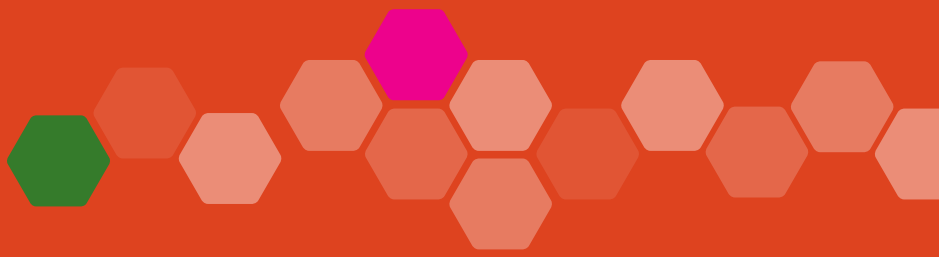
Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

Supporting collaboration between the third and public sectors: A review of current evidence



PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND PLACES

social research

Supporting collaboration between the third and public sectors: A review of current evidence

Contents

Contents 2

Summary and key findings 4

Methods 4

Key findings 4

Funding 4

Short-term funding 4

Inflexible funding 5

Reductions in funding 5

COVID-19 and funding 5

Funding and trust 6

Meaningful collaboration 6

Promoting better understanding between sectors 6

Promoting equal partnerships 6

Open communication 7

Building trusted relationships 7

Empowerment of communities 7

COVID-19 and meaningful collaboration 8

Public sector procurement and the third sector 8

Approaches to public procurement 8

Competitive tendering 9

Next steps 10

1. Introduction 11

Policy Context 11

Methods 12

Literature review 12

Stakeholder interviews 13

2. Findings 14

3. Funding 14

Short-term funding 14

Inflexible funding 16

Reductions in funding 18

Lack of transparency around funding 19

COVID-19 and funding 20

Funding and trust 21

4. Meaningful collaboration 22
Promoting better understanding between sectors 22
Promoting equal partnerships 23
Open communication 24
Building trusted relationships 27
Empowerment of communities 28
COVID-19 and meaningful collaboration 29
5. Public sector procurement and the third sector 30
Approaches to public procurement 31
Competitive tendering 33
COVID-19 and procurement 37
6. Conclusions and Next Steps 38
Bibliography 39

Summary and key findings

This report presents findings of research conducted by Scottish Government researchers to better understand current barriers to effective collaboration between third sector organisations and the public sector – particularly focusing on relationships between the third sector, local government and national government. This research project was guided by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Third Sector Interface Network (TSI Network), The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Government to strengthen collaboration between the voluntary sector and national and local government.

Methods

This report draws on two sources of data: a rapid review of the existing literature and evidence base relevant to existing barriers to collaboration between the third and public sectors and a set of thirteen qualitative interviews with key stakeholders from four third sector organisations, seven third sector interfaces, and five stakeholders representing local authority perspectives. While the selection of interviewees was designed to give a range of perspectives, the size and diversity of the third sector and the public sector in Scotland mean that a research project of this scale cannot be representative of the full range of views and experiences across those sectors. Given the nature of the collaboration, the focus of the public sector interviews was on local government perspectives, and did not attempt to gather views from across the wider public sector.

Key findings

The rapid literature review and stakeholder interviews highlighted four primary areas that present frequent challenges for collaboration between third sector, local government and national government. Those areas were: funding, meaningful collaboration, procurement and lack of trust, with lack of trust being a cross-cutting concern which affects each of the other identified themes.

Funding

Short-term funding

The literature and the interviews identify the current short-term funding model for the third sector as a major barrier to successful collaborative working. Third sector organisations relying on funding from the public sector often receive funding for one year at a time or for specific programmes of work, and do not have certainty that they will receive funding the following year. This creates precarious working conditions for individuals in the third sector, and contributes to high staff turnover and ongoing loss of knowledge and expertise in third sector organisations[1]. Similar issues are experienced within local government, where reducing the size of the workforce has been one of the ways local councils have addressed funding

[1] Looking ahead to the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2020-21: Valuing the Third Sector, 2019

challenges[2]. This leads to increased pressure and demand on the remaining workforce and results in loss of experience and knowledge within local authorities[3].

Both third sector stakeholders and local government stakeholders acknowledged that this is a complex issue, noting that local authorities are constrained by one-year funding settlements from the Scottish Government, which in turn means local authorities can often only commit to one-year funding for third sector organisations. This makes it difficult to build long-lasting relationships or implement long-term strategic programmes of work.

Inflexible funding

Third sector and local government contributors both expressed the view that funding received by third sector organisations and local government is often inflexible, rigidly structured and/or ring-fenced. This poses challenges for organisations to respond flexibly to changes in their operational/delivery context in order to meet the needs of service users and beneficiaries as effectively as possible.

The research identified that reporting requirements on how funding is spent can sometimes be overly complicated[4]. While both third sector and local government stakeholders acknowledged the importance of reporting how funding is spent, they also expressed frustration with complex monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements. These requirements often demand a lot of staff time and were seen as overly bureaucratic by the stakeholders.

Reductions in funding

An important theme emerging from the interview respondents and the literature was an overall lack of – or reduction in – funding and investment for both local authorities and third sector organisations. Respondents felt that reductions in funding received made it difficult for both third sector and local government to successfully achieve their goals or to work collaboratively. While stakeholders called for increases in funding for third sector organisations, they also acknowledged that it is not easy for local authorities and/or Scottish Government to increase funding for the third sector, in situations where local authorities and/or Scottish Government themselves face budget reductions or constraints.

COVID-19 and funding

Experiences of emergency funds that were put in place by Scottish Government and other stakeholders during COVID-19 were mostly positive, according to the interviewees and the literature[5,6,7]. The COVID-19 emergency funds did not require

[2] Local government in Scotland. Challenges and performance, 2018

[3] COSLA response to Resource Spending Review, 2022

[4] Social Renewal Advisory Board Third Sector Circle Recommendations, 2021

[5] Rapid Evaluation of the Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund | Foundation Scotland, 2020

[6] Review of the Small Grants Fund, 2021

[7] Evaluation of the Wellbeing Fund, 2021

recipient third sector organisations to provide typical levels of reporting on how the funding was spent, or provide exact plans how the funding would be used in advance, enabling them to be more flexible to respond to the rapidly changing situation, and to spend more time on delivering services. Local authority contributors talked about having flexibility to decide to use some of the emergency funding combined with existing budgets to respond rapidly and effectively to the pandemic.

Funding and trust

These varied issues around funding impeding collaboration between third and public sectors outlined in the literature and stakeholder interviews reflected an underlying problem of lack of trust. Third sector organisations felt that public sector funders were not trusting them, local government stakeholders felt not trusted by the Scottish Government and this lack of trust was reflected in restrictions such as funding having to be spent on pre-specified projects, and extensive monitoring of how the money was spent.

Meaningful collaboration

A lack of 'meaningful collaboration' was the second major barrier to successfully working together that was identified in the literature and stakeholder interviews.

Promoting better understanding between sectors

The research suggests that inadequate understanding between third sector organisations and public sector organisations about the statutory duties and operational challenges that each sector faces can impede meaningful collaboration[8,9,10]. Third sector organisations are not always fully aware of the statutory requirements that local authorities and/or national government are required to operate within. Conversely, local authorities and/or national government may not appreciate the particular challenges that short-term funding creates for third sector organisations, while policymakers may also lack understanding about the third sector and what it does[11].

Promoting equal partnerships

Findings from the research suggest that it is difficult to establish meaningful collaboration if all parties in the collaboration do not feel as though they are equal partners[12]. Interviewees noted that the fact that the public sector awards funding to the third sector can create a power imbalance, with the public sector being perceived to have more power in the relationship. Some interviewees felt that this sometimes created an expectation that the public sector funder might seek to direct the work of the third sector organisations involved, or to make all the decisions

[8] Seizing The Opportunity: The Case For Embracing Civil Society's Role In Democracy, 2021

[9] Principles for Positive Partnership, 2020

[10] Social Care Briefing by Audit Scotland, 2022

[11] Seizing The Opportunity: The Case For Embracing Civil Society's Role In Democracy, 2021

[12] Reflections on What Works Scotland project, 2019

around a policy or a project. Instead, respondents felt that third sector organisations should be seen as equal partners with the public sector. Research also showed that third sector organisations expressed frustration about not being listened to by their public sector partners[13], while the public sector can often lack the time and resources required for meaningful engagement with the third sector.

Open communication

Another principle important for meaningful collaboration is open communication between partners. The research suggests that discussing and making clear from the outset what is and is not in scope in a collaboration can help to avoid misunderstandings later[14]. The ability to have open and honest conversations was also raised by many interviewees as essential for healthy partnerships. Honest conversations allow organisations working together to admit that mistakes have been made and discuss what can be done to improve things in the future, without fear of repercussions or allocation of blame.

The research also indicated that a meaningful partnership should lead to partners sharing power and trusting each other[15]. However, despite some positive developments in relation to open communication and working together on shared goals, a number of interviewees expressed frustration about the difficulties of collaborative working when it comes to sharing power.

Building trusted relationships

Findings from the literature suggest that having successful trusted relationships can help partners to overcome some of the barriers outlined above, and those established, trusted relationships can be key to avoiding barriers to collaboration[16]. However, it is important to build institutional collaboration (for example, using Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or concordats, where appropriate) that extends beyond personal relationships. Otherwise, there is a risk that when an individual moves to a different post or leaves an organisation, the collaborative working relationship can break down as well[17]. Overreliance on personal relationships is particularly problematic in contexts where staff turnover is high.

Empowerment of communities

Third sector stakeholders said that there is a need for more engagement with communities and small third sector organisations, and particularly a need to support greater empowerment of communities and service users within these relationships[18]. Both third sector and local government interviewees said that giving

[13] Seizing The Opportunity: The Case For Embracing Civil Society's Role In Democracy, 2021

[14] Reflections on What Works Scotland project, 2019

[15] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

[16] Lessons learned by Scottish Community Alliance, 2020

[17] Principles for Positive Partnership, 2020

[18] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

more power and resources to communities or service users to help themselves was something that the public sector should do more often and more pro-actively.

COVID-19 and meaningful collaboration

Evidence from the research suggested that the public and third sectors were working more collaboratively during the initial COVID-19 lockdown in 2020[19]. A number of interviewees reflected that the COVID-19 pandemic had positively changed their relationships with partners from other sectors. There was agreement among some interviewees that the public sector quickly realised the importance of the third sector as a key part of the pandemic response. Existing relationships became stronger and new ones were built quickly. Moreover, it was also recognised that removal of some of the bureaucratic barriers enabled the third and public sectors to start working together quickly, alongside more joined-up working between sectors.

However, there were concerns that these positive changes arising during the pandemic will not be retained going forward. Interviewees questioned how the more collaborative working approach, increased trust and the feeling of everyone being 'in it together' could be maintained between sectors, with some third sector stakeholders feeling it was not likely to continue.

Public sector procurement and the third sector

Public sector procurement was the third major barrier to successfully working together that was identified in the literature and stakeholder interviews.

Approaches to public procurement

As part of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 Sustainable Procurement Duty, public bodies undertaking regulated procurement, amongst other requirements, are required to consider how they can facilitate the involvement of third sector organisations in their regulated procurements[20]. At the moment, third sector organisations frequently find themselves in competition for the same procurement contracts rather than working collaboratively with each other to achieve common goals[21,22]. Interviewees suggested that more opportunities for collaborative procurement, where local government is allowed more time to prepare tenders and third sector organisations are allowed more time to prepare bids together and apply for contracts as part of a consortium bid, could alleviate this.

Moreover, bidding for public contracts can favour private sector or large third sector organisations over smaller third sector organisations, due to smaller organisations not having sufficient resources to bid for contracts[23]. The research suggested that

[19] COVID-19 and Communities Listening Project: A Shared Response by Carnegie UK Trust, 2020

[20] Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014

[21] COVID-19 and Communities Listening Project: A Shared Response by Carnegie UK Trust, 2020

[22] Looking ahead to the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2020-21: Valuing the Third Sector, 2019

[23] Public Procurement Survey of Suppliers 2020, 2021

more flexible and collaborative procurement approaches may be needed in order to further increase successful cross-sector collaboration. Changes to procurement processes, such as making application forms and tendering processes simpler and more accessible could also make a difference[24]. A local authority stakeholder suggested that having engagement officers in local councils who could reach out to local third sector organisations and offer support for responding to tenders could also help third sector organisations. This role is fulfilled to varying degrees by TSIs in some areas.

Competitive tendering

The overarching aim of public sector procurement activity in Scotland continues to be the achievement of value for money for the taxpayer[25]. The Scottish Model of Procurement defines value for money as the best balance of cost, quality and sustainability[26,27]. Moreover, public sector procurement aims to contribute positively to businesses, society and places and communities, as outlined in the Scottish Government Outcomes for Procurement[28].

However, some third and local government stakeholders raised concerns about competitive tendering processes in cases where a disproportionate emphasis is placed on price in comparison with other value considerations. Respondents felt that this can lead to the public sector viewing the third sector as providers of services rather than equal partners[29]. Stakeholders also said that competitive tendering processes could be too long and overly complex. Third sector interviewees said that current procurement practices could be improved to facilitate more collaborative working by using more public social partnerships[30], alliance commissioning[31], grants and direct payments, where appropriate.

A number of third sector interviewees also said that tendered services should focus exclusively on quality and not cost. They did not feel that the implementation of 'best value' was always successful in achieving the right balance of price, quality and sustainability considerations. However, a local government contributor pointed out that constraints on local government budgets mean that even when a local authority would like to tender a service with 100% focus on quality, they are not always able to do that.

Some of the views about competitive tendering were challenged by a local government stakeholder who thought that competitive tendering can provide a fair and transparent opportunity for all organisations to access public sector contracts.

---

[24] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

[25] Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014: statutory guidance, 2016

[26] The Scottish Model of Procurement, 2019

[27] Outcomes for procurement, 2021

[28] Outcomes for Procurement, 2021

[29] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

[30] Public Social Partnerships

[31] Alliance Procurement: Promises, Truths, and Behaviours, 2018

While they agreed that price-based competitive tendering can cause problems by driving down prices, they also said that competition in respect to quality is something to be encouraged. Competitive tendering also allows the public sector to demonstrate how they have met their legal obligations around procurement.

Next steps

These research findings will be used to guide engagement with the sector on the design and development of a number of areas of work throughout 2022-2023. These will aim to catalyse and enable positive collaboration, explore practical ways of tackling some of the barriers to collaboration, and focus on learning about what works.

The planned projects include:

- Working with a range of stakeholders to understand what fair and sustainable funding means across sectors, and to develop a shared understanding of the barriers and enablers to this.
- Using one Scottish Government funding stream (the Community Capacity and Resilience Fund – CCRF) to test more flexible, trusting and innovative approaches to funding, and learning from the results.
- Developing a shared understanding of the barriers and enablers of multi-year funding from the perspectives of the third sector, national and local governments.
- Understanding and building on the results of research into the procurement of third sector services.
- Developing a knowledge bank on other projects that are underway to reflect on and improve commissioning and procurement across sectors, and share learning.

1. Introduction

This report presents findings of a literature review and analysis of stakeholder interviews conducted by Scottish Government researchers to better understand current barriers to effective collaboration between third sector organisations and public sector.

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Third Sector Interface Network (TSI Network) and the Scottish Government have committed to understanding and tackling the barriers to collaboration between the third sector and national and local government.

In the immediate response to the pandemic in Scotland, it appeared that barriers to effective partnership working across sectors were overcome in the short term to the benefit of communities, demonstrating what can be achieved on a large scale when key partners work together effectively.

The aim of this report is to provide a fuller understanding of the barriers to collaboration that most often prevent partners working together effectively. It also aims to provide greater insight into situations and cases where collaboration has been most effective and successful – and why this was the case.

This report will use the terms third sector and public sector. The definitions of these terms are outlined below:

Third sector - Scotland's third sector, which includes charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups, delivers essential services, helps to improve people's wellbeing and contributes to economic growth. It plays a vital role in supporting communities at a local level.

Public sector - Scotland's public sector is made up of organisations covering health, central government, public bodies, local councils, commissioners and tribunals. Although this research draws on literature considering perspectives from the wider public sector, for the purposes of this work we are primarily focused on collaboration between the third sector, local government and national government.

Policy Context

In 2011, the Christie Commission[32] drew on evidence from across the public, third, community and voluntary sectors and made a number of recommendations which continue to be highly relevant and influential in terms of setting out those key principles that can enable the shaping and delivery of sustainable and outcome-focused public services.

[32] Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services, 2011

Christie noted that there was an imperative to tackle the “fragmentation and complexity in the design and delivery of public services by improving coherence and collaboration between agencies and sectors”.

In short, collaboration was seen then as a necessary condition for reform, creating the conditions for public services, people, communities and places to be able to work jointly in the interests of achieving improved outcomes.

The emphasis on the reform principles of prevention, partnership, people, performance and place has been most recently reinforced in the outputs from the Social Renewal Advisory Board and the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy. The report from the Social Renewal Advisory Board[33] for example, predicates its 20 ‘calls to action’ on a strong platform that calls for national and local government, employers and the third sector to work together with people and communities. It also calls for the development of new arrangements for local governance through the ongoing Local Governance Review. This was subsequently reinforced through the strategic emphasis on ‘person-centred’ support and services in the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy[34] with huge importance being placed on collective endeavour in order to achieve this.

The follow up to this research will reflect this ambition through the implementation of a programme of work that is intended to test and embed more effective forms of collaboration between the project partners and others. This research has been undertaken in order to help guide the project work, by highlighting aspects of collaboration that have traditionally been challenging, and where there is scope for learning and improvement.

Methods

This report draws on two sources of data: a review of published and grey literature on the topic and a set of qualitative interviews with some key stakeholders.

Literature review

The report draws on a rapid review of the existing literature and evidence base relevant to existing barriers to collaboration between third and public sectors. Given the broad scope of such a project, the relatively brief time frame within which the report was compiled did not allow for a fully comprehensive or systematic review of the relevant literature. A focus was placed on key data sources identified by the researchers and by SCVO, COSLA and TSI Network. Additional literature was identified using a ‘snowballing’ method: finding literature by using key sources as a starting point and identifying sources through the references in key texts.

A full list of data sources for the literature review is included in Appendix I.

[33] If not now, when? Social Renewal Advisory Board report, 2021

[34] COVID-19 Recovery Strategy: for a fairer future, 2021

Stakeholder interviews

A series of thirteen interviews were conducted with stakeholders from sixteen third and public sector organisations. The interviewees were from the following organisations:

Table 1: List of organisations participating in stakeholder interviews

Third sector organisations	Public sector organisations	Third sector interfaces
Scottish Community Alliance	Falkirk Council	Voluntary Action Shetland
Cyrenians	Argyll and Bute Council	Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service
Association of Chief Officers of Scottish Voluntary Organisations (ACOSVO)	Renfrewshire council	Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector
Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS)	Improvement Service	Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway
	Scotland Excel	Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface
		Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise
		Highland Third Sector Interface

While the selection of interviewees was designed to give a range of perspectives – including urban and rural perspectives – the size and diversity of the third sector and the public sector in Scotland mean that a research project of this scale cannot be representative of the full range of views and experiences across those sectors. Rather, the information from the interviews was primarily sought to give greater insight and understanding into some of the key themes that were highlighted through the literature review. Given the nature of the collaboration, the focus of the public sector interviews was on local government perspectives, and did not attempt to gather views from across the wider public sector.

Eleven interviews were conducted with individual organisations and two were conducted as focus groups, with two and four organisations present respectively. The interviews were semi-structured, asking participants about their views on current barriers that prevent effective collaboration between third and public sectors, as well as asking participants about examples of effective and ineffective collaboration they have encountered. The interviews were analysed qualitatively to draw out the key themes emerging from the discussions.

The interviews were conducted by Scottish Government researchers, and recorded and stored securely for analysis in line with GDPR legislation. All participants were provided with a privacy notice to explain the use of their data in the research, and gave their consent to take part in the research. All respondents have been anonymised in the final analysis to protect the identities of research participants.

2. Findings

The rapid literature review highlighted three primary areas that present frequent challenges for collaboration between third sector and public sector organisations. Those areas were: funding, meaningful collaboration and procurement. The sections below will focus on each area separately, with each section combining an overview of the literature and analysis of stakeholders' interviews. The research also identified that lack of trust between third and public sectors is another challenge for collaboration. Because lack of trust is a cross-cutting concern which affects each of the other identified themes, the discussion about trust has been integrated within each section.

The report will also include examples of particularly successful or particularly challenging collaborations between third and public sectors, drawn from the stakeholder interviews.

3. Funding

Short-term funding

The literature and the interviews identify the current short-term funding model for the third sector as a major barrier to successful collaborative working. Third sector organisations relying on funding from the public sector often receive funding for one year at a time or for specific programmes of work, and do not have certainty that they will receive funding the following year. This creates precarious working conditions for individuals in the third sector, and leads to high staff turnover and ongoing loss of knowledge and expertise in organisations[35]. Similar issues are experienced in local government, where reducing the size of the workforce has been one of the ways that local councils have addressed funding challenges[36]. This leads to increased pressure and demand on the remaining workforce and results in loss of experience and knowledge within local authorities[37]. Short-term funding also means that third sector organisations are unable to focus on long-term or multi-year goals. Instead, organisations often work on short-term outcomes that can help them to secure further funding and respond to immediate or shorter-term challenges[38]. Local government is also impacted by this, struggling to effectively plan for systemic or long-term challenges - such as addressing inequalities – and instead focusing on interventions that can be provided within a financial year[39]. Moreover, where third sector organisations are reliant on short-term funding from the public sector, they can be reluctant to criticise their funders because of a perceived threat

[35] Looking ahead to the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2020-21: Valuing the Third Sector, 2019

[36] Local government in Scotland. Challenges and performance, 2018

[37] COSLA response to Resource Spending Review, 2022

[38] Social Renewal Advisory Board Third Sector Circle Recommendations, 2021

[39] COSLA response to the Resource Spending Review, 2022

that funding could be withdrawn or reduced after the current funding comes to an end[40].

Some of the challenges experienced by third sector organisations around short-term funding are also experienced by local government. Audit Scotland considers that one-year local authority financial settlements impact on the ability of local government to plan and budget effectively. This in turn creates uncertainty over future funding for third sector organisations[41]. Moreover, there is some evidence that current funding arrangements and increasing demand are impacting negatively on local government service delivery, such as social care and education[42].

Local and national government are aware of the challenges raised by short-term funding for the third sector organisations, but annual budget cycles of recent years have restricted the ability of both Scottish Government and local authorities to commit to funding over longer periods, while approaches to risk have inhibited scope for flexibility in what funding is directed towards.

Both third sector stakeholders and local government stakeholders acknowledged that funding is a complex issue, noting that local authorities are constrained by one-year funding settlements from the Scottish Government, which in turn means local authorities can often only commit to one-year funding for third sector organisations. This makes it difficult to build long-lasting relationships or implement long-term strategic programmes of work. One third sector interviewee said:

> "Year-to-year funding relationship, I think that just makes it an awful lot harder to build that trust and also the amount of time you spend putting in proposals, developing the relationship."

Interviewees also talked about the fact that even with one-year funding, third sector organisations often achieve amazing things that change people's lives for the better. However, lack of long-term funding can mean that a service that community members come to rely on can be discontinued, with nothing available to replace it, leaving individuals who were using the service without support. The research also suggested that short-term funding can also undermine the ability of third sector organisations to work on longer-term strategic issues, or to support a longer-term vision of change. Short-term funding models will often tend to prioritise immediate returns over important longer-term investments, and may leave organisations stuck in a cycle of crisis response without the means to invest in longer term or multi-year improvements, such as increasing diversity in the third sector leadership.

In order to alleviate these issues, third sector organisations spend large amounts of time and resource working on securing funding. This means that less time is available for the delivery of their objectives. Interviewees said that third sector organisations are also less likely to design multi-year programmes because short-term funding does not allow for it. Interviewees also noted that third sector

[40] Seizing The Opportunity: The Case For Embracing Civil Society's Role In Democracy, 2021

[41] Local Government in Scotland. Financial Overview 2020/21, 2022

[42] Local government in Scotland. Challenges and performance, 2018

organisations cannot compete with the public sector in terms of benefits, salaries and work security, even though some of the work that staff in third sector organisations do is very similar to work done by public sector employees. This means that third sector organisations are not always able to retain staff, as they leave for more secure and higher paying roles in other sectors.

Together, all of these challenges create an environment where third sector organisations feel devalued, and where it is difficult to build sustainable working relationships between the public sector and the third sector. As one local government contributor said:

> "We always talk about sustainability and the third sector, but how can we do that, when a lot of the funding is one-year funding, how can groups actually build that?"

The Scottish Government's recently published Resource Spending Review[43], while not making an explicit commitment to multi-year funding for the third sector, acknowledges the challenges presented by short term funding. However, Scottish Government intends that the multi-year spending framework set out in the Resource Spending Review will enable public sector bodies and delivery partners to work with the Scottish Government to plan effectively over the medium-term for the future of Scotland's public services.

Inflexible funding

Third sector and local government stakeholders both expressed the view that much of the funding received by third sector organisations and local government is inflexible, rigidly structured and/or ring-fenced. This poses challenges for organisations to respond flexibly to changes in their operational/delivery context in order to meet the needs of service users and beneficiaries as effectively as possible.

Local authority interviewees expressed frustrations about ring-fencing of the funding that local authorities receive, leading to a lack of flexibility and creativity in how the funds can be used to address the needs of different communities. Interviewees felt this can create an environment where local authorities feel disempowered, not trusted by the Scottish Government and unable to make decisions. As one local authority contributor said:

> "So it's less about local government being empowered to do what's right for its area, and more an example of Scottish Government almost telling us what's right for our area and then giving us the funds to do it. And if we really believe in community empowerment, then we just need to loosen all of that ring-fencing. I understand that that then creates a challenge for Scottish Government in terms of being able to demonstrate the impact of the funding but at the moment generally, we're leaning too much towards bureaucracy and control and not enough towards innovation and local flexibility."

[43] Investing in Scotland's Future: Resource Spending Review, 2022

Third sector stakeholders experienced similar challenges. Research shows that funding received by the third sector is often tied to specific projects and programmes, not allowing organisations flexibility to decide how best to use funding to meet needs most effectively in response to changing situations[44]. One stakeholder noted that despite the importance of collaborative working, the funding received by the third sector organisations does not recognise that building trusted relationships takes time and typically funding does not allow time for it. This again creates lack of trust between the third sector and their funders, and reduces the scope for effective collaboration.

Example of flexible funding allowing local government to help communities

A local government interviewee reflected how flexible Scottish Government funding allowed them to better tailor support to their community during the COVID-19 pandemic: "We also have another piece of work that [has started during COVID-19 and] is continuing to this day, which came about as a result of feedback from our community groups. We have given some community groups a council purchasing card and that enables them to provide food and other household essentials to people who are self-isolating and not able to get food for themselves. <…> Because it's a council card, there's no financial risk for the community group. So if the person is able to pay, that's fine, we can invoice them and they will pay that back, but if the person is in financial difficulty and can't pay, then we can use some of the funding from Scottish Government, and that's been great, because the funding from Scottish Government has been flexible for us to use as appropriate, we've been able to use some of that to pay off the balance of these purchasing cards, where they've been needed."

Research identified that reporting requirements on how the funding was spent can sometimes be overly complicated[45]. While both third and local government stakeholders acknowledged the importance of reporting how the funding is spent, they also expressed frustration with overly complicated monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements. These requirements often demand a lot of staff time and were seen as overly bureaucratic by the stakeholders. There was a view among third sector organisations and local government[46] that funders often do not appreciate how time-consuming reporting can be. As one third sector interviewee said:

> "I have examples of places, where we got a grant of a couple of thousand pounds and I have to give quarterly reports <…> The staff time is being used to just write reports."

[44] Social Renewal Advisory Board Third Sector Circle Recommendations, 2021

[45] If not now, when? Social Renewal Advisory Board report, 2021

[46] COSLA response to the Resource Spending Review, 2022

Some stakeholders said they would prefer to have a bit more flexibility around reporting, for example, telling narrative stories on how the funding was used instead of providing mostly quantitative data to the funders.

Finally, interviewees also said that sometimes they are asked for multiple reports of the same information, particularly by the Scottish Government, due to siloed ways of working between the Scottish Government departments. This impacts on staff time in local authorities and third sector organisations, taking away from service delivery in the communities, as summed up by one local government contributor:

> "We would much rather focus on delivering services than being caught up having to provide all this endless performance information."

Reductions in funding

An important theme emerging from the interview respondents and the literature was the overall lack of – or reduction in – funding and investment for both local authorities and third sector organisations. Research with third sector organisations working in areas such as social care found there was an expectation that third sector organisations would continue delivering equivalent services while receiving less funding and that this is not a sustainable situation[47].

Interviewees from both local government and third sector said that real terms reductions in funding received made it difficult to successfully achieve their goals or to work collaboratively. Interviewees from Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) talked about how reductions in funding are not sustainable, especially given ongoing increases in the costs of living:

> "I think that's one of the things, which is important in collaboration, it's having respect. <…> If the government wouldn't pay their staff that, and expect them to do that level or role, then stop thinking it's okay to pay the third sector, or stop thinking it's okay to keep asking for improvements year on year on year while returning no cost of living increase."

The interviews also suggested that there are particular challenges in social care, leading to third sector social care organisations sometimes having to reduce the number of hours of care being provided to individuals as a result of effective reductions in funding combined with increasing costs.

The funding situation is also sending mixed messages to the third sector, as summed up by a local government contributor:

> "So Scottish Government in previous years have said, we're really behind the third sector, we want the third sector to grow and become more important and the overall way that we deal with social issues and social challenges in Scotland. <…> But then if there's reduction to funding for the local authorities, then local authorities will look at their budgets, maybe sometimes

[47] Looking Ahead To The Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2020-21: Valuing The Third Sector, 2019

> the easiest areas to cut the budgets are not [for] your own staff, but pass it on a little bit to the third sector. So sometimes there can be a bit of a mismatch in messaging. At national level, you're really important, we want you to grow and respond, and then through the practical pressures of finance, [the third sector can say] wait a minute we're getting less money than we were two years ago, so how does that mean that we're being valued here?"

While reduced funding for the third sector causes a lot of concern, a third sector contributor also cautioned against focusing exclusively on funding, when discussing third and public sector relationship challenges, on the basis that it can mean that the third sector is primarily associated with funding in the eyes of the public sector. This respondent felt that excessive focus on funding can undermine the basis for collaborative working relationships, because the public sector starts to associate the third sector primarily with funding requests, rather than focusing on the partnership relationship.

Stakeholders also acknowledged that funding reduction is a complex topic, and it is not easy for local authorities to increase funding for the third sector, if local authorities themselves have reductions in their budgets, as summed up by a local government interviewee:

> "It's really a domino effect what happens. Scottish Government budget is then put on local government is then put on third sector, so there's a chain of events."

Lack of transparency around funding

The research found that a lack of transparency around what third sector work is funded can also present a barrier, because public sector funders are not always aware of what other work and/or projects have received funding. Large organisations such as the Scottish Government may provide several simultaneous grants to the same organisation from different departments, with no single organisational contact maintaining a full overview of the funding being provided to a given organisation. Moreover, there is also no single body maintaining a full overview of the funding provided to the third sector organisations by other funders, such as charitable foundations or the UK government. This can lead to overlaps in funded work, as well as under/over funding in certain areas. The Social Renewal Advisory Board Third Sector Circle[48] recommended establishing a giving platform, that would publish details of funding given out to the third sector from a wide range of funders. This could also be used to support better information-sharing and analysis as to whether public money is addressing needs as effectively as possible, and could support more effective working and partnership between public and third sector organisations.

[48] Social Renewal Advisory Board Third Sector Circle Recommendations, 2021

COVID-19 and funding

During the COVID-19 pandemic, various emergency funds were established by the Scottish Government and other public sector funders to help third sector organisations respond to the pandemic, and to help them survive as organisations. These funds focused on getting money out to organisations quickly, which meant that the funding application processes were often quicker and simpler. This resulted in third sector organisations being able to begin working rapidly to support people in need. The COVID-19 emergency funds often did not require recipient third sector organisations to provide typical levels of reporting on how the funding was spent, fulfil complex monitoring and evaluation requirements, or provide exact plans how the funding would be used in advance. These changes during the pandemic allowed third sector organisations to use funding flexibly to respond to the needs of communities and service users, and to spend more time on delivering services. Overall, changes to funding during COVID-19 were seen as a positive change that should be retained for the future[49,50,51]. As one third sector contributor said:

> "I expected to be accountable for that [funding] and say that at the end of the day, we've spent on this and this and this and that's absolutely fine. But I wasn't being told [by the funder] that it has to be that many of this, in this amount of time for this outcome. It was, how did you meet the need? How did you identify the need?"

Stakeholders also said that simpler and more flexible funding available during COVID-19 meant that local authorities and third sector organisations were able to support communities quickly, target funding to those most in need and be creative in their approaches. Local authority interviewees talked about having flexibility to decide to use some of the emergency funding combined with existing budgets to do what they thought was the right thing, for example spend more on food provision in the community. A third sector contributor talked about how social care organisations received funding directly from the Scottish Government that also allowed them to be flexible and decide where the funding was most needed and address those challenges. One local government contributor said that they would like to see some of these changes retained:

> "I think I would like us to re-assess some of the governance structures and some of the regulations and compliance and how necessary and relevant they are and to learn the lessons of COVID-19 by being more flexible. Actually there wasn't a higher risk and we got things done much more effectively. So to look at how can we continue to have more agile system and how can we continue to make it more responsive and look at what was done."

[49] Rapid Evaluation of the Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund | Foundation Scotland, 2020

[50] Review of the Small Grants Fund, 2021

[51] Evaluation of the Wellbeing Fund, 2021

The Scottish Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy[52] acknowledges the energy, flexibility and innovation exemplified throughout the pandemic. It takes the learning from that which characterised the way in which public services, businesses, communities and the third sector responded to the pandemic and sets out a process to systematise and scale successful approaches. It also makes a commitment that community involvement and empowerment must become the norm not the exception both in service design and delivery.

Funding and trust

The varied issues around funding impeding collaboration between third sector, local government and wider public sector outlined in the literature and stakeholder interviews came back to an underlying problem of lack of trust. Third sector organisations felt that public sector organisations were not trusting them, local government stakeholders felt not trusted by the Scottish Government and this lack of trust led to various restrictions in funding agreements, such as funding having to be spent on pre-specified projects, and extensive monitoring of how the money was spent. One third sector interviewee said:

> "[Everyone says] if we had the funding issue resolved, everything would be better, but I don't think it is that. I think that's slightly an avoidance strategy so we don't have to talk about the real stuff, about trust and about power and about who has it."

On the other hand, organisations that received the emergency COVID-19 funds reported saying they felt trusted by the public sector because of reduced bureaucracy and quick application processes[53]. Overall, both local government and third sector stakeholders during the interviews talked about how COVID-19 increased trust around funding between partners working collaboratively. However, in the current context of COVID-19 recovery, there were concerns that some organisations are going back to pre-COVID-19 ways of working, risking losing some of the gains in trust that some third sector organisations and local government had experienced. A local government contributor talked about the importance of trust and how lack of it in the pre-pandemic times can lead to ineffective working relationships:

> "[During COVID-19] we didn't do anything that was illegal, that was fraudulent, that was non-compliant, and we still managed to do it quickly and efficiently. So I think it comes back to the very first point that I spoke about, trust. People were trusted and when we don't have trust, we put in all these rules and regulations and check points that are often unnecessary, just because we don't trust people. And if Scottish Government put that and UK government put that on to local government, we then put that on the third sector <…> and it just becomes that chain."

[52] COVID-19 Recovery Strategy: for a fairer future, 2021

[53] Lessons learned - Scottish Community Alliance, 2020

4. Meaningful collaboration

A lack of 'meaningful collaboration' was the second major barrier to successfully working together that was identified in the literature and stakeholder interviews. While both third and public sector organisations might acknowledge the importance of collaborative working, this does not necessarily ensure that any ensuing collaboration will be meaningful and successful. Literature and stakeholder interviews suggest that better understanding between sectors, equal partnerships, open communication, empowerment of communities and trusted relationships are key components of meaningful collaboration. Below we outline these aspects of meaningful collaboration in more detail.

Promoting better understanding between sectors

The research suggests that inadequate understanding between third sector organisations and public sector organisations about the statutory duties and operational challenges that each sector faces can impede meaningful collaboration[54,55,56]. Third sector organisations are not always fully aware of the statutory requirements that local authorities and/or national government are required to operate within. Charities and community groups can lack understanding of the structures, processes and culture that shape national and local policymaking. Moreover, third sector organisations can lack capacity to engage with the public sector and also have conflicting views on policy, making it more complex for the public sector to engage meaningfully with the third sector. This lack of knowledge from third sector organisations about how policymaking works can lead to the public sector becoming frustrated with the third sector and can undermine the third sector's influence on public sector decisions[57]. Interviewees talked about how the third sector not being involved in local authority work and budget planning can lead to the third sector having limited understanding of the budgetary constraints experienced by local authorities.

Conversely, local authorities and/or national government may not appreciate the particular challenges that short-term funding creates for third sector organisations, while policymakers can also lack understanding about the third sector and what it does[58]. Some interview respondents felt that the public sector sometimes views the third sector as an extension of the public sector, rather than an equal partner that is working with them to deliver goals.

Moreover, inadequate understanding of other sectors can lead to third sector or public sector organisations having negative experiences when collaborating. This

[54] Seizing The Opportunity: The Case For Embracing Civil Society's Role In Democracy, 2021

[55] Principles for Positive Partnership, 2020

[56] Social Care Briefing by Audit Scotland, 2022

[57] A shared interest: the relationships between policy makers and charities, 2022

[58] Seizing The Opportunity: The Case For Embracing Civil Society's Role In Democracy, 2021

can entrench negative views about other sectors and lead to further poor collaboration.

It was acknowledged by the interviewees that better mutual understanding of these issues could support closer working relationships between the sectors.

Promoting equal partnerships

Learning from the What Works Scotland project[59] found that meaningful collaboration is hard to establish in situations where all parties in the collaboration don't feel as though they are equal partners[60]. The fact that the public sector awards funding to the third sector can create a power imbalance, with the public sector being perceived to have more power in the relationship.

Interviewees said that the power imbalance in the relationship between the third and public sectors can create difficulties when trying to work together. Stakeholders said that public sector providing funding to the third sector can lead to situations where the public sector expects to be able to direct the work of the third sector; or where the public sector makes all the decisions around a policy or a project and tells the third sector what needs to be done.

Instead, respondents felt that third sector organisations should be seen as key partners to the public sector. Recognising that the third sector has different and complementary strengths could lead to a more productive and collaborative working relationship. As one local government interviewee said:

> "It should be spheres in partnership, not tiers. When you have tiers, you then have the whole issue around power and who has power and influence and <…> they're beneath the government or whoever it is who's controlling this partnership."

Research with third sector organisations expressed frustration about not being listened to by their public sector partners, for example with their contribution only being required at some steps of policy making, rather than working together with the public sector throughout the full policy development cycle[61]. Third sector organisations can view this as performative engagement, when the third sector's views are sought at certain points in the process, even if public sector does take this feedback fully into account when developing policy. This further leads to lack of trust and weakens the basis for meaningful collaboration. The public sector also often lacks the time and resources required for meaningful engagement with the third sector. For example, local authorities can have a hard time listening to everyone due to lack of resources and the large number of third sector organisations operating in each local area. Moreover, smaller third sector

[59] What Works Scotland was an initiative that worked from 2014 to 2020 to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.

[60] Reflections on What Works Scotland project, 2019

[61] Seizing The Opportunity: The Case For Embracing Civil Society's Role In Democracy, 2021

organisations can also lack resources to successfully engage with the public sector or their local TSI.

Example of sectors successfully working together

A TSI contributor talked about a project where the local council put in place a multi-agency project team bringing together one team member from the NHS board, one from the local council and one from the third sector. Project team members remained working in their sector, but were also seconded into the multi-agency project team. The TSI interviewee said: "The benefits of working really collaboratively together in that team, I think have been really immense. <…> [We were] exchanging ideas, exchanging thoughts about how to support a family, who do you engage with, who can you link with." This has led to increased mutual knowledge and understanding between the partners, exchange of ideas and more effective collaborative working on the project.

Other issues, such as different timescales for the public and third sector were also raised by the stakeholders. The public sector can spend a long time working on a policy, a project, or a fund and then only give a couple of weeks or a month for the third sector to respond. Moreover, third sector organisations can struggle to get replies from the public sector when they contact them, often having to wait weeks or months for a reply. Third sector interviewees said this makes them feel disempowered and that their time is less valuable than that of people working in the public sector.

Lack of resources for collaboration mean that while there is willingness in the public and third sectors to work together at a strategic level, that cannot always be translated into meaningful action at a tactical and/or operational level. Local authority officers do not always have enough resources to work with the third sector, while third sector organisations and TSIs are under-resourced and unable to support relationship building and collaboration as much as they would want to. A third sector contributor said:

> "It's one thing to talk at a <…> political or strategic level about the importance of collaboration with the sector, but if you then go down to the [council] officers and say, deliver this in four months, their capacity to meaningfully engage vanishes."

Open communication

Another principle important for meaningful collaboration is open communication between partners. Findings from the literature suggest that discussing and making clear from the outset what is and is not in scope in a collaboration can help to avoid misunderstandings later[62]. Stakeholders also talked about the importance of setting ground rules and clearly defining the collaborative relationship. The use of terms of reference and explicitly identifying who will be responsible for which parts of the

[62] Reflections on What Works Scotland project, 2019

collaboration, were mentioned as ways to make sure partners on all sides have a clear understanding of what's expected of them.

The opposite of collaborative advantage is collaborative inertia, which takes place when partnerships are established but fail to generate collective action and make a difference, this can be very costly for all partners[63].

Example of a partnership failing to generate collective action

A third sector collaboration with the Scottish Government was described by an interviewee. They had worked on developing a series of Principles for Positive Partnership that was meant to provide guidance to Scottish Government grant managers and third sector grant holders on how to work well together. This was identified as a need due to frequent moves in post by civil servants, who might find themselves with a portfolio of funds to manage without having a good understanding of the organisations involved, the purpose of the funds or the history of the funding relationships. This work was carried out by third sector colleagues without any additional funding and the interviewee reflected that a lot of time and energy was put into it. Unfortunately, they now come across people who are grant managers who have not heard of this work and felt that despite their efforts, the work had not resulted in any change.

The ability to have open and honest conversations was raised by many interviewees as a key to any kind of healthy partnership. Honest conversations allow the sectors working together to admit that mistakes have been made and discuss what can be done to improve things in the future, without fear of repercussions or allocation of blame. Commitment to such conversations can build trust in the partnership over time. One local government interviewee said:

> "I think that's where partnership working is developed, where you do not have to be on your best behaviour all the time, [you can] talk honestly with people, agree to disagree on certain things, but work together on the things that you can work together on. <…> It's not always sweetness and light, there will be disagreements."

However, interviewees mentioned that these open conversations don't always happen and sometimes partners working together only pay lip-service to communicating openly and trusting each other because it is seen as impolite to admit this. Lack of open communication then leads to a poor collaborative working relationship.

Transparency and communication can support a process that allows for a shared understanding to emerge over time, allowing collaborative partners to focus on common goals instead of competing for resources and/or power and influence. Research indicated that keeping the shared goals at the forefront of the collaboration often allows organisations to collaborate better, because they stop

[63] Key messages about public sector reform in Scotland by What Works Scotland, 2019

caring as much about their individual achievements and start focusing on how to meet their end goals[64]. Interviewees acknowledged that there is a growing understanding in the public sector that the third sector has a crucial part to play in delivering services and support to people and communities. One third sector contributor said:

> "Fundamentally, what we're trying to do is to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to flourish, whatever that means. <…> I'm not a big fan of describing the world in three sectors, I think that starts out by dividing us. I'd much rather see us as citizens who want to collaborate and the legal status of our employer should be pretty irrelevant."

Example of shared objectives enabling collaborative working between sectors

A third sector interviewee talked about their experience of attending a resilience network meeting that was responding to a severe weather emergency. They reflected how in an emergency situation organisations from different sectors were able to put aside their differences, share information and successfully work to address the emergency, but that this does not always carry over into more regular day-to-day collaboration: "It's almost like a parallel universe of good collaboration between community organisations, councils, and Scottish Government. <…> The common point of reference is responding to a disaster, so everyone puts their differences to one side and we all work together. So I think that's interesting that around that we're all really good and collaboration works really well, it's just the normal tedious hum-drum of day-to-day living that actually people just retreat to their positions."

In practice, balancing organisational objectives with the shared goals of a partnership can also be challenging. One local government interviewee talked about how in a local Community Planning Partnership everyone, including public and third sector organisations, is meant to work together. However, where an organisation has a target that they have to achieve, such as NHS waiting times in A&E, this pressure can often take precedence for the relevant organisation over supporting a shared improvement in the community overall.

A meaningful partnership should lead to partners sharing power and trusting each other[65]. However, despite some positive developments in relation to open communication and working together on shared goals, a number of interviewees expressed frustration about the difficulties of collaborative working when it comes to sharing power. The interviewees from third sector organisations tended to see local government as reluctant to relinquish any power to the third sector, while local government stakeholders tended to view Scottish Government as too regulatory and not allowing local government enough freedom to work successfully. This

[64] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

[65] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

makes it harder to build a successful working relationship between sectors. A third sector interviewee said:

> "The trouble is everyone's holding whatever power they've got left. It's a very human thing."

Building trusted relationships

The research findings suggest that having successful trusted relationships can help partners to overcome some of the barriers outlined above, and those established, trusted relationships can be key to avoiding barriers to collaboration[66]. However, it was highlighted that it is important to build institutional collaboration (for example, using Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or concordats, where appropriate) that extends beyond personal relationships. Otherwise, there is a risk that when an individual moves to a different post or leaves an organisation, the collaborative working relationship can break down as well[67]. Overreliance on personal relationships is particularly problematic in contexts where staff turnover is high.

Stakeholders said that the importance of those trusted relationships and the positive impact they can have on a collaboration is often underestimated. One stakeholder talked about the value of having time for informal interactions within meetings because this can foster personal connections, build trust and create stronger collaboration between organisations. Interviewees also noted that the shift to virtual meetings can make it harder to build a strong relationship with a new person – although there is some evidence that the shift to virtual interaction can also be more inclusive – for example of participants with disabilities or from remote locations[68].

Interviewees said that individuals working in the third sector and in public sector organisations should have more time to develop professional skills that allow them to successfully build trusted relationships, such as openness to the perspective of others and willingness to listen. Moreover, interviewees reflected that time is also required to build relationships and organisations have to consciously put in an effort to do it. However, often there's not enough attention paid to building relationships between partners, even though the majority of interviewees agreed that without positive trusted relationships between partners there can be no successful partnership. One third sector interviewee said:

> "If everybody is acknowledging that the only way we can get things done is to do that through good positive relationships, that trusting environment that happens on a one-to-one basis predominantly, <…> but we don't put any effort in actually fostering that, we don't value it enough to put in time, it feels to me like we're tripping over our own feet."

---

[66] Lessons learned by Scottish Community Alliance, 2020

[67] Principles for Positive Partnership, 2020

[68] Virtual meetings promise to eliminate geographical and administrative barriers and increase accessibility, diversity and inclusivity by Nature Biotechnology, 2021

Empowerment of communities

Finally, research with third sector organisations indicated that there is a need for more engagement with communities and small third sector organisations, and particularly a need to support greater empowerment of communities and service users within these relationships[69]. Greater empowerment at the level of communities/service users and their representatives can enable them to have more influence over the work of both the third sector and the public sector, designing services that meet the needs of users as effectively as possible. Communities have shown interest for greater involvement in local decision making and those who had an opportunity to take part in participatory budgeting exercise, were positive about the experience[70]. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act also notes that central and local government should support communities to work together, releasing the potential to create a more prosperous and fairer Scotland.[71] Research suggests that the public sector should more frequently use values-based and place-based approaches when engaging with community and third sector organisations and designing services collaboratively[72]. The current emphasis on developing person-centred approaches within public service design, for example within the Scottish Government COVID-19 Recovery Strategy[73], also reflects this ambition.

The majority of the interviewees said that giving more power and resources to communities or service users to help themselves was something that the public sector should do more often and more pro-actively. The public sector can have good intentions to do this, but as one third sector interviewee said, they may also lack confidence that communities are able to help themselves effectively, even if given the resources to do so.

One third sector contributor reflected how government centralisation over time has hurt local communities by taking power away from local structures:

> "Over the years of local government re-organisations, <…> we've got bigger and bigger units of governance and since the Scottish [Government] came into being there has been a process of centralisation and sucking power away even from our very centralised local councils."

Empowering communities would mean sharing power between public and third sector and could result in more equal partnerships between the third and public sectors and communities/service users themselves, supporting more collaborative working. The importance of acknowledging communities and service users was summarised by a local government contributor:

---

[69] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

[70] Local Governance Review: analysis of responses to Democracy Matters, 2019

[71] Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act summary, 2017

[72] Rethinking Scotland: Action required to include more voices in policy-making in Scotland by Carnegie UK Trust, 2021

[73] COVID-19 Recovery Strategy: for a fairer future, 2021

> "Organisations come and organisations can go, people will join, a councillor or health board can move on after five or six years, but the communities will always be there. So maybe we need to recognise that they're the kind of custodians if you like of their local story, so it's about knowing that."

COVID-19 and meaningful collaboration

COVID-19 brought changes to a lot of the issues outlined above, as many of the usual barriers to working together were put aside to focus on helping as many people as possible. In a recent article reviewing progress in the ten years since the Christie Report was published, Audit Scotland said:

> "But it's also important to ask why that happened. The answer? Because it was life and death. There was a clear imperative that trumped everything else. It would be another tragedy if the same urgency wasn't now applied to poverty, education, health and strengthening our communities."[74]

Evaluation of the Scottish Government's Wellbeing Fund[75], one of a series of COVID-19 emergency response funds aimed at the third sector, noted that continuing to build collaborative working relationships, particularly using the local knowledge and expertise of third sector interfaces and others, could be an important element in designing future successful funding initiatives. Audit Scotland said that the public sector should actively seek feedback from communities and the third sector on how they can learn from the successes of working together during COVID-19[76]. Staff from a local authority reported feeling fulfilled by working at the frontline, with communities and the third sector. Staff reported increased wellbeing and job satisfaction while managers reported never having been happier at work because departments were working together, and the organisation was united around a shared objective[77]. These examples show the advantages of meaningful collaboration that can be achieved when sectors are working together.

Example of successful collaboration between the public and third sectors during COVID-19

A third sector interface (TSI) interviewee described how during COVID they worked together with the local authority to support people in the community who were receiving social care support. The TSI mapped out changes and resources available in the community groups and were updating it regularly. TSI would meet with local authority representative weekly, where social workers would bring up cases, saying what support needs were required for each case, for example, medication delivery or a visit. The TSI would then identify what community groups or third sector organisations were able to provide that to respond to the need. The TSI was working closely together with the local authority and enabling local

[74] Christie 10-years on by Audit Scotland, 2021

[75] Evaluation of the Wellbeing Fund, 2021

[76] Community empowerment: Covid-19 update by Audit Scotland, 2021

[77] COVID-19 and Communities Listening Project: A Shared Response by Carnegie UK Trust, 2020

community groups to target their support effectively to help people in the community.

A number of interviewees reflected that the COVID-19 pandemic had changed their relationships with partners from other sectors. There was an agreement that the public sector quickly realised the importance of the third sector, existing relationships became stronger and new ones were built quickly. There was also more joined-up working between sectors.

Example of successful collaboration between local government and the third sector during COVID-19

A local government interviewee talked about a positive experience of working together with third sector organisations to address food support in local communities at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. “There was a complete breakdown of the barriers between the local authority and the voluntary sector in terms of all the food provision. <…> Food banks are really very much in the voluntary sector, and the food for school kids was very much done by local government, but actually in all of it, if we needed volunteers to help deliver school meals, we got volunteers. If the food bank needed our support on something, we’d support them. It became very fluid, the kind of bureaucracy went away, we didn’t worry whose role was what, we just tried to do the right thing, and that was really good.”

However, there were concerns that these positive changes from the pandemic will not be retained going forward. Interviewees questioned how the more collaborative working approach, increased trust and the feeling of everyone being in it together could be maintained between sectors with some third sector interviewees feeling it was not likely to continue:

> “The barrier is a lack of a pandemic or the lack of a crisis, which is kind of cynical, but I think there’s an element of truth in that.”

The desire to learn lessons from the way services were delivered during the pandemic and to embed change is a key commitment in the Scottish Government’s COVID-19 Recovery Strategy[78].

5. Public sector procurement and the third sector

Public sector procurement was the third major area where barriers to successfully working together were identified in the literature and stakeholder interviews. Since procurement of services forms the basis of many partnerships between local

[78] COVID-19 Recovery Strategy: for a fairer future, 2021

government or other public sector bodies and the third sector, it is unsurprising that this emerges as a space where stakeholders identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration. For many third sector organisations, public contracts are a key source of income[79], therefore it is important to make sure that third sector organisations can successfully participate in public sector procurement. However, evidence from the literature and the stakeholder interviews suggest that there are barriers for third sector organisations to participate within public procurements on an equal footing with other types of organisation.

This chapter will use the terms public sector procurement and commissioning. The definitions of the terms are outlined below:

Public sector procurement - the process of procuring goods and services on behalf of a public sector organisation.

Commissioning - the process of assessing and identifying the needs, allocating resources and developing the service required to meet these needs effectively. Procurement is one part of the commissioning process.

Approaches to public procurement

As part of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 Sustainable Procurement Duty, public bodies undertaking regulated procurement are required to consider how they can facilitate the involvement of third sector organisations in their regulated procurements, as well as considering how in conducting the procurement process they can improve economic, social, and environmental wellbeing in the area and promote innovation[80]. Public bodies host supplier events, provide business support activities and hold workshops with third sector organisations to facilitate their involvement in public sector procurement[81].

However, a number of interviewed stakeholders said that more flexible and collaborative procurement approaches could increase successful cross-sector collaboration further. At the moment, third sector organisations frequently find themselves in competition for the same procurement contracts rather than working collaboratively with each other to achieve common goals[82,83]. Whilst consortium bids will not be the right approach for every contract, more opportunities for collaborative procurement, where third sector organisations are given enough time to prepare bids together and apply for contracts as part of a consortium bid, could alleviate this issue. Local government having more time to prepare tenders could also help, as current one-year funding arrangements for local government mean that there is a risk of unspent funds being lost if they are not used by the end of the

[79] New development: myth or reality? The public sector's growing appetite to procure from the third sector, 2020

[80] Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014

[81] Procurement activity: annual report 2019 to 2020, 2021

[82] COVID-19 and Communities Listening Project: A Shared Response by Carnegie UK Trust, 2020

[83] Looking ahead to the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2020-21: Valuing the Third Sector, 2019

financial year. This can create pressures for local authorities to spend funds quickly, without allowing as much time for tenders as third sector organisations require. This was acknowledged by a public sector interviewee saying:

> "I think probably people need to be better in building in more time in their [procurement] exercise to truly collaborate."

Example of a procurement process undermining collaborative working

A third sector interface interviewee talked about an example of third sector organisations working with the local authority, to review and design family services in the area. Third sector organisations were funded by a grant to deliver the service, however, once the grant finished, the services went to procurement and procurement was done at a scale and level that meant it was not possible for those third sector organisations to participate because they were not large enough. The timeline also made it difficult for organisations to collaborate and put in a collaborative bid. Therefore, the third sector organisations that were previously delivering the service ended up not getting the contract to deliver that service, despite the fact that the Health and Social Care Partnership had never expressed any concerns about the quality of service being delivered. This also meant that the continuity of support for the service users was disrupted.

The research found that the complexity of bidding for public contracts can favour the private sector or large third sector organisations over smaller organisations. Larger third sector organisations tend to have more resources to prepare more complex bids for contracts, while smaller organisations may lack the same level of capacity[84]. In order to collaborate more effectively with smaller third sector organisations, interviewees suggested that different models of partnership between third and public sectors are needed. For example, a wider use of "lotting" of contracts, where a contract is split up into a series of smaller parts, enabling smaller third sector organisations to bid for and deliver one or more lot of the contract could allow more smaller third sector organisations to bid for contracts. However, it is important to recognise that for low value contracts lotting may not always be appropriate. Changes to procurement processes, such as making application forms and tendering processes simpler and more accessible could also make a difference[85].

A 'sliding scale' proportionate approach, where bidders would have to provide more or less information, based on the size of the contract was also suggested. Currently, procurement contracts that are below the threshold of £50,000 (for goods and services) are unregulated and are not subject to the requirements of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. However, this threshold was seen as too low by some interviewees and can sometimes lead to the public sector procuring smaller contracts from third sector organisations, in order to avoid going over the threshold. Interviewees also said that some third sector organisations may avoid

[84] Public Procurement Survey of Suppliers 2020, 2021

[85] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

bidding for a contract if they know the contract value will exceed the £50,000 threshold, because of the higher demands of the procurement process.

Another suggested change in the procurement was cultural, with a third sector contributor saying that public bodies tend to not talk about anything they're going to procure, in order to avoid biasing results. However, this is not something that is specified in legislation, with public sector organisations encouraged to issue Prior Information Notices on Public Contracts Scotland, to notify potential suppliers about upcoming procurement activity. This secrecy can sometimes mean that community groups or third sector organisations do not get a chance to influence what is being procured, further damaging collaborative relationships.

Moreover, participation in the procurement process can currently be very difficult for small third sector organisations, due to the resources and knowledge needed to complete all the required paperwork. As one third sector interviewee said:

> "[Procurement] is often done at a scale that makes it easy for the public body to manage, rather than right for the community to receive. I think it undermines the relationship between the people who receive services and the connections that they engage with."

Public sector stakeholders talked about the importance of engaging these smaller organisations and the need to pro-actively make changes to procurement processes[86] and timelines, allowing more time for smaller organisations to apply for contracts, to enable that. One suggestion by a local authority interviewee was to have engagement officers in local councils, reaching out to local third sector organisations and providing support to them, so they could respond to the tenders put out by the local council. This role is fulfilled to varying degrees by TSIs in some areas.

Competitive tendering

The overarching aim of public sector procurement activity in Scotland continues to be the achievement of value for money for the taxpayer[87]. The Scottish Model of Procurement defines value for money as the best balance of cost, quality and sustainability[88,89]. Moreover, public sector procurement aims to contribute positively to businesses, society and places and communities, as outlined in the Scottish Government Outcomes for Procurement[90]. One local government interviewee noted that procurement principles of fairness and transparency are also an important part of meaningful collaboration. However, some third and local government stakeholders expressed frustrations with the current procurement approach, saying that it could be improved to facilitate more collaborative working. They were critical of situations where competitive tendering processes were viewed to have adopted

[86] Vision for a Stronger Community Sector, 2020

[87] Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014: statutory guidance, 2016

[88] The Scottish Model of Procurement, 2019

[89] Outcomes for procurement, 2021

[90] Outcomes for Procurement, 2021

a disproportionate focus on price in comparison to other value considerations. Audit Scotland noted that for example, current procurement procedures in social care that are focused more heavily on price have led to competition between providers at the expense of collaboration and quality.[91] This can also lead to the public sector viewing third sector as providers of services rather than equal partners[92]. One third sector contributor said:

> "What I'd like to see: more public social partnerships[93], I'd like to see more community commissioning, more alliance commissioning[94]. I'd like to see more confidence around just using grants and direct payments where it's appropriate, because legislation does actually allow for that."

A number of third sector interviewees said that tendered services should focus exclusively on quality and not cost. They agreed that the tendering process works well for some things, such as acquiring buildings or buying goods, however they argued that services provided by the third sector were different and that focusing on who can provide the cheapest service was not the right approach. Some interviewees said that as long as tenders continue to be assessed at least partly on the basis of cost, this will remain an issue, even if cost is meant to represent a small proportion of the overall cost/quality ratio used in the assessment process. In other words, they did not feel that the implementation of 'best value' was always successful in achieving the right balance of price, quality and sustainability considerations. According to one third sector interviewee:

> "The problem with competitive tendering is, <…> in my experience, even when it's 80% or 90% quality and 10% cost, cost will always be the final thing."

However, a local government interviewee pointed out that constraints on local government budgets mean that even when a local authority would like to tender a service with 100% focus on quality, they are not always able to do that. They said:

> "I don't think [third sector organisations] think we're bad people trying to keep the money down, but they're probably unaware that the budget pressures are vast and that the implications of having significantly increased costs are really problematic for what you can deliver."

Moreover, interviewees said that the public sector should give more consideration to the ways in which procuring services from third sector organisations can bring in additional benefits, contribute to the local economy or help the public sector achieve social policy goals. This suggests that public sector organisations could

[91] Social Care Briefing by Audit Scotland, 2022

[92] Better Relationships, Better Outcomes; Third Sector Review & Recommendations, 2021

[93] Public Social Partnerships

[94] Alliance Procurement: Promises, Truths, and Behaviours, 2018

make more use of community benefits requirements[95] as part of their procurement processes. This was expressed by a local government stakeholder:

> "So okay, it might be more expensive <…> [but] I think we need to look at what we think we're buying and describe that a bit better, so that we can then enable the third sector to get more of a foothold in some of those contract areas."

Some of the third sector views about competitive tendering were challenged by a local government stakeholder who highlighted that competitive tendering can provide a fair and transparent opportunity for all organisations to access public sector contracts. Some literature sources corroborate this, saying that open and transparent competitive tendering leads to gains in efficiency and cost-savings[96]. Whilst the local government stakeholder agreed that competitive tendering processes that place a disproportionate focus on price in relation to other value considerations can cause problems by driving down prices, they also questioned the idea that there is a prevalence of contracts that are overly focused on price, saying that it was not something they encountered in their day-to-day work. They did however acknowledge that it might be an issue in other parts of the sector. They also felt that competition in respect to quality is something to be encouraged and that competitive tendering allows the public sector to demonstrate how they have met their legal obligations around procurement:

> "The reality is that tendering is one of the mechanisms by which you can ensure that you've met your legal principles, the fairness, the transparency, the proportionality. And when people are saying you don't have to re-tender this, or you don't have to procure that, <…> it's how then commissioners demonstrate that they've met their legal obligations to be fair and proportionate and transparent. And I'm not sure there's a really good appreciation of that. We just get told, or you're just being bureaucratic for the sake of it, but actually a lot of it is about being fair to everybody. So there's a bit about balancing your legal obligations with the expectations of the market without straining into big silly competitive tendering stuff."

Competitive tendering processes can be long, complex and require a lot of resources on the part of both the procuring and the tendering organisations. As one third sector interviewee said, if a public body such as local authority wishes to procure a service from a local third sector organisation, and if the service is complex, it can sometimes take up to six months to complete the process. Annual local authority funding cycles mean that after tendering is complete, the local authority may only be able to provide funds for the selected third sector organisation for six more months. However, it is important to note that local authorities can procure services for multiple years and/or build extension options in

[95] Community benefits in procurement

[96] The Costs of Secrecy: Economic Arguments for Transparency in Public Procurement by M. Karanicolas, 2019

contracts to avoid long procurement processes curtailing collaborative working when possible.

Example of procurement impeding collaboration

A third sector interviewee talked about an example of how procurement requirements can make it difficult for the third and public sectors work together efficiently, even when the public sector wants to work together with third sector organisations. The interviewee referred to a specific funding stream that Scottish Government had agreed with local government. The local authority that interviewee engaged with, agreed that part of the funding would go to the third sector: "That money [is still not distributed to the third sector 16 months after funding stream was agreed] because [it has not been worked out how to] commission that from the third sector in a way that's not going to a full procurement, which we say is not the right way to do what we want to do."

Another issue raised by the stakeholders focused on the fact that while competitive tendering is viewed as the best way to ensure that public money is used to achieve value for money for the taxpayer, it can also hide the fact that both third sector and public sector organisations spend a lot of time on the tendering process, and that in itself this costs a lot of money. They considered that competitive tendering may not always be the best way to make sure that public money is spent responsibly. This was summarised by a third sector contributor :

> "If you have ten [third sector organisations] applying for a tender, they all put in three or four days [of work], which is an underestimate to begin with, [overall] you have 30-40 working days put into [applying for a tender] that somebody somewhere is funding, but only one of them is potentially going to get the contract. It's just shifting the cost, it's not better value. <…> It means that [funds are taken out] of direct service delivery or <…> public donations or fundraising efforts [are used] to fund [applications for a tender]. There's never been any acknowledgement that I have seen that that's what happens, so I think <…> public sector procurement, doesn't actually save the public purse any money, just shifts where the costs of that are felt."

Finally, third sector organisations said that they sometimes choose not to bid on public sector contracts, because they cannot cut costs sufficiently to compete with large private sector organisations. Public sector suppliers are asked to commit to Fair Work First principles, that include no inappropriate use of zero-hour contracts and payment of Real Living Wage[97], however some third sector organisations are not able to do this while also keeping costs low enough to be able to compete with large multi-national private sector companies. Stakeholders drew attention to this and said that if the public sector wants to work with the third sector organisations, they had to take this into account.

[97] Fair work and procurement, public sector procurement

COVID-19 and procurement

Both third sector and local government interviewees said that while the changes to public sector procurement processes during COVID-19, such as using accelerated timescales to award contracts, use of direct awards or light touch regimes to enable procurement of goods and services with extreme urgency[98] were necessary at the time, these flexibilities could not be continued indefinitely. Instead, as outlined above, they were keen to explore how procurement approaches could be improved to support more effective collaboration in future.

[98] Coronavirus (COVID-19): procurement regulations for public bodies SPPN 4/2020

6. Conclusions and Next Steps

It can be concluded from the rapid literature review and stakeholder interviews undertaken that the four key areas that have emerged - funding, meaningful collaboration, procurement and lack of trust, present frequent challenges for collaboration between third sector and public sector organisations. This report highlights that there is a need for improvements to practices, processes, and relationship building across the public and third sectors if these barriers are to be overcome and changes, like those seen in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, are realised.

These research findings will be used to guide engagement with the third sector on the design and development of a number of areas of work throughout 2022-2023. These will aim to catalyse and enable positive collaboration, explore practical ways of tackling some of the barriers to collaboration, and focus on learning about what works.

The planned projects include:

- Working with a range of stakeholders to understand what fair and sustainable funding means across sectors, and to develop a shared understanding of the barriers and enablers to this.
- Using one Scottish Government funding stream (the Community Capacity and Resilience Fund - CCRF) to test more flexible, trusting and innovative approaches to funding, and learning from the results.
- Developing a shared understanding of the barriers and enablers of multi-year funding from the perspectives of the voluntary sector, national and local governments.
- Understanding and building on the results of research into the procurement of voluntary sector services.
- Developing a knowledge bank on other projects that are underway to reflect on and improve commissioning and procurement across sectors, and share learning.

Bibliography

A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22 (2021), https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22/

A Shared Interest. The relationships between policymakers and charities by Pro Bono Economics (2022), https://www.probonoeconomics.com/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=2ff5c336-b6ea-4e22-a4f2-f6ccbab8051c

Better Relationships, Better Outcomes: Third Sector Review and Recommendations by Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (2021), https://www.gcvs.org.uk/blog/better-relationship-better-outcomes-third-sector-review-and-recommendations/

Beyond the COVID Crisis – Lessons from Lockdown by Glasgow TSI Network (2020), https://www.gcvs.org.uk/blog/beyond-the-covid-crisis-lessons-from-lockdown/

Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services (2011), https://www.gov.scot/publications/commission-future-delivery-public-services/

Christie's clarion call can't wait another decade by Audit Scotland (2021), https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/blog-christie-10-years-on

Community empowerment: COVID-19 update by Audit Scotland (2021), https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/community-empowerment-covid-19-update

Community health and wellbeing. Sustaining and strengthening the role of community organisations beyond the initial COVID-19 response (2021), https://ihub.scot/media/8233/community-health-and-wellbeing_final-report.pdf

COSLA's Response to 'If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report' (2021), https://www.cosla.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/24482/COSLAs-response-to-Social-Renewal-Advisory-Board-report.pdf

COVID-19 and Communities Listening Project: A Shared Response by Carnegie UK Trust (2020), https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2020/11/01084615/FINAL_Shared-Problem-Shared-Response-1.pdf

Economic Recovery Implementation Plan: Scottish Government response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (2020), https://www.gov.scot/publications/economic-recovery-implementation-plan-scottish-government-response-to-the-advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/

Engaging with our communities to support recovery and renewal by National Standards for Community Engagement (2020), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b74b3ad7fb3972cfe271b0/t/61409e86f20b94259a7c7656/1631624839455/NSfCE+Report_Final2.pdf

If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report (2021), https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/

If not now, when? - Social Renewal Advisory Board report supporting documents (2021), https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/documents/

Key messages about public service reform in Scotland by What Works Scotland (2019), http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/WWSKeyMessagesAboutPSRInScotland.pdf

Lessons learned by Scottish Community Alliance (2020), https://scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/2020/06/30/lessons-learned/

Local People Leading. A Vision for a Stronger Community Sector by Scottish Community Alliance (2016), https://scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/final-print-version-1.pdf

Looking Ahead To The Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2020-21: Valuing The Third Sector (2019), https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/EHRiC/2019/11/7/Looking-ahead-to-the-Scottish-Government-s-Draft-Budget-2020-21--Valuing-the-Third-Sector#The-third-sector-in-Scotland

Overview of Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (2020), https://www.gov.scot/groups/advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/

Pooling Together: How Community Hubs have responded to the COVID-19 Emergency by Carnegie UK Trust (2020), https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/pooling-together-how-community-hubs-have-responded-to-the-covid-19-emergency/

Principles for Positive Partnership by Evaluation Support Scotland (2020), https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/partnerships/work-with-scottish-government/positive-partnership/

Rapid Evaluation of the Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund by Foundation Scotland (2020), https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-news/rapid-evaluation-of-response-recovery-and-resilience-fund

Reflections on the What Works Scotland initiative (2019), http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/WWSReflectionsOnTheWhatWorksScotlandInitiative.pdf

Rethinking Scotland: Action required to include more voices in policy-making in Scotland by Carnegie UK Trust (2021), https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/rethinking-scotland-action-required-to-include-more-voices-in-policy-making-in-scotland/

Seizing the Opportunity: The case for embracing civil society's role in democracy by Civil Society Alliance (2021), https://civilsocietyalliance.uk/resources-indexpage/seizing-the-opportunity

Small Grants Fund: review (2021), https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-small-grants-fund/

Social Care Briefing by Audit Scotland (2022), https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2022/briefing_220127_social_care.pdf

Social Renewal Advisory Board: our response (2021), https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-response-report-social-renewal-advisory-board/

Together We Help – Social Action During the Coronavirus pandemic by Carnegie UK Trust (2021), https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/together-we-help/

Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (2020), https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/

TSI COVID-19 Learning Project. A focus on the roles played by Third Sector Interfaces during COVID-19 by TSI Scotland Network (2021), https://tsi.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Roles-Played-by-TSIs-During-Covid-19-ESS-Report-Final.pdf

Wellbeing Fund - open application process: evaluation (2021), https://www.gov.scot/publications/evaluation-wellbeing-fund-open-application-process/

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

☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact socialresearch@gov.scot for further information.

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

social research

© Crown copyright 2022
You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/ or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.
Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

The views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and do not necessarily represent those of the Scottish Government or Scottish Ministers.

This document is also available from our website at www.gov.scot.
ISBN: 978-1-80435-989-1

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Produced for
the Scottish Government
by APS Group Scotland
PPDAS1163262 (10/22)
Published by
the Scottish Government,
October 2022

GSR
GOVERNMENT SOCIAL RESEARCH
Social Science in Government

Social Research series
ISSN 2045-6964
ISBN 978-1-80435-989-1

Web Publication
www.gov.scot/socialresearch

PPDAS1163262 (10/21)