

Further information for the Committee

I am writing to thank you and the Local Government and Communities Committee for inviting me to provide evidence at the committee meeting on the 2nd October 2019. As suggested, I would like to take the opportunity to provide some further information to the committee on some of the points discussed during the evidence session and in our written submission.

Local government pension scheme

Early in the committee meeting, I noted that a lot of charities are experiencing difficulties through being part of the local government pension scheme: it is too expensive for them to be in it, but it is too expensive for them to come out. We have been funding specific work in this area with other partners which might be of interest to the committee as part of its budget scrutiny and its wider consideration of issues facing communities and local government.

Universal youth work

The witnesses were also asked about issues around preventative spend and both me and Ms Quigley noted the impact of the ongoing cuts to youth work. This is an important point and one that I would like to reiterate.

There is a range of evidence showing the value of universal youth work, some of which is cited in Youthlink Scotland's written submission to the committee. However, because the approach is not targeted we are concerned that it is seen as an easy area to cut in the current economic climate.

In its written submission, Youthlink Scotland asserted that:

youth work is the ultimate preventative measure; making cuts to youth work is a short-term approach which fails to recognise the negative impact this will have across wider society in the longer term.

We have seen the challenges that these funding cuts have had on organisations delivering youth work approaches and are concerned about the sustainability of the organisations and approaches, and the impact on the positive outcomes they support. I would urge the committee to consider the importance of universal youth work and other preventative services when making recommendations to the Scottish Government.

We have previously developed a successful partnership with YouthBorders, the Rank Foundation, and Children in Need to support the reshaping of youth work in the Borders. This partnership led to improved collaboration between the local authority and third sector organisations and ensured there was improved access for young people to universal youth work. As a result of our learning from this model, we have been supporting Youth Highland to protect and improve the quality and resilience

of universal youth work services in its area. I can share information about the approach if that would be of use to the committee.

We have also established the Rural Action Fund to address the reducing in the availability of 'open access' universal services for young people. Due to certain funding gaps, this has been identified as an issue that particularly affects rural communities. An impact and learning report for the first two years of this Fund is available on request.

Social Bridging Finance (SBF)

I have also presented the model of SBF as a possible tool for supporting a more sustained shift towards preventative services. Through it, evidence-based models can be trialled in a new area or scaled up with no risk to the public purse; the public sector partners only commit to sustaining the service if it is proven to improve outcomes for individuals or communities.

Having previously had success with different elements of the model (discussed in both my verbal evidence and written submission) we have commissioned a formal evaluation of the model which is currently being undertaken in three demonstration areas. The first report will be produced in January 2020 and will explore some of the successes and challenges in setting up a Social Bridging Finance model. We would welcome the opportunity to share this report and any wider learning with the committee members so please let me know if this would be of interest and I will ensure that it is sent to you directly.

Systems change

In my verbal evidence I asserted that there is a large imbalance of power between local authorities and charities in the current contract approach and that there are different ways of doing things. On 15th October, Collaborate CIC [published a case study](#) about our systems change work with Stirling Council which I had said was forthcoming in our written submission. The case study contains key learning about what can be done with resources when you invest in creating capacity for reflection and relationship-building, rather than focusing solely on services. It is worth highlighting that this approach cannot be confined to the public sector: the third sector and citizens need to be seen as equal partners in helping to shift the systems that they are part of.

In our written submission we noted that Workforce Scotland could be useful partners in supporting and implementing systems change work across Scotland. I would like to add that the Improvement Service is also likely to have a valuable role to play in the system change required to ensure that the services are able to meet the needs of, and improve outcomes for, individuals and communities across Scotland.

Developing partnerships with other funders

Finally, in my verbal evidence I asserted that we are not currently maximising opportunities to develop partnerships between government, local authorities, philanthropic organisations and charities. In my role as vice-chair of the Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF) and the convener of the Scottish Grantmakers Trust I have spoken to various trusts and foundations across the UK and there is an appetite from many to engage more in Scotland. However, they often find it challenging because they do not fully understand the different ways of working and different policy contexts that we have here.

I mentioned that we need to formally invite them to Scotland, to introduce them to key decision makers, and to show them what we do. I would suggest that the Scottish Parliament hosts a formal dinner for cross-party MSPs and funders in spring 2020 to demonstrate how Scotland is different and to highlight the opportunities for partnership working. If the First Minister was also able to attend it would strengthen the message that the Scottish Government and Parliament are willing to engage

with and learn from the third sector and recognise the valuable role that it plays in improving the lives of individuals and communities across Scotland. I can support with the invitations to funders (perhaps around 15 London funders and 10 key Scottish funders), to ensure that those attending have a willingness and capacity to take this forward.

Again, I would like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to share some of The Robertson Trust's relevant knowledge and experience. I have noted above particular areas where I might be able to support the committee in its ongoing work but if you have other questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Kenneth Ferguson
Director