Justice Committee

Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2014-15

Written submission from the Robertson Trust

1. The Robertson Trust

1.1 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 Care, Health, Education and Training and Community Art and Sport. We aim to help those most in need and to improve life for as many people as possible. In 2012/13 the Trust awarded over £15M to recognised charities throughout the country.

1.2 The Trust also proactively works in a number of Development areas: Community Sport, Criminal Justice and Alcohol Misuse. Development awards are preceded by research to identify where the Trust can have the greatest potential impact in an area of Scottish life where a gap in service provision exists. Through these awards we aim to make a sufficient investment over an extended period of time to enable independent evaluation to identify elements of good practice in a project. We then use the learning from these projects to help inform local and national policy and shape future service delivery.

1.3 In addition to funding a wide range of third sector organisations that work with young offenders, women and families affected by imprisonment, The Robertson Trust plays an active role in developing the capacity of the criminal justice sector by helping to improve partnership working between agencies and by sharing best practice from criminal justice projects in order to improve service delivery. Through our long term investment in criminal justice, we have developed a growing evidence base about ‘what works’ to reduce reoffending.

1.4 The Robertson Trust welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Justice Committee’s scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s Draft Budget for 2014/15.

2. Scottish Government’s Draft Budget for 2014/15

2.1 The Robertson Trust currently funds a range of projects across Scotland that provide support to vulnerable children and families, including families affected by imprisonment. We very much welcome the commitment made by the Scottish Government in the Draft Budget to “work jointly with partners to deter high risk and vulnerable groups for committing crime at an early age, working with children and families as a priority.” (p.71)

2.2 In partnership with a number of the key third sector organisations that provide support to families affected by imprisonment, The Robertson Trust recently produced a short research paper that highlights examples of good practice in this area as well as the challenges that these services currently face. The paper made a number of recommendations to help improve work within this area including the need for the Scottish Government, the Scottish Prison Service and other relevant stakeholders to...
develop a long term strategy for supporting families affected by imprisonment over the next 10 years and to identify and allocate adequate funding for this programme of work to take place. The full report is available to read at: http://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/index.php/download_file/view/385/

2.3 While the Trust welcomes the Budget’s prioritisation of preventive services, we believe there is a need to recognise that these services will require long term funding if they are to achieve their intended objectives and for the Budget to allocate resources accordingly. Additionally, there is a need to adopt a consistent and robust approach when evaluating preventative services so we are better able to measure, understand and demonstrate the cost savings that these services can produce in the short and long term.

3. The Role of Independent Funders

3.1 In addition to the funding outlined in the draft budget, independent funders such as The Robertson Trust can provide additional financial resources to help address the needs of people who are involved in or at risk of becoming involved in offending behaviour.

3.2 The Trust has contributed £2M to the Scottish Government’s Reducing Reoffending Change Fund which aims to improve outcomes for women offenders and prolific male offenders. Over the next two years, we will be administering and managing the Fund on the Government’s behalf.

3.3 Additionally, we are currently working with the Scottish Government and other independent Trusts and Foundations across the UK to explore the potential of developing centres in Scotland that offer holistic support to vulnerable women and families who at risk of offending. Through this work, the Trust aims to divert vulnerable children and families away from the criminal justice system and add value to the Women’s Justice Centres that the Scottish Government are currently developing in response to the recommendations of the Commission on Women Offenders.

3.4 The Trust is interested in exploring how alternative funding models such as Public Social Partnerships can be used to fund preventative services going forward. We recognise that such models need to fit the priorities of the public sector, the third sector and independent funders and we are keen to work with a range of partners to develop new models that address these needs.

3.5 The Robertson Trust appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft Budget and would be happy to provide any additional information should the Justice Committee require it.

The Robertson Trust
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