in our most disadvantaged communities and homes?
15. Which online platforms are considered safe to use in order to deliver online learning?
16. How can we work together to develop and deliver CLD innovatively using digital platforms? What are the platforms recommended to deliver CLD safely while complying with GDPR? What are the innovative approaches to a phased return to CLD provision?
17. Which online platforms are considered safe to deliver online teaching?
18. How do we support learners who do not have on line devices or the ability to use them?
19. How are CLD providers using online systems to deliver services?
20. how do we overcome IT obstacles both learner and organisational
21. How to we deliver Gaelic learning in the community post Lockdown ?
22. Is remote teaching the best option for community education?
23. Barriers to social media use
24. possible hosting of VLE's for digital learning
25. Anything around guidance on online learning - joint approaches
26. How can we as CLD practitioners engage people who have volunteered in their community for the first time during this crisis and involve them in the community in the future? Given that many may not be interested in 'traditional' groups such as tenants and residents or community councils
27. Should we be putting more effort onto providing resources pupils can use off screen?
28. What plans can we put in place for learners with no internet access?
29. How can we address the digital divide during and after lockdown so that we don't further disadvantage learners without access to the Internet?
30. Is there a possibility of a CLD Sector national platform for online learning? Something like Moodle or Google Classroom rather than a mix of free and paid platforms leading to lack of portability of learning resources and also confusion for learners.

Theme Three: Health and Well Being of learners and staff

1. Developing and integrating new health and well-being learning content in ESOL and ALN programmes to offer on-going support to learners.
2. How can we best support the mental wellbeing of our children now, through online learning, and later, on return to school?

Theme Four: Looking Forward – The role of CLD in the recovery phase

1. How do we get CLD recognised nationally and locally as a core part of Scottish Education... it's not all about Teachers and Schools... #inthistogether
2. How do we communicate the value of good CLD work & the contribution it can make as we emerge from the crisis?
3. How can we plan to utilise our skills and knowledge (old and new) to full potential when the unlocking starts?
4. What will the CLD classroom look like when we return after lockdown?
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8. How do we sustain the communities activities and keep that drive when we enter the new normal?
9. COVID has arrived in midst of the 3 year planning cycle for the CLD Regulations. Given that most authorities will have to start planning and commence engagement for new CLD plans at the end of this year will additional time be given to undertake this thoroughly?
10. Will there be any additional funding to support Post Covid CLD recovery available from Scottish Government ?
11. What is our role in supporting community groups to restart & evolve when COVID recovery requirements will put huge demands on volunteers.
12. What does the future of CLD look like post lockdown?
13. How to move forward as a CLD service when restrictions are still in place and not everyone is online
14. Ideas what the new landscape will be and new priorities
15. Will funding support be given to redevelop the role of youth work and CLD to work with families over weekends and holiday periods to improve health and wellbeing and close the attainment gap.
16. How do we make sure the work of CLD within the emergency response to Covid 19 is captured and recognised going forward.
17. How can CLD best listen and learn from all the fantastic work communities have been doing for themselves during this crisis?
18. How do you see the classroom or CLD and Adult learners going forward ?
19. How do we best support the most vulnerable families in the recovery phase following the COVID-19 pandemic?
20. How will Adult Learning develop as we move beyond through and beyond Covid_19?
21. What will the future for adult literacies and employment look like?
22. Keen to hear of any 'recovery planning' that colleagues are undertaking
23. What will CLD look like post Covid-19?