

Children, Young People & Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning & Empowering Communities Fund Evaluation Baseline Report

Iconic Consulting

The Children, Young People & Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning & Empowering Communities (CYPFEI & ALEC) Fund is supporting the core services and infrastructure of 118 national third sector organisations. It aims to increase the effectiveness of services and policies that prioritise prevention and early intervention and improve outcomes for children, young people, families and adult learning. This baseline report is part of a formative evaluation which aims to assess whether the overall vision for the Fund is achieved and to inform future decisions around this area of funding.

Main findings

- Funded organisations regard the skills and knowledge within their organisations positively. Financial pressures and increasing demand for services were seen as constraints on organisational capacity.
- Prevention and early intervention were important to funded organisations and were generally embedded in the delivery of their core services. Financial pressures, increasing demand for frontline services and the increasing complexity of cases were however identified as challenges in this area.
- Funded organisations were committed to equality and diversity, with a number established to promote the rights of particular minority groups. It was suggested that smaller organisations may find it more difficult to articulate their approach.
- Overall third sector organisations worked well together although competition for funding was identified as an increasing barrier to information sharing. Third sector organisations also reported good relationships with the Scottish Government, however for some this was limited to one or two key contacts.
- Consultees welcomed the assignment of Policy Officers from Scottish Government/Education Scotland to third sector organisations supported by the Fund. The main benefits were seen as greater understanding and mutually beneficial communications around policy issues.

- The development of the Fund was regarded as inclusive with positive third sector involvement. Funded organisations welcomed support for core services and infrastructure which is adding to organisational capacity and should enhance prevention and early intervention, and joint working.
- Financial sustainability was regarded as challenging although there were examples of how the Fund is helping to identify alternative funding sources.
- Overall, consultees suggested the Fund will contribute to improved outcomes for beneficiaries of each organisation and this will lead to a national impact.

Introduction

The Scottish Government established the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund to enhance the core services and infrastructure of national third sector organisations during the period 2016-19. In total 118 third sector organisations were awarded funding of approximately £14m for 2016/17 with subsequent funding dependent on satisfactory progress towards individual outcomes and the overall budget available. The Fund's vision is to deliver improved outcomes for children, families, young people and adult learners through supporting the third sector in prevention and early intervention approaches. It also aims to strengthen the effectiveness of third sector organisations through support and information sharing with the Scottish Government, increasing third sector capacity and skills, and increasing partnership working between third sector organisations.

Iconic Consulting is conducting a formative evaluation of the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund to assess whether the overall vision for the Fund is achieved and to help inform future decisions around this area of funding. Specific evaluation questions focus on assessing the Fund's impact on: 1) improving outcomes for beneficiaries, 2) prevention and early intervention, 3) internal Scottish Government processes, 4) capacity, skills and knowledge, and 5) partnership working. This baseline report summarises the initial findings, including an overview of the capacity, strengths and weaknesses of the organisations supported by the Fund.

Methodology

The research consisted of a mixed methods approach involving: a document review, an online self-assessment survey completed by 103 of the 118 funded organisations, and consultation with seven Scottish Government/Education Scotland Policy Officers, six public and third sector stakeholders, and twelve funded organisations. The self-assessment survey provided a baseline picture of the national third sector organisations supported by the Fund which will be tracked over the life of the Fund.

Knowledge, skills, capacity, and equalities

Third sector organisations supported by the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund rated the knowledge, skills and capacity within the organisations highly with an overall score of 8.1 out of 10 on the self-assessment survey. Generally, skills and knowledge were viewed as strong, with consultees commending the expertise that exists in the organisations. A limited number of skills gaps and shortages were noted. Capacity

was identified by a number of organisations as a challenge resulting from financial pressures and increasing demand for services (driven by social and economic conditions and policy developments).

The funded organisations also rated their understanding and integration of equality issues highly (8.8 out of 10). Organisations were committed to equality and diversity, with a number established specifically to promote or protect the rights of particular minority groups. There was however a suggestion that some smaller third sector organisations may find it more difficult to articulate their approach.

Prevention and early intervention

One of the key issues to be assessed by the evaluation is whether embedding early intervention and prevention in the ethos of organisations supported by the Fund have been sustained or improved, and if so, what was the Fund's contribution, and what has the impact been. The baseline self-assessment survey found that third sector organisations rated the importance of prevention and early intervention, and the extent to which they are embedded in the delivery of core services, more positively (9.0 out of 10) than any other survey theme. Generally, funded organisations suggested the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund will maintain and enhance their prevention and early intervention focus with examples provided of their own work and how they seek to influence partners. Some third sector organisations identified capacity issues as a constraint on their prevention and early intervention work - increasing demand for frontline services, the increasing complexity of cases and funding pressures were seen as the main issues.

Partnership working

Overall third sector organisations reported they work well with other organisations in the sector and joint working was rated 7.9 out of 10 on the self-assessment survey. A number of examples of joint working were cited by third sector organisations covering consortium working, co-location and shared services, shared training, and joint campaigning and policy influencing. However, time pressures and capacity issues were seen by some as inhibiting joint working. In addition, decreasing funding and increasing competition has led some third sector organisations to reassess information sharing with other organisations in the sector. Third sector organisations described how CYPFEI & ALEC funding is enhancing joint working and may be enhanced further by the learning and development programme to be delivered by Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland as part of the Fund.

Involvement in national and local structure was also rated positively (7.1 out of 10). Numerous third sector organisations described the value of engagement with local and national groups, partnerships or forums and some noted how the Fund will enable them to continue or enhance their involvement with these structures. Some third sector organisations commented that resource constraints meant they were prioritising national structures above local engagement, or had to be selective in their local engagement, and there was a view that only the largest organisations had the capacity to maintain a strong involvement in these structures.

Positive relationships generally exist between third sector organisations and the Scottish Government/Education Scotland – interaction with Scottish Government was rated 7.1 out of 10 on the self-assessment survey. However, there was a view that this interaction can be limited to one or two key contacts and information dissemination by the Scottish Government/Education Scotland could be more consistent. Positive views about the Policy Officers assigned to third sector organisations as part of the Fund were reported, the main benefits of which are envisaged as greater understanding and mutually beneficial communications around policy issues. Funded organisations reported that their core services were strongly aligned with the national outcomes.

One of the questions to be addressed by the evaluation is whether the Fund has impacted on internal Scottish Government processes and ways of working, including the third sector having opportunities to co-produce and add value to the development of Scottish Government policy. Consultees reported that the third sector had been actively involved in the development of the Fund via the Board (that met to discuss allocations) and the Short Term Working Group (that informed the Fund's initial design). There was also a view that the Fund has promoted closer working relationships between third sector organisations, as well as with the Scottish Government.

Financial sustainability and funding

Financial sustainability and funding were rated positively at 6.5 out of 10 although this was the lowest rating of the themes covered by the self-assessment survey. Third sector organisations warmly welcomed the Fund's support for core services and infrastructure in light of the prevailing financial climate and the limited number of other alternative sources for such issues. A number of organisations suggested the CYPFEI & ALEC funding is adding to organisational capacity, which they envisaged will help to enhance prevention and early intervention, and joint working.

Financial sustainability was generally regarded as challenging with decreasing public sector opportunities and increasing competition. There were however some examples of how the Fund is assisting third sector organisations to identify alternative income sources which could enhance sustainability.

Conclusions

The majority of consultees suggested that the Fund will contribute to improving outcomes for beneficiaries of each organisation and will therefore have a collective impact at a national level. However, they cautioned that the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund represents a relatively small percentage of the overall income for the majority of the funded organisations and the impact will therefore be proportionate. The difficulty of measuring attribution and the impact of secondary organisations supported by the Fund was raised by some consultees.

This baseline report is part of a formative evaluation of the Fund and its findings will be re-visited as the evaluation progresses. It is also hoped the findings will inform the work of the Stakeholder Group and the learning and development programme to be delivered by Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this / social research publication:

are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics

are available via an alternative route using the following link

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/delivery/thirdsectorfunding>

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact <email address> for further information.

cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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