Finance Committee

Prevention

Submission from the Robertson Trust

The Robertson Trust

The Robertson Trust is the largest independent grant-making Trust in Scotland. Every year the Trust funds a wide range of charitable projects across Scotland with our priority areas including Alcohol Misuse, Care, Community Art, Community Sport, Criminal Justice, Education and Training and Health. We aim to improve life and realise potential of people and communities in Scotland, inspired by the legacy of our founders, the Robertson sisters. In 2014/15, the Trust awarded over £18.3M to recognised charities across the country.

The Trust has identified the following aims:

- We will enable people and communities to realise their potential through building relationships based on flexible grant funding which responds to changing needs.
- We will be open to new ways of funding including the provision of additional support as required to help those we fund build capacity and capability. We will also partner with others if the impact for those we support will be enhanced.
- We are committed to understanding the results of our work through monitoring and evaluation, sharing what we have learned and encouraging others to act upon this by changing policy and practice.
- We will seek to be as effective as possible in our stewardship of the Trust’s resources and develop the organisation to enable us to meet our aims.

Barriers and Enablers

In terms of reforming Scotland’s public services towards a prevention basis, from our perspective as a funder the following enablers and barriers exist:

Enablers

- Understanding from Scottish Government that decisive change is needed
- Recognition of the value of charities and the good relationship that exists between Scottish Government, OSCR and the third sector
- Appetite for partnership working between Scottish Government, Local Authorities, other public sector agencies and charities.
- Independent funders are increasingly willing to take a risk and fund innovative approaches and learn from these

Barriers

- Ability to take successful demonstration projects to scale
• Lack of new significant sources of finance and the innovators to develop new financial models
• Mix of restricted and devolved powers leads to confusion over responsibilities
• Timing of major structural changes such as integration of Health and Social Care which can lead to delays with other decisions such as introduction of innovative services.
• Confusion over rules and regulations relating to issues such as procurement, State Aid and government financial rules

The potential role for independent funders in delivering a decisive shift towards prevention

The Robertson Trust seeks to use the learning from the third sector projects we fund to inform policy and practice. We have been acutely aware of the impending public sector funding cuts and have developed proposals for how the resources of independent funders can be used by harnessing the capabilities of the third sector to assist the move towards preventative spend.

In our evaluation of any development we have adopted four key criteria to judge the initiative:
1. It has to be able to attract new investment from private and charitable sources
2. It has to be able to fund high quality evidence based preventative spend services
3. It should minimise the cost to the public purse
4. It must produce sustainable services.

The Public Social Partnership (PSP) is one example of a model which we have been seeking to adapt which has the potential to assist with this agenda. However, there is a need for other models to be developed and trialled which identify other sources of new money which can be harnessed to enable this shift to take place. We are particularly impressed by the Social Impact Investment Partnership developed by Ian Marr at YMCA Aberdeen.

As funders we have not seen many applications for funding of new preventative spend models. We have instead proactively funded new projects on our own initiative which we believe have the potential to add to the debate on preventative services.

Examples of this include the Inclusion Plus PSP in Dundee where along with the City Council, The Robertson Trust and the Big Lottery have invested £800,000 in a demonstration project aimed at reducing school exclusion rates and increasing positive outcomes for young people. We have learnt a considerable amount from this piece of work and its work has enabled Dundee City Council to reconsider its city wide approach to managing school exclusions and taking a preventative approach which now includes no off-site education provision for S1 pupils across the City.

Another major example is our £2m investment in the 6 Reducing Reoffending Change Fund PSP’s which focus on mentor support to prevent re-offending.
Another example of a preventative service we have invested in includes the Learning Together about Making Choices Programme alongside the Jeely Piece Nursery in Castlemilk to support young children with attachment issues and their families.

We are in the process of proactively developing two Women’s Centres which will provide a community based approach to divert vulnerable young women and girls away from negative outcomes.

There is the potential for many more examples of this innovative thinking but at times we have struggled to engage the public sector in these conversations.

We would welcome the opportunity to give more detail on our work or on the enablers and barriers as we see them from our perspective as a funder.