

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

Iconic Consulting

The CYPFEI & ALEC Fund is supporting the core services and infrastructure of 118 national third sector organisations. It aims to increase the effectiveness of services and policies that prioritise prevention and early intervention and improve outcomes for children, young people, families and adult learning. A Baseline Report was published in September 2016 summarising the initial evaluation findings. This Interim Report assesses progress to mid-2018 and the emerging impact. The report is intended to inform discussions regarding the future of funding in this policy area.

Background

This Research Findings Summary presents the findings of the research commissioned by the Scottish Government and conducted by Iconic Consulting into the progress to mid-2018 and the emerging impact of the Children, Young People & Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning & Empowering Communities (CYPFEI & ALEC) Funds. Specifically, the aim of the evaluation is to assess whether the overall vision for the Fund is achieved and to help inform future decisions around this area of funding.

The baseline report, published in September 2016, summarised the Fund's background and policy context at that time. Key policy developments since then include publication of the Fairer Scotland Action Plan in October 2016 and the subsequent passing of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, as well as publication of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Community Planning Guidance, revised National Standards for Community Engagement, and revised guidance on Community Learning & Development Planning 2018-21. In addition, Scottish Government published a revised National Performance Framework in June 2018 which set out 11 National Outcomes.

Fund overview

The overall vision of the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund is to:

- Deliver nationally on improved outcomes for children, families, young people and adult learners through supporting the Third Sector in prevention and early intervention approaches.
- Strengthen the Third Sector to increase the effectiveness of services and policies that prioritise prevention and early intervention in the areas of children, young people and families and adult learning, at a national level through.

The CYPFEI element of the Fund is expected to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families through: 1) the delivery of prevention and early intervention; 2) building parenting and family capacity and skills; and 3) contributing to positive and sustained support for children and young people to achieve their potential under the GIRFEC Wellbeing indicators. The ALEC element of the Fund is expected to improve outcomes for adult learners and building community capacity through: 1) prevention and early intervention through adult learning and community capacity building; 2) support to, and delivery of, lifewide, lifelong, learner-centred adult learning as outlined in the Statement of Ambition for Adult Learning in Scotland; and 3) using an asset based approach, work with adult learners or with communities to plan and co-design learning or capacity building opportunities. The CYPFEI & ALEC Fund objectives are aligned with, and expected to contribute to, delivery of Scottish Government policy in these key areas.

The Corra Foundation (formerly Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland) was commissioned by the Scottish Government to deliver the grant management and monitoring aspects of the Fund and provide support to the funded organisations. The Foundation's role has been extended into the fourth year of funding.

Evaluation

The specific questions to be addressed by the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund evaluation are:

- How has this fund as a whole contributed at a national level towards improving outcomes for beneficiaries?
- Has the embedding of early intervention and prevention in the ethos of organisations supported through this fund been sustained or improved. If so, what was the contribution of this fund, and what has the impact been?
- Has the fund impacted on internal Scottish Government processes and ways of working, including third sector having opportunities to co-produce and add value to the development of Scottish Government policy?
- Have the capacity, skills and knowledge of the third sector improved as a result of being part of this funding programme. If so, what has the impact been?

- Have formal and informal partnerships between third sector organisations arisen as a result of being part of this fund? If so, what has the impact of these partnerships been?

In addition, the Scottish Government identified the Policy Officer role as a specific area of interest for this Interim Report.

This Interim Report is based on evidence gathered via a variety of methods including desk based reviews, interviews, discussion groups, surveys and self assessment exercises.

Progress and Support

Overall, monitoring information submitted by the funded organisations demonstrates good progress against their stated outcomes. At the end of the second year of the Fund (end of March 2018) 111 of the 119 grant recipients¹ (93%) reported they were 'on track' to meet their outcomes; a similar situation had been reported at the end of the first year when 91% of grant recipients stated progress was 'on track'.

Six grant recipients reported progress was 'probably (on track) but we have some concerns' at the end of 2017/18. However, their concerns appeared to be relatively minor and tended to involve issues the organisations had faced and largely overcome such as challenges developing new services or generating referrals from partner agencies or where other time commitments had temporarily affected CYPFEI & ALEC funded activities.

Two grant recipients reported that they were not on track to achieve their outcomes. One of the organisations had experienced significant funding issues which had, at one point, led to concerns about their ongoing viability; these issues were subsequently addressed with support from the Scottish Government and the Corra Foundation. The other organisation had also experienced funding issues following the loss of a significant contract although there was no concern about this organisation's viability.

The CYPFEI & ALEC Fund has supported a significant number of beneficiaries during 2016/17 and 2017/18. As part of their end of year monitoring submissions to the Corra Foundation, funded organisations are required to report on the number of: 1) children and young people, 2) families, and 3) adults including practitioners. The Foundation's analysis of this data found over one million children and young people, over 900,000 families, and over half a million adults were supported by the Fund².

¹ One of the 118 funded organisations was awarded two separate grants.

² The Corra Foundation revised the figures submitted by some funded organisations to take account of suspected inaccuracies. Some organisations had supplied annual data not the cumulative figures requested. One organisation reported that all children and young people in Scotland (690,000) had benefitted from their activity and this figure was excluded from the analysis as it skewed the results.

Emerging impact and challenges among funded organisations

Evidence is emerging on the positive impact of the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund on the third sector organisations it supports. The self-assessment exercise focused on key issues addressed by the Fund and the findings suggest some improvements in the way they operate, with the qualitative findings provide supporting, and in some cases, additional evidence of change. This emerging impact may be, at least partly, attributed to the Fund alongside that of other funds, internal developments at the third sector organisations and broader policy developments.

“It’s the first time that we’ve had a really long term investment into our core infrastructure, so it’s really helped us develop the work that we do over the last few years and we feel like we are just in a much more stable place as an organisation as a result of this funding and it means that as a staff team we’ve been able to grow and to take on other opportunities that we wouldn’t have been able to take on otherwise”. (Third sector organisation)

The self-assessment form gathered evidence on seven operational areas that the Fund aims to strengthen among third sector organisations. The November 2017 survey findings show ratings varied from a high of 9.0 (out of 10) for equalities, and prevention and early intervention, to 6.5 for financial sustainability and funding. Since the baseline survey in May 2016, third sector organisations reported an improvement in four of the seven operational areas (involvement in local/national groups, interaction with Scottish Government, equality issues, and organisations knowledge/skills/capacity).

Many third sector organisations reported extensive involvement in national structures and local groups, in part facilitated by core funding from the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund. Funded organisations identified the additional staff time and capacity resulting from CYPFEI & ALEC funding, and the Fund’s focus on core services and infrastructure as key factors aiding their increased involvement in national structures and local groups. Several funded organisations reported that capacity was the main constraint on their involvement in national structures and local groups.

Funded organisations highlighted improved interaction with Scottish Government and cited the Policy Officers as a key factor. It was reported that two-way information sharing with Scottish Government/Education Scotland had improved however some funded organisations were less clear about their ability to influence policy. Interaction with Policy Officers was found to be variable and some funded organisations found this challenging. A majority of Policy Officers found the role useful particularly in terms of information and intelligence sharing, and enhancing their understanding of the third sector. CYPFEI & ALEC Policy Officers spend an average of approximately 10 hours per month fulfilling the role.

Overall equality issues appear to be embedded in the way funded organisations operate. The organisations highlighted some of the specific actions they had taken with the aid of CYPFEI & ALEC core funding to integrate these issues such as in staff and volunteer recruitment, undertaking equality assessments for projects, and in roles and responsibilities. Some funded organisations identified organisational size and capacity as challenges to fully embedding equalities issues.

Numerous funded organisations reported that CYPFEI & ALEC funding had enhanced organisational capacity, particularly among senior staff, which in turn aided the development of staff knowledge and skills. The Fund's multi-annual awards were regarded as important factors here as they aided staff retention and organisational stability which can otherwise be significant challenges for third sector organisations reliant on short-term funding. Challenges included generic skills such as IT and communications as well as specialised skills such as evaluation techniques, and fundraising. A small number of organisations also highlighted stress as an issue facing staff in the sector which can be exacerbated where capacity is limited.

Funded organisations consistently reported how prevention and early intervention are at the core of what they do and stressed that CYPFEI & ALEC core funding helped them to maintain this focus. Some of the funded intermediary organisations emphasised the importance of their campaigning, representation and research work to the early intervention and prevention agenda. A small number of funded organisations reported that challenges making and receiving referrals from statutory partners can impact on their efforts to deliver early intervention to disadvantaged children and young people or families.

The funded organisations warmly welcomed the financial support provided by the CYPFEI & ALEC Fund. They specifically highlighted the multi-annual commitment (subject to satisfactory performance) and the Fund's support for core services and infrastructure that were difficult to fund from other external sources. Several also acknowledge the added importance that financial support from the Scottish Government provides. Examples were provided of efforts to enhance sustainability including controlling or reducing costs, developing income generating activities, and diversifying income streams. Many organisations described how withdrawal of the funding would affect their organisation including, in some cases, threatening their continued existence. The time consuming nature of fundraising was also highlighted.

Funded organisations report on partnership working as part of their quarterly reports and they reported it was widespread with numerous positive examples of new or sustained joint working. However, the process was seen by some as time consuming and others reported competition for funding and contracts could discourage joint working.

Conclusions

Since 2016, the core funding provided by the Scottish Government's CYPFEI and ALEC Fund has provided ongoing financial support of £14m per annum. This has supported 118 organisations within Scotland to deliver for children, families, adult learners and communities. Evidence gathered through the evaluation so far suggests that the funding has supported the broader aims of strengthening the third sector and prioritising early intervention and prevention. Organisations reported that the core funding allowed them to build upon their organisational capacity by providing a level of sustainability around central posts.

In addition to the financial support provided by the grants there have been a number of examples where the fund has provided or facilitated activities which have supported the overarching outcomes and delivered additional value for money. One example of this has been the links with Policy Officers and the ongoing support provided by the Corra Foundation. The benefits of the CYPFEI and ALEC fund were reported equally across intermediary and service delivery organisations.



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