

Education Scotland/ CLD Standards Council Wee Blether
The Power of Communities in Education Recovery
Wednesday 5th August
Summary Notes

Discussion questions:

1. To what extent has the Covid-19 crisis re-asserted the importance of ‘the power of communities’ in addressing education priorities?
2. How can educators collaborate with communities and with each other to address the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on poverty and inequality?

Pre-session reading:

1. *The Power of Communities* – Jen Mclean, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, June 2020 https://www.gcph.co.uk/latest/news/943_the_power_of_communities
2. *Community, Covid-19, Challenge and Change* – Gormally, Beggan & Coburn, Policy Scotland, April 2020 <https://policyscotland.gla.ac.uk/community-covid-19-challenge-and-change/>

Participants: A mix of practitioners from education establishments, local authorities, community learning and development, third sector organisations and the Scottish Government.

Facilitators: Education Scotland - John Galt, Susan Epsworth (Education Officers, CLD); Karen Pryde (Attainment Advisor). CLD Standards Council - Colin Ross

Key themes discussed:

1. The ‘power of communities’

- There is clear evidence of positive community-led responses to the Covid-19 crisis (Eg those highlighted on [Communities Channel Scotland](#)). There is also evidence of increased levels of volunteering in some communities.
- It could be said that the power of communities has never been clearer. *‘We are seeing communities responding to the crisis in their own unique ways by using their insights of what is needed locally, and organising around the knowledge and skills they have to meet those needs and concerns’* ‘As the COVID-19 crisis continues we must continue to acknowledge the countless acts of kindness, neighbourliness and collective effort which support and keep safe the most vulnerable within our communities.’ (McLean)
- That said, it is important not to romanticise this in such a difficult time for many communities, families and individuals. There is clear evidence that existing inequalities in communities across Scotland are being exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis.
- *‘When we emerge into the ‘new normal’ and whatever that looks like, it is clear that community responses will play a vital role in rebuilding and responding to the new challenges ahead.’* (Mclean)
- What role should education practitioners - in community learning and development and in education establishments – play in supporting local groups and organisations to ‘harness’ or ‘sustain’ community-led responses?

2. Resilience of our communities

- What impact is the crisis having on levels of social¹ and/or cultural capital in communities across the country? How does social and/or cultural capital impact on educational attainment and what are the implications of this for education establishments and practitioners?
- The Covid-19 crisis has clearly created trauma and loss for many. One area of concern is the impact of the pandemic on mental health and how this is affecting some groups much more than others.
- Young people not engaging with school might have been engaging elsewhere – eg youth work. There are also likely to be young people who will have been disengaged from most support as a result of the crisis.
- It is important moving forward to support community resilience and the ability for individuals and groups to deal with change at short notice in an unstable environment. McLean describes taking an asset-based approach to this support to *'respect and elevate the insights and experiences of people – those who have the sharpest focus on what matters most in their lives and in their communities. By understanding a person and the context of their life, it is possible to see how they can contribute to and benefit from the assets and resources of their local community.'*

3. Shaping the curriculum

- There was agreement that learning doesn't just take place in the classroom. Learners personal achievements at home and in their communities should be properly supported and recognised. Some were concerned that wider achievement and activity will be lost as schools focus on 'core curriculum.'
- Remote learning has taken place throughout the pandemic. It is important though to differentiate between 'teaching in a pandemic' and 'blended learning'.
- Some of the blended approaches in planning were really exciting. We might find schools taking these forward to reach some young people in a different way
- There is an opportunity within schools to reshape the curriculum with renewed focus on learner voice/sustainability/global citizenship
- Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a great approach to share power when funding decisions are made in education establishments and community settings. PB is now built into the PEF guidance.
- Partnership working should be how we work all the time – not just in a pandemic.

4. The role of community learning and development (CLD)

- *'To achieve its emancipatory purpose Community Learning and Development needs to be positioned at the heart of policies on community empowerment, addressing poverty and raising attainment.'* (Gormally et al)
- CLD workers have become key workers in the pandemic. They have continued to engage with young people, families, adult learners and community organisations. Examples of innovative approaches have included virtual community centres (North Ayrshire). How can we build on this in the future?

¹ Glasgow Centre for Population Health summarises 'social capital' as: *'the relationships and networks of support that people experience, the interconnections within communities, and the involvement of people and communities in decisions that affect their lives.'*

- [Youth work and schools partnerships](#) have been prioritised within the Scottish Attainment Challenge. Youth work engagement has continued in a variety of ways through the crisis including online and detached youth work. In July the SG committed up to £3m to the youth work sector to support educational recovery.

5. Suggested further reading:

- *Social Capital in Scotland*, Scottish Government, February 2020
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-capital-scotland-measuring-understanding-scotlands-social-connections/pages/1/>
- Participatory Budgeting in Educational Establishments
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/participatory-budgeting-in-educational-establishments/>
- Youth Work and Schools Partnerships Programme: COVID-19 Education Recovery, June 2020
<https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/4627/covid-19-education-recovery-youth-work.pdf>
- Education Scotland Community Learning and Development Wakelet
<https://wakelet.com/wake/b1f028ae-4def-47b4-a0e3-00da1359b1cb>