

## Scottish Government Response

**1. It appears to have taken a global pandemic for third sector organisations to be treated as an equal partner in the planning and delivery of services. Is this a view you share? The Committee would also be interested to understand what role the Scottish Government is taking to give third sector in the recognition it deserves.**

### SG response:

The third sector has been crucial in our response to the pandemic and has demonstrated resilience and responsiveness in the face of unprecedented disruption. The sector is an integral partner and the Scottish Government's support over the last two years is one of the factors that has contributed to its resilience. According to SCVO's 2020 estimation, the third sector benefitted from around £500 million in investment across the whole of the Scottish Government.

We want to build on the effective partnerships and innovation we saw during the pandemic as communities, the third sector and local authorities collectively stepped up to look after one another. As we set out in our Covid Recovery Strategy published in October 2021, we are committed to working with our partners in the third sector and our communities as part of an energetic national recovery endeavour. Our commitment in 2021 to a long-term partnership to strengthen collaboration between national & local government and the third sector, following successful partnership work in response to the pandemic is an example of this approach.

Through our commitment to Strengthening Collaboration, we want to see effective partnership work between national & local government and the third sector become the norm. Only by working together can we address the inequalities made worse by Covid and make the changes necessary for the sector in Scotland to thrive. This will be a long term, iterative process that will rely on all partners to break down barriers and recognise opportunities. We are committed to that task and look forward to making progress together.

**2. The Committee welcomes your views in response to the concerns raised regarding the short term funding arrangements for community organisations, and the risk this approach presents to the delivery of Scotland's National Outcomes.**

### SG response:

We understand the challenges that short term funding presents for community organisations and the impact this can have of the ability to deliver positive outcomes in addressing long term poverty and disadvantage. This is why our Empowering Communities Programme provides support for community organisations through multi-year funds.

Our Covid Recovery Strategy, *For a Fairer Future*, has a clear vision to address the inequalities made worse by Covid, to make progress towards a wellbeing economy, and to accelerate inclusive, person-centred public services.

We are determined that the Scotland that emerges from the pandemic is more progressive, more inclusive and more equal, and that people and communities feel valued, included and empowered to claim their human rights.

Government cannot deliver this alone—we have to work together across the public, private and third sector to make the best recovery we possibly can. The strategy includes this commitment:

“Key to the resilience of communities has been the action taken by communities themselves. We will build on this to ensure that resilience can be sustained as part of our recovery and renewal through our Empowering Communities Programme. The programme provides support to the hundreds of community anchor organisations across the country, enabling communities to take more control and make a difference in tackling inequalities on their own terms, shaping their own futures.”

The Empowering Communities Programme includes two key funding streams the Investing in Communities Fund and Strengthening Communities Programme.

### Investing in Communities Fund

Investing in Communities Fund (ICF), when launched in 2019, addressed this by delivering support for up to a 3 year period. In light of the pandemic the fund has been extended for a fourth year from 2022-2023 in order to provide stability for the current recipient organisations and the project delivery. This fund is focussed toward our least advantaged communities and is delivering support totalling £27m over the period 2019-2022 to nearly 200 community organisations supporting services/activities to tackle poverty and disadvantage. Projects are supported and encouraged to take person centred approaches and deliver action across a wide range of themes/issues.

The next round of funding for ICF is anticipated to open in spring this year for funding available over a further 3 year period from 2023-2026. The purpose of opening the fund in advance of the funding period is to provide organisations time to prepare applications, develop partnership working, for many building on existing partnerships and those formed during the pandemic and to ensure that funding decisions are communicated earlier.

### Strengthening Communities Programme

Our Strengthening Communities Programme is a rolling programme considering new participants each year for provision of funding and support over multiple years, with an annual budget of approximately £2.5 million. The programme is currently supporting 141 organisations across Scotland. The programme utilises the knowledge and experience of the programmes supporting partners to identify community organisations at the relevant stage in their development seeking to become a Community Anchor Organisation by taking a more active, co-ordinating and leading role in their communities. The SCP uniquely provides core support to enable groups to make this step change with access to longer term commitment that is flexible around emerging needs giving the organisations the assurance and confidence to develop their structure and operational plans. The support provided often focusses around skills and learning needed to take on the management or ownership of land and assets – a key route through which organisations can develop sustainability, delivering more complex projects and/or a wider range of services/activities.

The programme has been described as transformational delivering core resource alongside direct support to the organisations who participate over a 3 to 5 year period depending on need. Recent evaluation conducted by the programme partners demonstrates the impact of the programme for example:

10 participating organisations in remote, rural and island communities received a share of £837,085 investment from SCP and HIE over the period 2019-2021 reported as a result of this investment:

- Development of 27 community managed/owned assets
- 13.5 FTE jobs have been created locally
- Enabled leverage of an additional £21.2m investment/funding
- Increased turnover / income generation of £2m from a total of 36 community assets

A survey of 28 participating development trusts across Scotland received a share of £2.65m over a 2-4 year period from SCP reported as a result of the investment:

- 73 FTE jobs created locally
- Enabled leverage of an additional 12.1m into their local communities
- Increased annual turnover from an average of £45k to £110k
- 89% of the groups had developed/delivered new services for their communities
- 48% of the groups were helped to undertake an asset transfer

The Empowering Communities Programme provides key resource funds for communities and complements our wider regeneration capital investment through the Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP). The PBIP backed with £325 million capital over the next five years (2021/22-2026/27) will be used to link and align place-based funding initiatives and accelerate our shared ambitions for Place, 20-Minute Neighbourhoods, Town Centre Action, Community Led Regeneration, Community Wealth Building and net zero.

All of our programmes reinforce the need and importance of active, inclusive, meaningful community engagement and involvement in the decisions that affect the places where people live, work and access the services in order to deliver the change that communities need to thrive.

The Scottish Government is evaluating the Supporting Communities Fund (SCF) one of a number of funds delivered with the Covid consequential funding to support communities in responding to the pandemic. This report will be published in early 2022 in addition to the report already published for the Wellbeing Fund . The SCF evaluation will provide important information to help understand what worked well or not in the delivery of this fund and inform future design of funding delivered through the Empowering Communities Programme.

### **3. The Committee seeks views on the extent to which national bodies are meeting their obligations under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and examples of where this activity is working well beyond the local government sector.**

#### SG response:

Public authorities commitment to community empowerment is more than meeting their obligations under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. It must include the public bodies listening closely to their communities and working with them to shape the public services around the things that matter to them, and to help enable people to lead their own lives.

The report Community Planning: Progress and Potential, which the Community Planning Improvement Board published earlier in 2021, includes a large portfolio of examples of community planning partners supporting communities in need during the crisis response to

the Pandemic. NHS bodies, health and social care partnerships, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and other public sector bodies were involved in many of these examples, in addition to local authorities.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 has provided a legal framework to promote and encourage community empowerment and participation, creating new rights for community bodies and placing new duties on public authorities. The Act has enabled communities to have more control over the decisions that affect them to develop their own economies, wellbeing and environments. The response from local public service providers, community volunteers and organisations in all their forms during the pandemic was inspirational. It highlighted more than ever that communities can use their assets and respond to local need in an agile way, when and where it is needed.

There are 11 policy parts in the Act and the Programme for Government 2021/22 has made a commitment to review the Act and this will include exploring to what extent national bodies are meeting their obligations under the legislation. Working collaboratively with the public sector, third sector and communities, the review will also consider how we can give local communities more of a say over how local public assets are used – whether that is taking on the ownership or management of land or buildings, delivery of services to members of their community, or greater engagement with the public sector to have more say in how services are delivered, assets are used and resources are allocated. This work will be carried out over the coming years with an indicative timescale for completion in 2023.

Part 5 Community Asset Transfer is a good example of where activity is working well beyond the local government sector. For example, Scottish Natural Heritage granted the transfer of 105 hectares of Dunnet Forest to Dunnet Forest Trust for £48,000 providing recreational facilities and training in a variety of skills to local residents and the wider Caithness community. Scottish Water has transferred an area of land on the Isle of Skye to Edinbane Community Company for the purpose of a community play park. Forestry and Land Scotland have transferred 19 assets using the new powers, including parts of their forest estate for community woodlands (Isle of Mull); tourism parking and toilet facilities in Skye; the development of a water sports club in Lochgoilhead; and the creation of a river hydro scheme on the Isle of Raasay that is helping prevent fuel poverty.

#### **4. The Committee asked what the Scottish Government is doing to support all public bodies to fulfil their community empowerment obligations.**

At the core of several key SG policies is an expectation that public sector bodies shape local services holistically and seamlessly in line with what matters to people who use those services. An emphasis on local services maintaining and extending close engagement with communities, building on the community-based work during the Pandemic.

- We are establishing a *Centre of Expertise for Transformation* as part of the Covid Recovery Strategy.
  - Its aim is to develop collaboration and learning across a range of improvement and participation methods; applying this expertise to accelerate public service transformation.
  - We are taking a project based 'learning by doing' approach to establishing the Centre, with initial focus on creation of the *Family Wellbeing Fund* and the *integration of transport, childcare and employability services*.

- The *Children & Young People Improvement Collaborative* (CYPIC) exists as an improvement community across services that support children and families in all sectors - with particular focus on addressing *equity related gaps in children and young people's development*.
  - The SG CYPIC Team support and coach people to encourage and facilitate multi-agency collaboration, apply Quality Improvement, and share learning about 'what works' to improve outcomes for children and young people.
  - Example: An innovative piece of work in partnership with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to look at how the Scottish Approach to Service Design and improvement methodology can be combined to make a difference to *children & young people's mental wellbeing* (this work is currently focussed in Moray and Falkirk).
- SG and COSLA jointly lead the *Scottish Leaders Forum* (SLF) – which brings together over 300 senior leaders from across public services, third sector organisations, equality groups, and organisations delivering public services. It supports individual and collective action in pursuit of Scotland's national purpose and outcomes as set out in the NPF.
- SG's *Collective Leadership for Scotland Team* design and deliver learning and development programmes and interventions with partners to help equip them in their collective, system leadership roles.
  - Example: *Place-based collective leadership development programmes with Police Scotland and Local Government*, initially with participants from West Dunbartonshire, Aberdeenshire and West Lothian. This supported collective leadership practice, which was then applied to real complex issues being faced in the locality. Reactions from participants indicate a strong evidence base of changes in practice and wider ripple effects from these into teams, organisations and the wider system.

**5. The Committee asked how the Scottish Government will ensure lessons are learned across the public sector to develop longer term approaches to empowering communities.**

Our approach to Covid Recovery has been closely informed by the work and recommendations of the independent Social Renewal Advisory Board (SRAB). Board Members included experts in housing, disability, poverty, communities, homelessness, the third sector and local government. A detailed programme of engagement, to bring in the voices of lived experience on the impacts and implications of the pandemic, sat alongside the work of the Board. Christie principles feature prominently in SRAB's January 2021 report and the SG's initial response in March; as well as underpinning Covid Recovery Strategy and other sector-specific plans

The Scottish Government has established two Citizens' Assemblies, which have produced major recommendations on a range of issues. As part of our response to these recommendations, SG has committed to establishing an annual Citizens' Assembly, alongside a wider programme of work looking at how we can embed deliberative methods of participation, including improved use of digital participation into how we make policy. An Expert Working group has been set up to provide advice on how this commitment should be implemented, including looking at standards, equalities, and integration across the public sector in Scotland. The first annual Assembly will look at methods of Local Government funding.

The Covid Recovery Strategy sets out clear vision – to address the systemic inequalities made worse by Covid, to make progress towards a wellbeing economy, and to accelerate inclusive person-centred public services. We know that if we are to tackle the inequalities which Covid exacerbated, we must work to a joint long term ambition to rebuild our public services, built on a willingness to change how we do things and how we work collaboratively to achieve place-based, person-centred public services.

The Covid recovery strategy articulates our conviction that by aligning services around people, we can multiply impact and support communities to thrive. This will require all involved – Scottish Government, local authorities, partners in the private and third sector – to challenge ourselves to put this into practice.

Achieving the goals of the strategy, will take whole system approaches that are shaped round peoples' and communities needs. This will be a genuinely collaborative effort to understand what works and put it into practice in the key areas of the strategy. The board, comprising representatives from Scottish and Local Government, as well as the private and third sector, met for the first time in December, and emphasised their commitment to the approach of the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy. It was noted that implementing these approaches in practical terms was likely to be challenging at times, but that the experience of the pandemic has shown that, where there is a clear imperative to work together, barriers and silos can be quickly overcome.