Introduction

This paper provides an overview of the Delivering Equally Safe fund managed, on behalf of the Scottish Government, by Inspiring Scotland. It provides key figures on the funding programme, learning on the application process and provides some insights into learning from interactions with funded groups to date.

The paper is background to a presentation to be made to the VAWG Strategic Review Advisory Group on Wednesday 22 June 2022.

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A full progress report on the Fund is currently being compiled from six-month progress updates submitted by funded groups. This will be available and presented to the Scottish Government Violence Against Women and Girls team in late July.

All documents referred to in this paper are available if the Advisory Group would like further information, and we are happy to provide more information on any points within the paper.

## Outline of the Delivering Equally Safe funding programme

Delivering Equally Safe (DES) is a 3.5 year funding programme, supporting activity across the voluntary and public sector. Funded work contributes to the outcomes and priorities contained within the Scottish Government and COSLA’s Equally Safe strategy.

DES is an evolution of previous Scottish Government funding streams, Equally Safe Violence Against Women and Girls (ESVAWG) Fund and the Rape Crisis Specific Fund, which ran from April 2017 to September 2021.

Between October 2021 and September 2023, funding of £38m [£19m p.a] will be distributed to 112 organisations delivering 121 projects. Funding amounts from October 2023 to March 2025 are to be determined[[1]](#footnote-1).

DES is an increase in funding from the ESVAWG and RCS funding programmes which distributed £7.3m per annum to 72 organisations between 2017 and 202, however DES also incorporates funding to groups that were previously funded directly from the Scottish Government to the value of £4.3m per year.

### 1a. Portfolio of funded organisations and projects

The tables below provide headline information on the make-up and funding levels of the DES portfolio.

|  |
| --- |
| **Delivering Equally Safe portfolio [as at Grant offer October 2021]** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Number of projects/ grants | 121 | Single | 98 | Partnership | 23 |
| Number of funded organisations | 112 | Third Sector | 93 | Public bodies[[2]](#footnote-2) | 19 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Range of grants offered (over 2 years)** | | | |
| Highest grant offer | £1.874m | Lowest grant offer | £35,128 |
| Average grant offer | £316,217 | Median grant offer | £261,061 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Frontline services funded** | | | |
| Total no. of organisations | 91 | % of funded organisations | 81% |
| Amount of funding (2 years) | £29.4m | % of funding (2 years) | 77% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Women’s Aid Centres funded | 41 | Amount of funding (2 years) | £15.4m | 40% |
| Rape Crisis Centres funded | 17 | Amount of funding (2 years) | £7.7m | 20% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Specialist services funded** | | | |
| Services for children and young people | 43 | % of funding | 35.5% |
| Services for ethnic minority communities | 13 | % of funding | 10.7% |
| Services for disabled people | 5 | % of funding | 4% |
| Services for LGBT communities | 1 | % of funding | 1.6% |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Recognised models funded** | | | |
| Safe and Together | 12 | % of funding | 9.9% |
| CEDAR | 8 | % of funding | 6.6% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Prevention focussed activity funded** | | | | | |
| Number of organisations | 17 | Amount of funding (2 years) | £5.2m | % of funding (2 years) | 14% |

NB: The are many other organisations in the portfolio whose primary focus is not prevention but that are delivering prevention activities. These include many Women’s Aid organisations. This funding is not included in the figures above.

### 1b. DES contribution to Equally Safe strategy priorities and outcomes

As part of the DES application, applicants were asked to select which Equally Safe priorities and outcomes their proposed work contributes to. This was reviewed during assessment.

The table on the following page maps distribution of awarded work across priorities and outcomes at the time funding decisions were made. There will have been some movement as work was reprofiled (due to part funding offers), and as work has evolved.

As part of progress reporting, organisations are asked how funded activity has contributed to Equally Safe priorities and outcomes. Further information, and an update to the table will be published alongside the Progress reviews, as we learn more about funded activity.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Equally Safe Priorities [number, % of funded proposals contributing to:]** | | | |
| **Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically [89, 27%]**    **Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls [102, 31%]** | **Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response [29,9%]** | | **Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people [112, 34%]** |
|  | | | |
| **Outcomes [number of grants/ projects contributing to:]** | | | |
| * Fewer people adhere to gender stereotypes **[61]**      * People have increased understanding of all forms of VAWG (causes, consequences and appropriate responses **[104]** | Perpetrators are identified (early) **[21]** | | Women and children affected by violence are identified (early) **[95]** |
|  | | | |
| * Power, decision -making and material resources are distributed more equally between men and women **[46]**      * Tolerance of VAWG is reduced and people are more likely to recognise and challenge it **[93]** | * Perpetrators are supported to change their behaviour **[14]** * Perpetrators are sanctioned/ held to account **[14]** | | * Women and children’s safety needs are met **[102]** * Women and children’s wider wellbeing needs are met **[100]** |
|  | | | |
| Violence against women and girls is reduced/eradicated **[80]** | | Negative impacts on women and children who have been affected by violence are reduced/ eradicated **[80]** | |

## DES funding application process

Inspiring Scotland commenced fund management delivery in November 2020 and the Delivering Equally Safe Fund opened for applications 7 December 2020.

The fund had been due to open in March 2020, however this was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the previous ESVAWG/RCS funding was extended in response.

### 2a. Application timelines and pre-application support

*Diagram

Description automatically generated*

The original deadline for applications was 31 March 2021. This was extended first to 30 April, and then to 28 May 2021, due to Covid restrictions, and the decision to shorten the fund to two years.

Throughout this time Inspiring Scotland provided pre-application support. This included five different webinars to support completion of the application form, 90 one-to-one surgery sessions, and an email and telephone enquiry helpline.

We were also able to monitor interest in the fund through a registration of interest form. A total of 206 registrations of interest were submitted indicating that the fund was likely to be heavily over subscribed.

### 2b. Number of applications and fund budget

At the deadline, 163 applications were received requesting funding of £61m over two years against a total budget available of £36m. This included 180 single applications and 33 partnership applications. The average amount requested was £469k over two years and nine applicants requested over £1m.

The budget had originally been set at £13m per year for three years [£39m]. This was changed to £18m per year with a minimum of £14m secured for frontline specialist services, as a result of feedback from potential applicants, the context of Covid-19, and the decision to undertake a strategic review of sustainable funding for frontline services.

All organisations that had previously been funded through ESVAWG/ RCS submitted proposals and built in an increase in funding. This was, in part, a response to stand-still budgets over an extended period of time, and a reflection of the pressures services were facing with waiting lists and under-resourced services.

### 2c. Assessment and decision making process

The extended submission deadline put pressure on the assessment process, which was undertaken in a period of five weeks.

*Diagram

Description automatically generated*A team of assessors reviewed all applications and scored them using the agreed assessment and scoring guide. Just under 50% of the assessments were scored twice. Where necessary, moderation was carried out by a third assessor.

Assessment information was then presented to the VAWG policy team at Scottish Government for review.

Following these discussions, portfolio funding options were presented to a panel of Scottish Government officials alongside findings from a number of additional inputs facilitated by Inspiring Scotland. Full reports on each of the inputs are available if required. These included:

#### Clinical Overview

37 applications were received to provide counselling and/ or psychological support. These received an additional assessment from a Clinical Psychologist who provided a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating for each application. This rating was based on applicant input about the specific therapies they engage, the evidence base, rationale for use, and how applicants consider and mitigate risk. Observations and recommendations were presented to the panel to review.

#### Experts by Experience advisory forum

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research was carried out with survivors of Gender Based Violence and a research report presented to the decision making panel. The research included online focus groups of lived experience panels supported by Safe Lives, Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women’s Aid, Shakti Women’s Aid and DeafLinks. An online survey received 170 responses.

#### Violence Against Women Partnerships involvement

Information from VAWP Chairs was gathered through two steps, being an online questionnaire on local plans, priorities and challenges, and feedback from VAWP Chairs on anonymized applications from their local area. The information provided local context and a summary report was presented to the Scottish Government panel. This step in the process was added after the launch of the programme which left a short time period for Chairs to provide information. This led to varying engagement levels and criticism about the process from VAWP Chairs. There were also conflict of interest concerns that were worked through as some Chairs were members of organisations applying to the Fund.

### 2d. Panel meetings and grant offers

Three panel meetings were held in late July 2021 to discuss the assessed applications, policy team recommendations, the findings from the clinical review, experts by experience research, and the VAWP survey and Chair input on local applications.

Due to the demand on funding, a number of different funding scenarios were looked at with discussions including, how to get a fair geographic distribution of funding, funding against the ES priorities, and ensuring groups sharing protected characteristics would get access to specialist services.

Final panel recommendations to Ministers included partial-offers to 95 projects (88 organisations). This enabled more activity and proposals to be supported.

Following final agreement and notification, Inspiring Scotland spent much of August and September working with organisations to re-profile proposed budgets and agree what activities would be delivered with these partial awards.

#### DES grant offer comparisons

* 96% (all, but 3) of previously funded (ESVAWG/RCS) were offered either a full or partial award
* The average partial award was 77% of what was requested with 4 receiving 50% of their requested amount
* No organisation were offered less than they had previously received in funding.
* Women’s Aid organisations requests equated to 35% of the total requested via DES and were offered 43% of funded awarded
* Rape Crisis Centres requested 17.3% of the total requested and were offered 21.5% of funding awarded

### 2e. Applicant feedback on DES funding application process

We undertook a survey of all applicants to get their views on the pre-application support provided and the overall process of submitting an application. A full report on feedback is available if required. The availability of pre-application support was very well received:

* Webinars and phone/ email support were the most common way of seeking support. 74% of respondents requested one to one support by phone or email, with 91% reporting that it was of help or very helpful
* People who were able to attend one-to-one surgery sessions rated them highly. 43% of the respondents attend a 1:1 surgery with 100% of them stating that it helped a bit or was very helpful.

There was, however, a real mix of responses to how easy or difficult the application was to complete and submit, and a huge range of comments and feedback on different elements of the form. Word limits were a common source of frustration.

Many applicants found the changes to the application and criteria mid-way through the process frustrating, and a cause for anxiety, and it was clear that the comprehensive application form was difficult especially for smaller capacity organisations, and those seeking smaller amounts of funding.

### 2f. Inspiring Scotland reflections for future application processes

In September 2021 we held a meeting with Scottish Government colleagues where we reflected on the application process and learning from applicant and partner feedback. The process was robust and fit for purpose. There were also some exceptional circumstances to this funding process, and an acknowledgement that the strategic review will look at funding in more depth.

In the spirit of reflection and continuous improvement, some of the key areas of learning from an Inspiring Scotland perspective are:

#### Development or capacity building funding to enable a wider range of support

The Experts by Experience research demonstrated that survivors have difficulties accessing the support they need. Most respondents had contacted at least 2 or 3 organisations before they found what they needed (73%). Indeed, it wasn’t uncommon to have contacted at least 4 organisations (35%).

The table below outlines some of the multiple challenges faced by survivors when accessing support

*Fig 10: Difficulties Experienced Accessing Support*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **%** |
| Not knowing what support was available to me | 54 |
| Waiting lists | 45 |
| A lack of emotional or mental health support | 44 |
| Being passed from one service to another | 38 |
| A lack of practical support e.g. housing, money/debt, legal advice | 27 |
| Lack of support in my local area | 24 |
| Not being eligible for support | 19 |
| Not being believed | 19 |
| A lack of support for my children | 19 |
| Services lacked knowledge of my culture/faith | 8 |
| Services weren’t available in my language | 7 |
| Services not accessible for my disability | 4 |
| Services didn’t consider my sexuality | 4 |
| Services didn’t consider my gender identity | 3 |
| Other | 14 |
| No reply | 18 |
| Base: 170 | |

We also know that groups may not have the capacity, skills or even charitable purposes in place to provide a comprehensive range of specialist support that is needed. It is difficult both to get, and manage, capacity building funding to develop specialist services (eg mental health services, services for people with learning disabilities, money advice) either themselves or to develop working partnerships with partner organisations which would enable survivors to have the holistic accessible support they may need.

A separate funding stream that enables groups to develop these services and expertise, either within frontline organisations or, working with specialist groups to develop services for survivors of gender based violence, could be built into future funding programmes.

The quality of applications received to Delivering Equally Safe in general was high. However there was proportionally a small number of applications received from groups delivering specific expert support for people who share protected characteristics. This could also be addressed by offering capacity building funding and time for groups to test different service models, in addition to service delivery funding.

#### Time-scales

Timescales throughout the DES assessment and decision making process were incredibly pressured. In part this was because they were squeezed to enable a longer application period, and additional steps to the decision making process were added after the launch. Even without these additional steps, appropriate time should be built in at assessment, to enable negotiation of funding offers and for any follow-up questions on proposals submitted.

#### Application form(s) and follow-up

Related to the above, how applications are submitted could be reviewed and improved. The simplicity of one form for all applicants to complete should be weighed against accessibility of the funding opportunity. There is a huge range of organisations delivering services and contributing to the Equally Safe strategy. Future funding programmes may benefit from different application forms for different sizes of grants, and organisations. An opportunity for organisations to verbally present their proposal via video submission or interview could also help organisations who are less skilled in completing applications, but that provide valuable services.

#### Local context to support understanding of priorities and gaps

Alongside engagement with survivors to support development of the fund, local involvement to understand different context and priorities could be sought and built into the application and decision making process before the funding opportunity is launched. This is in part, reference to the time-pressures and concerns over conflict of interest with VAWP involvement for DES, but also in recognition that there are different local contexts and strength of networks, and funding may be needed to support development of local pathways, or specific capacity building to address gaps in local provision.

#### More meaningful lived experience involvement

There is universal agreement that the authentic and varied voice of people with lived experience is important to put at the heart of funding processes. Fund priorities, criteria and assessment guidance could be developed based on the real experience of people. Learning on how best this is done, and the resources to support this being done well and safely, is evolving and needs planning and consultation. We are also aware that it shouldn’t stop once funding decisions are made, however this needs to be carefully and well resourced. The question of the value of input and therefore payment for lived experience is something that is being discussed across the public and third sector and any new fund process could incorporate best practice.

## Portfolio learning

All groups funded through Delivering Equally Safe will submit progress reports on a six monthly basis as part of their grant conditions. Learning will also be gathered by Inspiring Scotland through an annual data capture, portfolio and learning events.

The first progress reports were received in May 2022 and are currently being reviewed by the team. The Fund progress update will be published and shared at the end of July. The Inspiring Scotland DES team are in regular contact with funded groups through one-to-one meetings, portfolio events and training sessions.

With the caveat that the full analysis and report is still to be completed, some general observations from these interactions, and early analysis from the progress reports are:

#### High demand and active response to changing circumstances

There are some excellent examples of ongoing front-line delivery. Early analysis of quantitative data submitted indicates that over 10,000[[3]](#footnote-3) people have accessed one-to-one support in the first six months of DES funding. Groups are adapting services to incorporate elements of digital delivery whilst also maintaining emergency and face-to-face support. Organisations are operating waiting lists and are reviewing their processes and contact methods with the aim of better supporting service users.

#### The voluntary sector faces huge challenges with recruitment and retention and pressure on the workforce

There are recruitment challenges across all sectors, however it is being felt keenly in the voluntary sector. Comparably low wages[[4]](#footnote-4) and pensions, plus a lack of security in funding, as well as general Covid-related changes to work choices, means that staff are either leaving for better work conditions, or are not applying for positions. Some DES funded groups have not been able to recruit staff to new pieces of work, or replace departing staff.

Added to this is the need for increasingly specialist skills, without the corresponding pay or work related benefits, all making recruitment incredibly challenging. This is adding more pressure to already stretched services who are currently having to manage additional Covid related staff absences.

There is also a feeling among some projects that Support Workers are not recognized in the same way as Care or Health Workers. They point to local variations on how Mental Health Support Workers are defined, and how potential benefits, or access to training and wellbeing support, is not available to some frontline Support Workers who are providing crisis support to people with a range of complex support needs.

#### Cost of living challenges

Cost of living challenges are impacting on the sector, both in the complexity of need services are addressing and their own organisational finances. The cost of living is having multiple impacts from increased pressures in the home, vulnerability to maintaining financial independence, difficulties accessing support, and increased anxiety. Although a cost of living increase was supported and built into salary budget lines as part of the DES application, this is well below current inflation levels. Energy price increases, and high fuel and accommodation costs for outreach work, are all hitting small organisations that have very little buffer in terms of reserves.

#### Appetite for networking and collaboration

The DES portfolio includes groups that are already very well networked and supported by strong national, local partnerships, and intermediary bodies. There is however, a real appetite for peer networking and learning opportunities and collaborating to improve service delivery. Inspiring Scotland capacity building and peer networking events have been very well attended. An example of cross portfolio collaboration is work to better understand the impact of gender based violence on people with learning disabilities and how services can learn from each other and develop best practice to ensure their services are accessible and meet the needs of learning disabled and neurodiverse communities.

#### The voluntary sector are able to leverage additional funding

Funded groups have had mixed success rates securing match funding. There are a number who have secured additional funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, and Tampon Tax funding, and examples of DES funding supporting groups to secure other smaller pockets of funding. These organisations have needed clear and timely communication from DES on funding amounts and flexibility around what to approach other funders for. The voluntary sector within DES is heavily reliant on state funding, however investment in voluntary sector services can, in many instances, be amplified by additional funding that they are able to source. Managing multiple sources of funding continues to be a significant administrative burden for smaller organisations who may have very stretched or non-existent core support.

#### Positive response to the DES extension

There has been a positive response to the announcement that Delivering Equally Safe will be extended to March 2025. There have been questions and concerns raised about uncertainty of the levels of funding beyond Sept 2023, bu,t in the main, organisations are appreciative that the current funding horizon has been extended to give time to review and reflect on the findings of the review. Some organisations have expressed verbally that difficulties recruiting could have been avoided if the fund length had not been shortened in the first instance.

## Inspiring Scotland team – concluding comments

The Delivering Equally Safe team at Inspiring Scotland welcome this opportunity to present to the Advisory Group and look forward to discussions on the 22nd June and beyond.

Contact details for the full team are below:

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| --- | --- | --- |
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1. Delivering Equally Safe was initially a three programme, shortened to two years in light of the Strategic Review. Grant offers were made for two years commencing October 2021. In April 2022 an 18 month extension was announced with funding levels to be determined. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Includes one NHS, one Higher Education, one HSCP and two VAWPs as well as LA services [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. These numbers are still being analyzed and checked by the team. Information will be available on support ‘type’ with a break-down of figures of delivery of advocacy, counselling, group-work, legal advice, helpline support etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Analysis of a comparable role (CEDAR Co-ordinator) and wages paid at seven DES funded groups shows that the voluntary sector average salary is £13k less than the public sector (£30k vs £43k) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)