The Robertson Trust

Response to the Scottish Parliament’s Health and Sport Committee Inquiry

Preventative Agenda

February 2017

About 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 an overarching aim to improve the quality of life and realise potential of people and communities in Scotland. In 2015/16 we awarded £17.1m to charities of all types and sizes working in Scotland. We have multiple ways of providing funding across Scotland, including through targeted programmes such as our Sport for Change work. These programmes have a particular focus on gathering evidence about what works, what doesn’t work and why in order to inform policy and practice.

In addition to our main funding programmes, The Robertson Trust has committed to developing new funding models which have the potential to maximise sustainable impact for individuals and communities in Scotland. Over the last five years we have been developing and testing innovative funding models and have produced two well received papers on a funder’s perspective on Public Social Partnerships (PSPs). We have also hosted two events which brought together organisations from the third, public and private sectors to share learning and develop actual practice.

We think that much of our learning in this area will be of interest to the Health and Sport Committee’s current inquiry into the preventative agenda.

Developing new models of funding

Rather than focusing attention on prevention and preventative spend within particular areas of health care we instead suggest that the Committee considers exploring new funding models which support the development of preventative models. This will enable a shift towards preventative spending across all areas of health and social care.

In particular we recommend that the Health and Sport Committee identifies ways of effectively engaging with other funders to ensure that there is new funding available to third sector and public sector partners to develop innovative and sustainable approaches for prevention. We believe that this will help health boards and integration authorities to overcome the (financial and political) pressures that lead to reactive spending.

What we have learnt

The Trust has proactively funded and supported new projects which we believe have the potential to provide improved outcomes for individuals and communities as well as helping to re-direct resources to preventative - rather than reactive – services. Examples of these include:

Six PSPs that were funded through the £20m Reducing Reoffending Change Fund. Alongside the £2m which we invested into the Change Fund we also provided project management and self-evaluation support to the PSPs. These projects explored how effective mentoring support is in reducing re-offending.

- Inclusion Plus PSP in Dundee where the City Council, The Robertson Trust and the Big Lottery Fund have invested £800,000 in a demonstration project. This is aimed at reducing school exclusion rates and increasing positive outcomes for individuals.

- MCR Pathways PSP into which the Trust has committed funding as part of a £1m grant over a three year period from 2016-2019; the other funders are MCR Foundation, Life Changes Trust, STV Appeal and Glasgow City Council. This PSP aims to expand and embed the model of relationship-based mentoring for secondary school-aged looked after and vulnerable young people.

As well as providing financial and other practical support to these PSPs, the Trust has also used these models to not only evaluate the difference they are making for individuals and communities but also to evaluate the effectiveness of the PSP model. Through this we have identified a number of key learning points.

**Embedding new approaches** – we have recognised that the challenges in this area are not just around developing and testing innovative models of service delivery but are also in enabling them to become embedded and sustained. A typical PSP involves co-production and a trial period for service delivery and this is then followed by a procurement phase. Unfortunately, with no contractual arrangement in place at the start many good practice examples get lost. In response to this, the Trust has been developing a new model of PSP which has a contractual arrangement predicated on certain outcomes and targets being achieved. This ensures that where a new approach is proven to be successful it is sustainable for an agreed period.

**Innovative models with less risk** – following on from the point above it is worth highlighting that the PSP models enables public sector and third sector partners to develop innovative approaches for meeting the needs of individuals and communities without having high levels of risk attached: if it is unsuccessful the risk of the trial period is borne by the funders and not the public purse.

In addition to this, where an approach is proven to be a success, the public sector partner(s) have time to consider how they can re-allocate their current budgets, as well as evidence which shows what works and why. For example, Dundee City Council has used the evidence from the evaluation of the Inclusion Plus PSP to move £700,000 from reducing off-site provision to enhance in-school support for pupils at risk of being excluded. In this way the evaluation of a PSP which showed what worked why and why has enabled the local authority to re-allocate a portion of its budget which was spent on reactive services to more preventative approaches.

**Debt funding** – One particular issue faced by many public bodies is starting preventative models while still having to run ‘reactive’ services. We have been working on a debt based ‘social bridging finance’ model to overcome this problem. More information about this model and our learning to date is available on request.
Barriers and enablers

Despite our belief that developing innovative funding models is necessary in order to support the preventive spending /preventative agenda there are a few barriers which still need to be overcome. These include:

- New models of funding may require special dispensation from the UK Treasury. This is because they need to be able to borrow for revenue and not just capital projects
- Although there are examples of new preventative approaches to service delivery across Scotland, scaling up successful demonstration projects remains a challenge
- Procurement needs to be done at the beginning and not the end of the trial period
- There are likely to be challenges for public sector partners to manage their statutory requirements alongside a focus on prevention

However, the Trust also recognises that there are a number of enablers which can facilitate this shift towards more innovative funding models. These include:

- A clear commitment from the Scottish Government towards prevention and preventative spend
- Independent funders are increasingly willing to take a risk and to fund innovative approaches and to learn from them
- An appetite for partnership working between the Scottish Government, third sector and public sector

Opportunities for developing a new model of funding

There is a real opportunity for the Scottish Government to lead the way in this area and to become more proactive in how it engages with other funders. For example, if it were to commit money to a Change Fund with a focus on sustainability as well as improved outcomes for individuals and communities, it might then challenge other funders to contribute to the Fund. This would increase the amount of resource available to fund innovative projects as well as ensuring a wide range of expertise are involved in the development, support and evaluation of such work.

In our experience many independent funders are able to take the initial risk for a trial period but are unable to sustain services indefinitely. If the Scottish Government is able to support this focus there are undoubtedly opportunities for developing new models of funding which will not only provide improved outcomes for individuals and communities but also support the transition from reactive to preventative spending within public sector budgets.

For more information

As previously mentioned, the Trust has already established a number of innovative funding models and we would welcome the opportunity to share more of our learning in this area. If you would like further information, or if you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact: Kenneth Ferguson, Director of The Robertson Trust, by email at kennethferguson@therobertsontrust.org.uk or by phone on 0141 353 7300.