

Isobel Martin is a practice teaching training officer within Argyll & Bute Council. Along with some of her colleagues she has begun to explore and use the Continuous Learning Framework (CLF). Lately she was asked to share some of her views. Here is what she had to say:

Q - Where did you first come across the Continuous Learning Framework?

A - Although I was aware of the initial launch of the CLF its potential did not become evident until there was a presentation to the Argyll and Bute Local Learning Network meeting on the 21st April 2009.

Q - What was your initial impression?

A - At first I was concerned that this document was yet another initiative to be added to a raft of others at a time of change and pressure in public services. But after visiting it several times I rapidly recognised its huge potential for staff development using logically progressive measurable stages. The actual document is visually well laid out and uses accessible language.

Q - How can you see the CLF being used in your organisation?

A - The personal capabilities provide a relevant starting point for accessing the whole framework in a way which is understandable for all working in a social services setting. The whole document provides a vehicle for shifting towards a learning culture and lends itself really well to staff supervision and Personal Development and Review (PDR). I am particularly interested in developing meaningful service user influence in social work training and service delivery so there is scope for its use in recruitment. I am starting to think about how it can support members of staff and managers where practice may have become stuck or stale, using a solution focussed approach rather than a more managerial response. We are still at an early stage of engaging with the document. It is ideal for supervision of newly qualified workers.

Q - Where do you think you will start?

A - I have already started by selecting components from the personal capabilities for use in a written assessed task for applicants for our Open University BA Hons Degree in Social Work sponsorship scheme. The written submissions have been assessed by carers who found the focus of the personal capabilities extremely relevant. This led to some surprising outcomes but it is something I would like to develop further.

Q - What is it that you like about the CLF?

A - The more I look at the CLF and its potential the more I find it to be the most useful and clever document I have seen for a long time. Its multi dimension model lends itself to a range of environments where it can be applied without organisational stress or cost! It identifies core aspects of social services roles and functioning that can be identified meaningfully on the ground and can be shaped up according to local context. It adheres to the core social work values and, although it needs to be read a few times, it is written in accessible language.

Q - Are there any concerns about using the CLF, would you change anything about it?

A - Most workers do not dwell on the implications of education and development for their professional progression as they are immersed in the business of delivering services. There is therefore a high risk of the CLF being marginalised and I wonder if there should be a stronger expectation for its existence to be known, while leaving agencies to introduce it in ways most suited to their context. Compulsory introduction is a double edged sword in this instance.

Q - What's next, how are you going to continue with the CLF?

A - I am trying to bring it to attention in a number of forums, such as the planned relaunch of the Local Practitioners' Forum, and a service manager colleague is at the same time bringing it to attention through the management system. We hope to hold an awareness raising event in 2010. Ideally we need to consider its use in development of supervision tools and systems.