



Continuous Learning Framework

Embedding Strategy

Background

The Continuous Learning Framework (CLF) was developed by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) and published in December 2008. Its aim is to improve outcomes for people who use social services by supporting the workforce delivering services to be the best they can be. The CLF sets out what people working in social services need to do their jobs well now and in the future and what their employer needs to do to support them.

The CLF is not mandatory but the Scottish Government is keen to see ownership of it across the social service sector as a key resource for achieving the shared vision of a competent, confident workforce which is capable of delivering the highest quality services. The Framework is not however intended to replace the systems and processes which many organisations already have in place but to enhance their effectiveness.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to embed the use of the CLF in practice across the social service sector while encouraging a range of different approaches to using it.

Aims

The strategy has key four key aims:

- to make sure that social service workers and their employers are aware of the CLF and have enough information to be able to make decisions about using it in practice in their own context
- to make sure that social service workers and their employers have access to support that is responsive to their needs and that enables them to make best use of the CLF in practice in a way which is relevant to their own context
- to provide a range of relevant tools to support individuals and organisations to use the CLF in practice

- to evaluate the strategy on an ongoing basis and provide evidence of the impact of the CLF on outcomes for people who use services and their carers at the end of three years.

Scope of the strategy

The CLF is for all of the 164,000 people working in social services in Scotland. It is also for social service workers who are working in multi-disciplinary settings but who may be employed by another agency such as health or education. Indeed there are clear links between the CLF and other relevant Frameworks for staff from other disciplines and so there is considerable potential to support multi-agency working.

The CLF is for all of the seven to eight thousand organisations providing social services in Scotland spread across the public, private and voluntary sectors. These vary enormously in size and the focus of their work. There is evidence to suggest that they are at different stages in their ability to support the continuous learning and development of their staff and their readiness for the transformational change which the CLF sets out to achieve.

The task of embedding the CLF in practice across the social services sector is therefore challenging in scale, complexity and nature and will take time to achieve. This strategy sets out the direction for the next three years (2009-2012). However, it is expected that learning from the continuous review of the strategy will result in the need for changes and so an updated strategy will be submitted for discussion at the Steering Group on an annual basis.

Key principles

The strategy is based on the following key principles:

- a focus on improving outcomes for people who use services and their carers
- partnership working between the SSSC, the Learning Networks and other key strategic partners including the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit (VSSSWU) and the Private Sector Care Home Workforce Initiative
- partnership working with and continuing active involvement of the sector including people who use services and their carers, practitioners, managers, leaders and educators
- links to other initiatives particularly Changing Lives
- sustainability – we need to build the capacity of the social service sector to continue to embed the CLF in practice beyond the life of the project team.

Rationale

The CLF is not mandatory and therefore its successful implementation depends largely on convincing individuals and organisations that they and the people who use their services can benefit from its use. The aim of the embedding strategy is primarily to win hearts and minds. However, a number of regulatory initiatives already in place, including registration by the SSSC and inspection by both the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (Care Commission) and the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA), will provide a source of external motivation.

The CLF was developed through a process of extensive consultation and involvement with the social service sector. As a result, a number of key stakeholders are already promoting the CLF and its potential benefits and several organisations are already using it in practice. It therefore makes sense to build on this successful approach which has already provided some initial 'change champions'.

Individuals and organisations across the sector are at different stages of readiness to embrace the level of change envisaged through using the CLF. A phased approach to engagement will therefore be needed which recognises different support needs and promotes the sharing of experience and benefits of using the Framework in practice.

Finally, the strategy needs to include a robust evaluation process. The approach to evaluation will also be one which encourages engagement of the workforce so that evaluation is not seen as something separate to using the Framework, but rather an integral part of planning to use it for change and development. The approach is further outlined in paragraph 4 of the section on activity below.

The iterative approach taken during the development of the CLF was successful and it makes sense to review the strategy on an ongoing basis. Moreover there are expectations from Scottish Government, the SSSC, and the sector that the impact of the CLF on the workforce and on outcomes for people who use services and their carers can be evidenced.

Key messages

There are a number of key messages about the expected benefits of using the CLF for both individuals and organisations which are set out below. However, the specific benefits for individuals and organisations will depend on how they use the CLF in their own context. Therefore, although we need to publicise the potential benefits, we also need to make sure that we don't communicate set expectations which limit the way the CLF can be used. In addition, some of the key messages are likely to be particularly relevant for parts of the sector and more specific links are made in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan in appendix 1.

The CLF can help social service workers to:

- identify their learning needs in a way which takes account of the demands of their current job role, their own particular areas for development and their career aspirations

- provide evidence of the impact their learning has had on their practice, e.g. for Post Registration Training and Learning
- be clear what they can expect their employer to do to support their learning
- engage meaningfully with and gain the most from employee development processes such as induction, supervision, performance appraisal and personal development planning
- recognise and gain recognition for their progress
- gain recognition for their prior informal learning
- meet their responsibilities set out in the Code of Practice for Social Service Workers.

The CLF can help employers of social service workers to:

- systematically and fairly identify and meet the learning needs of all employees
- prepare workers for undertaking qualifications required for registration with the SSSC
- recruit the right people and retain them
- continuously improve their service
- evaluate their own performance and provide evidence for external scrutiny, e.g. the Care Commission Quality Themes and statements, SWIA Performance Inspection Model
- involve people who use services and their carers in the planning and delivery of personalised services, the development of staff and the continuous improvement of the service
- meet their responsibilities set out in the Code of Practice for Employers of Social Service Workers.

Outcomes

There are a number of key outcomes through which the success of the strategy and the impact of the CLF will be measured. The ultimate aim of the CLF is to improve the quality of outcomes for people who use services and their carers. It will be challenging to measure this as we are unlikely to be able to isolate completely the contribution of the CLF from the other factors which may have impacted on these outcomes. These issues will be explored in the project to scope the evaluation and further refined during the evaluation process. The following key outcome measures, based on the understanding that improving the knowledge and skill of the workforce leads to the delivery of better services, are identified at the outset:

- a year on year increase in the numbers of social service employers who are aware of the CLF
- a year on year increase in the numbers of social service employers who are using the CLF in practice in their organisation
- evidence of improvements in the practice, learning and development of social service workers in organisations using the CLF in practice
- evidence of improvements in the learning culture in organisations using the CLF
- evidence of improved services for people who use them and their carers in organisations using the CLF

- evidence of the impact of the use of the CLF by social service workers and their employers on the outcomes for people who use services and their carers

Activity

The activity through which the strategy will be delivered focuses on four key areas:

1. Information and awareness-raising

Information needs to be widely available and in different formats about the content of the CLF itself, the benefits for social service workers and employers, the support available, how it can be used in practice including examples of current use etc. The main national resource for information will be the CLF website which will be on-line later this year as a dedicated part of the SSSC's website. Information will be made available using text, video, podcasts and tools and will be supported at a local level by the Learning Network websites. There will also be leaflets available and we will seek out opportunities to raise awareness of the CLF in various relevant publications.

Face to face engagement about the CLF was an important part of the development phase and this will continue. This allows issues to be teased out and the various ways the CLF can be used to be explored prior to commitment to use it in practice. The plan is mainly to input to existing national and local events as this makes best use of resources and makes clear links between the CLF and other initiatives. However, it may be appropriate to hold a national event next year focused solely on the CLF to keep up the profile and showcase emerging practice. We will also continue to respond to requests for information from individuals and organisations in partnership with the Learning Networks.

There are some parts of the sector that may be more difficult to engage with. The plan is to identify and work closely with key people who can help us to understand the issues facing these parts of the sector more fully and help us to engage more widely. For example we have recently met with a key stakeholder from the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) who has been enthusiastic about the CLF and has offered to help us to engage with Scotland's colleges. This is set out in more detail in the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

2. Support networks

The Learning Networks have agreed to facilitate support networks for those who are using the CLF in practice in their area. The format of these will vary across the Learning Networks but it is about putting people in touch with each other and facilitating opportunities for sharing practice, areas of concern, solutions to difficulties etc. We are not expecting the Learning Networks to provide intensive support on an individual basis to organisations as they are not resourced to do so.

The support networks will be the main vehicle for identifying 'champions' who can engage others in the sector with their enthusiasm for the CLF, act as mentors and provide examples of using it in practice which can then be shared nationally through the website, events etc. It will be very important that this information is able to be captured by the Learning Networks. A key role for the national staff will be to support the Learning Networks in these activities.

At a national level it is not anticipated that project staff will be able to offer intensive individual support to organisations on an ongoing basis as in the trials given the increasing numbers of people who will be using the CLF. However, it is increasingly clear that individuals and organisations benefit from the opportunity to explore using the CLF in their own context through initial discussions with project or Learning Network staff. Furthermore, there may be some parts of the sector where use of the CLF is less evident. In these circumstances offering targeted support to a small number of organisations may be considered to make sure that there are examples of using the CLF across the sector. We need nonetheless to bear in mind that the strategy needs to be sustainable and therefore use of the CLF in practice cannot become dependent on the availability of dedicated national staff.

3. Development projects

The CLF has been designed to be used in a variety of ways that meet the needs of individuals and organisations in their specific context. It is intended to be relevant and accessible to the whole sector. The potential variety of ways the CLF may be used is exciting. However, it is also recognised that there may well be a number of shared needs for support and resources that can (i) increase the efficiency and effectiveness of using the CLF in specific contexts (ii) ensure that effort is co-ordinated, good practice is shared, and unnecessarily duplication across the sector is minimised.

During the engagement process, a small number of organisations who are interested in developing specific tools and resources will be identified. Project staff will work with one or two of these organisations in the first instance, to develop tools that could form the basis of a 'toolbox' for use by the wider sector. As some of these tools could take some time to develop, their number will be small to start with. However, these could continue to be developed as time goes on. We will work with the key stakeholders to make sure that the process of sharing good practice, tools etc. continues beyond the life of the project team.

4. Evaluation

Evaluation of the impact of the CLF as it rolls out across the sector will be critical. In keeping with the way the Framework has been developed, the evaluation strategy will also seek to engage the sector in the process of evaluation. The initial stage will be a scoping project to research and consult on the areas for evaluation and provide a report which makes recommendations on scope, feasibility and methodology. It is important

that we do not generate a wish list of required data that cannot and will not be collected. However, the aim is to assist organisations to collect a consistent data set that will provide evidence for national evaluation as well as for their own self-evaluation of the impact of the CLF. It is envisaged that some of the evaluation data will be routinely collected monitoring data, for example through an annual survey of employers, while some will be collected through research methods aimed at identifying the views and experiences of individuals and organisations using the CLF in practice and service users and carers. More information is set out in the separate Evaluation Strategy.

Key partners

The success of the Embedding Strategy depends on working in partnership with individuals and organisations across the social service sector. However, there are a number of key partners who have agreed to be actively involved in the activity set out in this strategy and, where appropriate, have included this activity in their own objectives.

1. The Scottish Social Services Learning Networks

The four Learning Networks will play a central role in the provision of information and awareness raising at local level and facilitating support networks for individuals and organisations who are using the CLF in practice in their area. The Networks will also be crucial as a conduit for examples of practice and in the evaluation process. All of the Learning Networks are committed to their role as key partners in the strategy and have included it in their Business Plans as part of their core purpose, aims and objectives. An action plan has been agreed individually with each Learning Network as their approach will vary to take account of local needs and models and to make the most of existing networks and resources.

2. Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit

The VSSSWU is also committed to a key partnership role in embedding the use of the CLF in practice by social service workers and employers in the voluntary sector and this is reflected in their Business Plan. As part of this Plan, the unit will be focusing in the first year of this strategy on medium sized voluntary organisations. As part of their support to these organisations they will offer an audit against the organisational capabilities. Supporting the strategy will therefore help them to deliver their own organisational objectives. The purpose of this audit is to use it as a pilot to develop a tool for use by the sector to use to audit how well they are supporting staff learning and development.

3. Private Sector Care Sector Workforce Initiative

The PCSWI is also committed to a key partnership role in the embedding strategy. As well as raising awareness of the CLF, PCSWI staff have identified a small number of care home and care at home providers who

will be supported to use the CLF in practice thereby generating examples to encourage use by others in this part of the sector.

4. 'Change champions'

Individuals and organisations who are already using the CLF, such as those who were involved in the trials, will be key to the success of the Embedding Strategy. They are already providing examples of the use of the CLF in practice which can be shared across the sector. In addition, some may be willing and able to play an active role in advocating for the CLF, e.g. providing input on their experiences at events, but this level of commitment will need to be negotiated individually and should not be assumed.

Phased approach

Given the size of the sector and the limited resources it makes sense to have a targeted approach across the three years of the strategy. In the first year we will target those individuals and organisations who have expressed active interest in the CLF and capitalise on their innovation and enthusiasm as 'change champions'. From this we will develop examples of good practice, tools and learning which we can then use to support those organisations who choose to become more involved in the second year. Finally by the third year we will have a good range of evidence, support, tools and advocacy by individuals and organisations to foster the involvement of those not yet using the Framework.

However, it is important that we are able to identify and support 'change champions' across all parts of the sector from the outset so that all individuals and organisations can see examples in practice which are directly relevant to them. There are some key parts of the sector where at the moment we are lacking such champions. They will be targeted in the first year and include:

- Integrated services
- Lone workers
- Private sector care home and care at home providers
- Criminal Justice

Resources

The Scottish Government is providing additional resources to the SSSC to take forward this strategy. The SSSC has recruited a senior learning and development adviser, project officer and administrator until the end of March 2011.

The Steering Group will play an important role in taking forward the strategy by providing advice, bringing a perspective from their own role and part of the sector as well as advocating for the CLF.

It is proposed to continue with the reference pool as an important resource to support the project staff by providing a sounding board and a broad range of expertise and experience. One of the early tasks of the project staff will be to review its membership, seek ongoing commitment from existing members where

appropriate and clarify their role in this new phase of the project. It is envisaged that membership will continue to grow and change as required and we will be looking in particular for involvement of individuals from other agencies including health, education and justice.

Key interfaces

- Other Changing Lives workstreams - leadership and management, research and development strategy, personalisation, self-evaluation, and practice governance
- Skills Strategy
- Sector Skills Agreement
- Sector Learning Strategy
- Registration and PRTL
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
- Practice Learning Qualification (Social Services)
- Early Years Framework and career pathways toolkit
- Knowledge Management Strategy and the Social Services Knowledge Scotland portal

Conclusion

This strategy sets out the overall purpose, aims and direction for the next three years but with a particular focus on year one activity. The strategy will be reviewed by the Steering Group in March 2010 and revised as required in the light of progress in the first year.

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