

CLF Evaluation

Interim Report 2010-2011

PERForm Consulting & Development

May 2011

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The contract for the evaluation of the Continuous Learning Framework was awarded to PERform Consulting and Development at the start of 2010.

1.2 The agreed scope of the project included evaluating the CLF by undertaking qualitative 'case study' research in eight social services organisations and supporting self-evaluation across the sector through the production of guidance and other support via SSSC. Two of the case studies were to focus on employers using the CLF to support the development of leadership capacity in their organisation. The others were to select how they would use the CLF to develop personal or organisational capabilities.

1.3 Project management and quality control of the project have been undertaken through regular meetings between the SSSC Contract Manager, the Project Lead and relevant team members as appropriate. Quarterly progress reports have been submitted.

1.4 This report summarises progress during 2010-2011. It is structured under headings outlining the context for the work during this period, project and performance management issues and progress relating to case-study research and self-evaluation guidance. It concludes with key highlights, exceptions and risks and a summary of overall progress.

2.0 Context in 2010-2011

2.1 The financial crisis and subsequent economic downturn placed significant strain on public spending and on social service organisations across Scotland. The organisations identified as case studies were amongst the many that underwent periods of significant reflection, restructuring and

service redesign. Such activities are still underway in some organisations.

2.2 This period of major financial uncertainty has been extremely challenging. Many of the case study organisations have not had the capacity they expected when they committed to be part of the evaluation and uncertainties about their future have been very real. In addition to addressing challenges resulting from the economic crisis, many have also been progressing key policy objectives such as leadership development.

2.3 Against this backdrop, it is striking that commitment to the CLF remained strong and all eight case study organisations are still committed to being involved in the evaluation.

3.0 Project and Performance Management Issues

3.1 The project team have liaised closely with SSSC throughout the project. Regular monthly meetings were supplemented by telephone and email communications as required. Quarterly reports provided written updates of progress, performance and risks. Progress on case studies and self-evaluation support was discussed at each meeting or more frequently if required.

3.2 Business continuity has been maintained despite two significant changes in the project team, one relating to illness and the other to recruitment of a team member to alternative employment. To manage these changes, additional tasks were absorbed by the project lead and the case studies that were previously supported by the two team members concerned were reallocated to remaining team members. The team would like to acknowledge the patience and cooperation of organisations affected by the changes in accommodating their new research support contacts.

3.3 It became clear at a relatively early stage in the project that, for the reasons described in section 2 of this report, progress would be slower than originally planned. The team agreed with SSSC that this would be managed partly by increasing the number of events where case study organisations would meet together. It was anticipated that events would provide a useful forum for discussion about shared interests, would ensure consistent communication of key messages and would serve as a catalyst for, and review of, progress. Due to the difficulties of finding suitable diary dates across all eight organisations, the first two events were run with half the case study organisations at each. At their request, this pattern was repeated for events three and four. At the fifth event, which took place in January 2011, all case study contacts met for the first time.

3.4 As anticipated, events have been well received by case study organisations and they have proved to be an effective mechanism for progressing the project. The sixth event is planned for June 2011.

3.5 The project team met initially with the Learning Networks, CLF Gathering Groups and with other relevant stakeholders such as the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit. It was agreed, in discussion with SSSC, that ongoing attendance at the Gathering Groups should be at the invitation of group members, allowing them to manage their own agenda and set the pace. The Project Lead was subsequently invited to one Gathering Group meeting to talk about evaluation.

3.6 In September 2010, the project team was invited by SSSC to present at the CLF conference. A short, light-hearted presentation, aimed at raising awareness about the case-study evaluation and generating interest in self-evaluation, was made to the conference. Questions and comments were collected at the end of the presentation to provide material for a new 'Q&A' section on the CLF website. The team prepared answers to all

evaluation related questions and submitted these to SSSC along with other comments received. It is expected that ongoing questions and answers will ensure that the CLF website continues to provide interactive support across the sector for self-evaluators.

3.7 The project has delivered on budget for the year 2010-2011. Additional demands necessitated by the delays and changes that have occurred over the period have been absorbed by the project team.

4.0 Case Studies

4.1 Identification of the case study organisations to be included in the evaluation took place in consultation with SSSC. It was agreed that case studies should be selected on the basis of (i) their existing knowledge and commitment to use the CLF (project timescales did not allow for time for plans to be developed from scratch) (ii) their location (to include both rural and urban based organisations) (iii) the part of the sector in which they worked (to include a combination of private, voluntary and statutory organisations) and (iv) the people they served (to include organisations delivering to a range of different service user groups.)

4.2 Eight case study organisations were selected, of which two were to focus on leadership development. The final 'leadership' case study was recruited in January 2011.

4.3 The combination of different recruitment timing, pressures on organisational capacity and varying levels of existing engagement with the CLF, meant that it was a challenge to get all case study organisations to the starting blocks at the same time. Collection of baseline data was significantly behind schedule. The event at the end of January was to be a forum for discussion of plans and progress and an opportunity for organisations to share baseline data, discuss the challenges they had faced and the solutions they had found in collecting it

and move to the next stage of the evaluation. Although not all organisations had been able to progress this far by the time of the event, the event nevertheless helped to crystallise thinking and it was agreed that research contacts would continue to work individually with case study organisations to gather baseline data as soon as possible.

4.4 SSSC agreed that the team would continue to support the case study organisations as much as possible and to do whatever possible to evaluate the CLF in the time available. This impacted to some extent on the timing of self-evaluation materials. The SSSC offered helpful suggestions about additional support they may be able to provide to specific organisations. These offers were passed on to the relevant case study organisations.

5.0 Self-Evaluation

5.1 The initial draft of the guidance for self-evaluators (Guide to evaluating the CLF) was produced and submitted for discussion at the project meeting with SSSC on 6 April 2010. Comments were received in May 2010 and subsequent revisions were made.

5.2 A reference pool for consultation on the document was identified and the draft was sent out electronically towards the end of 2010 to around 20 employees of different organisations across Scotland. Additional consultation took place with an established 'Service Users and Carers' group in Dundee and a single carer from the South East area of Scotland. The draft was also sent to all four Learning Networks and one set of comments was received independently of the electronic consultation.

5.3 Comments made during consultation were generally very positive with most of the Reference Pool reporting that the guidance was helpful and that it would help them to self-evaluate. A number of suggestions for improvement were made

and these will be reflected in the redrafted document. The research team would like to thank all those who took time to read the document and submit comments.

5.4 Further discussion about how to make the document relevant to lone workers took place and SSSC subsequently engaged specifically with this group to support CLF use and evaluation by lone workers.

6.0 Resources to be made available

6.1 It is expected that the guidance (Guide to Evaluating the CLF) will be published in pdf format with an accompanying 'Toolbox' of checklists and templates that can be used to support organisations on their self-evaluation journey. It is hoped that the sector will actively engage with this Toolbox and supplement contents with their own materials as they become available. The Toolbox will include a template for self-reported case study material with the intention that a developing body of practice insight about how the CLF is being used and evaluated will be built over time.

7.0 Key highlights, exceptions and risks

7.1 Key highlights over the year include the following:

- Eight case study organisations have been recruited to take part in the evaluation.
- All case study organisations have demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm for the CLF and equally high levels of commitment to the evaluation project.
- Guidance for self-evaluation has been well received with consultation on the draft showing high levels of enthusiasm and engagement with the CLF.
- The CLF conference was successful in generating a set of starter questions and responses by the project team about

evaluation which will form the basis of the initial evaluation Q&A section on the CLF website.

- Despite challenges to business continuity, and increased demands on project time, the project team continues to progress the project and has delivered on budget in year 1.

7.2 Key exceptions over the year include the following:

- Some organisations were late joining – the last being as late as January 2011.
- The economic downturn has severely affected all case study organisations in different ways.
- Scoping the projects and identifying smart objectives against which evaluation could take place was much slower than expected.
- Some organisations have needed to rethink their evaluation plans as a result of the impact of the economic climate on their organisations.

7.3 Key risks for 2011-2012 include the following:

- Potential that restricted availability of data will limit the strength of the analysis. The project team will minimise this risk where possible through adapting research design to gain maximum benefit from the time available.
- Potential that within the period set for the project, there will be little or no comparative data from self-evaluators. (Likely that self-evaluators will be going through similar challenges as those faced by case study organisations.) Guidance on Evaluating the CLF may prove to be successful at encouraging progress over the longer term, subject to SSSC continuing to keep evaluation high on the agenda for organisations.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 The first year of the project has been characterised by enthusiasm to embrace the CLF, and commitment and tenacity by case study organisations to remain part of the evaluation despite the severe challenges they faced. The challenges have resulted in slower progress than was anticipated and this has presented some risks. However, both the SSSC and the evaluation team have been adaptable to the changed circumstances and have agreed to revise timescales and priorities where necessary to maintain momentum. The evaluation team has worked closely with case study organisations to change plans to meet new circumstances and, at the end of year 1 we remain optimistic that the evaluation report will be valuable. Guidance and a 'Toolbox' of templates, examples, checklists and other documents will be available as an ongoing support for self-evaluation and it is expected that knowledge about how the CLF can be used effectively will continue to build across the sector.

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