

**‘Working and learning together to build stronger communities’  
- community learning and development working draft guidance**

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Executive’s consultation on ‘Working and learning together to build stronger Communities’ - Community learning and development working draft guidance (“the Draft Guidance”).

YouthLink Scotland is the national youth agency for Scotland. We promote the well-being and development of young people in a local, national and global context. We are a national voluntary organisation serving the needs of young people, and those who work with them. YouthLink Scotland believes that the aims and objectives of the Draft Guidance could, if properly resourced by the Scottish Executive, make a significant contribution to community learning and development in Scotland.

**This response has been produced following consultation with 32 local authorities and 45 national voluntary youth organisations**

In summary, our key points are:

- **The focus on work with those who are disadvantaged should not be at the expense of ‘mainstream’ CL&D work: we should work to a baseline entitlement approach.**
- **YouthLink Scotland will work with its members (both statutory and voluntary) to shape the contribution of youth work and youth services in relation to the development of effective public services and in building social capital.**
- **Changes be made to the national priorities in order to better reflect the relevance of the priorities to different target groups.**
- **Changes be made to the definition of community learning and development with the addition of the phrase ‘of all ages’ to ensure that young people are clearly identified as a core part of communities.**
- **Changes be made to ensure the active involvement of the voluntary sector in Community Learning Partnerships.**
- **A clear framework outlining the hierarchies and relationships of all of the plans, including youth strategies, be included within this document**

For ease of reference YouthLink Scotland’s comments are in response to the consultation questions set out at the end of each section.

## SECTION 1

### **Emphasis attached by the Draft Guidance to prioritising support towards disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities**

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the Draft Guidance's recommendation that Community Planning Partnerships ("CPPs") should focus their community learning and development support on "disadvantaged individuals, groups and communities, and those who are at risk of becoming disadvantaged", while extending this support to all communities across Scotland. We strongly believe, however, that this must not be at the expense of mainstream youth work and that there is a need to look to models of entitlement which ensure baseline provision for all young people. The Scottish Executive must, therefore, confirm the level of resources that it intends to make available to the CPPs to ensure that they can meet these obligations effectively.

### **The Four National Priorities**

YouthLink Scotland takes the view that the four national priorities should be located more clearly within context set by the Scottish Executive in its Regeneration Statement:

- to support and deliver effective public services, and
- to build social capital.

We would like to suggest a rewording of the national priorities as follows:

1. To raise the standards of achievement in learning for individuals, groups and communities of all ages in the core skills of literacy and numeracy and in information communications technology (ICT) and through community-based vocational and non-vocational lifelong learning opportunities. We aim to increase levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT.
2. To support the personal, social and educational development of individuals, groups and communities of all ages. We aim to increase levels of personal, social and educational ability.
3. To give individuals, groups and communities of all ages the organisational skills they need to tackle issues of concern in the community. We aim to increase levels of community involvement to tackle issues of concern.
4. To support individuals, groups and communities of all ages to work with and influence the planning and delivery of services at local and strategic levels. We aim to increase the effect the community has on planning and service delivery options.

These changes take into account concerns about young people being seen as an 'add-on' and not an integral part of communities, as well as addressing specific concerns about the role played by youth work in relation to literacy, numeracy and ICT. This will recognise the concerns of many employers, who are increasingly finding that young people are entering their employment with poor literacy and numeracy skills. Acknowledging this factor in the national priorities will help to ensure that the Draft Guidance has a positive impact on the lives of young people.

The statement in section 1, paragraph a, should be adapted, making the inclusion of young people within the term ‘individuals, groups and communities of all ages’ clear.

YouthLink Scotland takes the view that the national priorities must recognise, and be placed in the context of, the significant contribution which young people make as members of their communities. The Draft Guidance should also be amended to reflect the recent commitment given by Peter Peacock MSP, the Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services, in response to amendments tabled to the Local Government in Scotland Bill on behalf of YouthLink Scotland. At Stage 3 of the Bill the Deputy Minister gave a firm commitment that the guidance on community planning produced by the Scottish Executive for local authorities would include a specific reference to the need for local authorities to consult and co-operate with young people and youth work bodies during the community planning process through which they will now be expected to deliver public services. Given that the Draft Guidance is intended to support the community planning guidance, the Draft Guidance should highlight that, following the Deputy Minister’s commitment, the community planning guidance will require local authorities to consult and co-operate with young people and youth work bodies in initiating, maintaining and facilitating the community planning process.

### **SECTION 3**

#### **Whether the guidance provides an effective basis for making sure that there is a link between Community Learning and Development Planning, Community Planning and other development plans?**

The Draft Guidance outlines a wide range of plans, which suggests that there is a real danger of replication. To avoid this, careful thought must be given to ensuring that the Best Practice which has emerged from local community learning plans is taken up by the CPPs. We would also suggest that a clear framework outlining the hierarchies and relationships of all of the plans, including youth strategies, be included within this document

#### **How strategic and local partnerships are made up and sustained**

YouthLink Scotland believes that, in order to promote sustainable strategic and local partnerships, it is crucial that sufficient time is made available for such partnerships to be formed. In this respect, where any plan requires the involvement of a variety of partners, it is crucial that the capacity of those partners is taken into account. Reflecting this, voluntary organisations within a local authority area may be totally dependent on volunteers, and lack full-time staff able to attend meetings of the partnership. Local authorities must, therefore, give careful consideration to how they can best involve voluntary organisations in strategic and local partnerships, and to support community involvement across a wide range of service planning and delivery as envisaged in Section 3, Paragraph O of the Draft Guidance.

In section 3, paragraph R, we would suggest details of the types of methods which local authorities should use to enable effective involvement in partnerships, such as virtual networks and evening meetings, rather than suggesting that they simply do not have to attend.

We would also suggest that reference is made to the Scottish Executive's review of policies to promote the Social Economy which places great emphasis on the role of the voluntary sector.

**Whether the guidance provides an effective basis for making sure communities and users are represented on strategic and local partnerships?**

Section 3, Paragraph S, states:

*“...we expect that the local authority will provide the lead role, through its community learning and development service, with regard to setting up and maintaining partnership working at both levels”.*

YouthLink Scotland considers that the Draft Guidance is too vague about how this will work in practice. Clear guidance should be provided regarding how communities and users will be represented on strategic and local partnerships.

Furthermore, given that local authorities will be expected to take the lead role in this process, more information must be provided about the support that will be provided by the Scottish Executive to local authorities to make this a reality. YouthLink Scotland's fear is that the smaller partnerships and local authorities could struggle to fulfil this role, given the resources it could involve. Against this background, YouthLink Scotland strongly believes that there must be some sort of mechanism which will bring the parties together, and ensure that communities and users are represented on strategic and local partnerships. It is also vital that careful thought is given regarding how to link this mechanism into the over-arching community planning process.

YouthLink Scotland takes the view that local authorities will welcome the statement in Section 3, Paragraph U, that all community planning partners will be required to support the work of the local authority under the community planning provisions of the Local Government in Scotland legislation. This ties in with the input of community planning partners in the Community Learning and Development Strategies outlined in Section 3, Paragraph E, of the Draft Guidance.

**The relationship proposed between planning and priority setting at strategic, local and thematic level**

YouthLink Scotland is an umbrella organisation representing youth work providers from both the voluntary and statutory sectors. This places YouthLink Scotland in a unique position to bridge these sectors, and to play a key role at both the strategic and local levels. YouthLink Scotland can be involved at local level through our member organisations, and strategically by acting as an umbrella organisation for both voluntary and statutory youth work organisations in Scotland.

We have a wide range of member organisations. Our members will not all have to be involved in a proposed partnership if there is another mechanism through which we can deliver a collective response, either through our role as an umbrella organisation or through the appointment of a lead member organisation to represent YouthLink Scotland and its members in a key partnership.

YouthLink Scotland will work with its members to shape the contribution of youth work and youth services in relation to the development of effective public services and in building social capital.

## **SECTION 4**

### **The proposed arrangements for the quality assurance and evaluation of the work of the community learning and development partnership**

Significantly, the Draft Guidance refers to investing in staff costs in the context of community learning and development, but not to community planning. In this respect, local authorities, voluntary organisations and other community bodies will have to have a clear understanding of the different processes involved, and be comfortable with the quality and evaluation processes.

#### **Continuing professional development priorities**

YouthLink Scotland welcomes the emphasis which the Draft Guidance places on continuing professional development priorities. It is, however, vital that the Scottish Executive ensures that appropriate funding is made available to meet these priorities. This is necessary because many local authorities and voluntary organisations do not have the means and resources to meet these priorities, and have actually reduced their commitment to staff training as budgetary priorities have changed.

Section 4, Paragraph E of the Draft Guidance refers to the need to invest in public service staff, and to Community Learning and Development Partnerships “supporting the skills agenda for staff at all levels, including staff and community representatives”. YouthLink Scotland welcomes this commitment to invest in staff working in community learning and development partnerships, which we believe will greatly benefit volunteers by improving their skills and providing them with CPD. This will, in turn, increase voluntary organisations’ capacity to contribute to the social capital within communities, and to help the Scottish Executive deliver its social inclusion agenda. It is, however, critical that the Scottish Executive clarifies who will be investing in the skills agenda, and where. If the local authorities will be expected to assume this responsibility, the Scottish Executive must ensure that the local authority investment in the skills agenda is identified within the local authority grant.

The Draft Guidance must also provide clear guidance on how it will relate to the Scottish Executive’s response to the Community Education Training Review, *‘Empowered to Practice: The Future of Community Learning and Development Training in Scotland’* (‘the Scottish Executive’s Response to the CETR’). We note, for example, that this document links CPD to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (“SCQF”), but there is no link to the Draft Guidance. We further note that

CETR Recommendation No.10 refers to a wide range of CPD priorities, but as with the Draft Guidance there is no mention of the funding which the Scottish Executive will make available to local authorities and voluntary organisations to ensure that these priorities are met in practice.

**The ways in which partnerships could jointly collect management information**

YouthLink Scotland believes that if appropriate quality and evaluation systems are put in place, it will be possible to develop mechanisms that will allow service providers and users to collectively pool and manage information.

YouthLink Scotland is working closely with colleagues in the Scottish Executive in relation to the development of management information. We are in the final stage of our own phase one mapping of youth provision across the sector and care has been taken to ensure complementarity with the work of HMIE and the Development Department.