

# Building a generation of equal citizens

The Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) is using Learning Disability Week as an opportunity to shine the spotlight on the importance of community. *Libby Clement* tells us more about their plans for the week and how national strategy is supporting a cultural shift towards inclusion

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**S**CLD has been responsible for coordinating Scotland's Learning Disability Week for the past four years, taking place from Monday 13 to Sunday 19 May this year. This is an important chance to raise awareness of the issues faced by people with learning disabilities and to effect positive change. It's a chance to celebrate the progress we've made as a nation, and a chance for organisations from across the third sector to come together with focus and address problems.

We're at a really important point in Scotland's history. The generation of young people with learning disabilities today are the first in our history to grow up with an expectation of living as part of mainstream society – studying, working, volunteering, raising a family and being part of a community.

In the not too distant past, people with learning disabilities grew up in long-stay hospitals and stayed there as adults, hidden away from Scottish communities. That means that a lot of change must happen across society to make sure that this population can feel welcome in the communities they were excluded from for so long.

Learning Disability Week is a great way to support this. Whether that means charities and community organisations taking the time to think about how they could use plain English in their signage, forms and resources to avoid unintentionally excluding people, or schools asking their pupils how they could better support them to reach their full potential, the week offers the space for everyone to consider the ways their community can be open and inclusive.

SCLD has distributed hundreds of free Get Involved packs to support communities across the country to host 'Communita' events – from bunting and posters to teabags and stickers – through which we're encouraging people to take time out to chat about what community means. For young people marking the week, Uno the Unicorn (a mascot for the week who represents the celebration of difference) offers a fun twist on the theme.

The week will also culminate in the annual Learning Disability Awards, where people with learning disabilities will be recognised for the contributions they've made to their communities as volunteers, artists, entrepreneurs and more.

All of this celebration takes place shortly after

the Scottish Government's strategy on learning disability has been refreshed. The updated strategy, 'The Keys to Life', focuses on a whole-system, whole-population and whole-person approach. It is systematic, stretching across local and national government, and the third and private sectors, to ensure the needs of people with learning disabilities are addressed across all relevant areas of Scottish Government policy.

It focuses on the whole life journey, from childhood to older age, addressing key elements of that journey, from health and social care support, to education and the transition period between childhood and adulthood.

Whether through the work of the employability and parenting 'task groups', or the commissioned research which is making up for a lack of evidence about lived experience of learning disability, SCLD is working hard to join the dots between strategy, practice, and public awareness. Ultimately, all of this work aims to ensure our communities are welcoming and inclusive for young people with learning disabilities transitioning to the independence of adulthood.

We're at a crucial point in Scotland's history – we need to get it right and make sure that present and future generations of people with learning disabilities are respected as equal citizens in whichever community they become a part of.

## Benefits of Children in Scotland membership

“Membership of the Children in Scotland network helps to keep us up to date with developments in the sector. This is increasingly important to SCLD, as 'The Keys to Life Implementation Framework 2019 – 2021' is taking a whole-population approach to learning disability policy. Membership of Children in Scotland is very important in connecting these policy priorities to a wider network of professionals within the children's sector to help enact positive change for people with learning disabilities.”

Join SCLD this Learning Disability Week and celebrate people with learning disabilities as a valued part of communities across Scotland.

**Libby Clement is Digital Communications Officer at SCLD**

> Interview by Lisa Clark

> To download Learning Disability Week resources, visit [sclcd.org.uk](http://sclcd.org.uk)

> Visit [keystolife.info](http://keystolife.info) to find out more about the Scottish Government's approach

**“We're encouraging people to take time out to chat about what community means”**



SCLD Tea Party  
Photograph: Peter Devlin