

Labour Scottish Policy Forum Consultation Response

January 2025



Corra Foundation is a Scottish grant-making charity that works to strengthen and amplify people's voices and their power to make change. We fund organisations that progress equity, challenge poverty and support children and young people in Scotland. We believe that listening, and supporting communities in ways that work for them, leads to positive change. Our response draws on evidence from our grant making and People in Place programme.

For further information about anything in this response, please contact Julie Aitken, Policy and Communications Manager at julie@corra.scot.

Commission 1: Economic Powerhouse

Models of Ownership

How can we deliver renewed action on land, to update laws that no longer work, to empower more communities to deliver more economic transformation and to grow community wealth?

By providing flexible support and resources in ways that work for communities.

We want to see a Scotland where communities are supported and resourced in ways that work for them. Our Getting Alongside Communities programme shows that when systems can respond flexibly to community needs this enables communities to grow community wealth – creating new community spaces and employment opportunities whilst strengthening community voice and action.

One example, specific to rights and land, is the work developed by the community in Carbrain. The local community identified a need for people to know and understand their rights in relation to major construction projects in the local area. We provided a small amount of funding for a planning rights workshop designed to give local people the confidence to respond to consultations on major developments. As a result of the workshop, 87% of attendees said they would now take the time to comment on a planned local development compared with only 12.5% prior to the workshop.

As well as land ownership, how can community ownership of facilities and businesses, such as pubs, shop and football teams, be enabled to protect jobs and services?

By providing long-term support to communities and community leaders. It takes time, trust, and strong partnerships to undertake community ownership.

In 2014, Corra made a long-term commitment to work alongside communities through our place-based work recognising that many of the communities had felt left behind. Through this work, we know that high levels of community participation and ownership takes time. People often get involved by attending a group – such as a walking group, a baby and toddler group, or a cooking session – and then they become more involved in decision making processes. Ensuring funding and support for a wide range of activities in a community will be important for community ownership of facilities.

An example of this is the Cumbernauld and Carbrain Community Hub. The hub began as a small women's group based in Carbrain Primary School in 2019. Through continued support, the group developed their plan for a community space for people in their community – something that the area lacked and desperately needed. Four years later, the Hub is now open and provides a range of services including a community pantry, free community fridge, men's group, wellness group and much more. They have found that through building confidence and relationships with people accessing services at the Hub, some of those people have gone on to volunteer and provide their own input into the space and activities on offer.

Communities tell us that they value supportive partnership working and transitions into taking on more responsibility. We have seen this in community asset transfers which are a significant undertaking for a community. We have supported Cumnock Men's Shed in East Ayrshire through this process with helping the group to set up themselves, completing paperwork, and fundraising. In East Ayrshire, each community asset transfer request starts with a lease first. There is then the potential to progress into full asset transfer if the lease is successful and the community would like to continue. This has given communities support and space to manage new assets and responsibilities. It shows how shared responsibility continues to be an important part of community ownership.

Infrastructure and development

What changes can we make to our transport infrastructure and how it operates to enable economic growth?

By ensuring communities are meaningfully consulted on changes to transport infrastructure that affect them.

Neighbourhoods, in all parts of Scotland, should be thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of the people who call them home. This includes through the provision of accessible transport infrastructure to connect communities with vital services and resources. [Recent research](#) from the Dunterlie Action Group outlines the devastating impact that changes to transport infrastructure can have. The removal of the only public transport service in Dunterlie has disproportionately affected people who are most marginalised in our society. Disabled people, older adults, and women have all been negatively impacted by the removal of a lifeline bus service. 97% of respondents felt that communities should be more involved in the decision-making process around the removal of bus routes.

How will we deliver the required social infrastructure and urban regeneration (including town centres) to support economic growth and build strong communities?

By taking place-based approaches that centre the knowledge of local people.

Through Corra's work to support communities in ways that work for them, community leaders and community-led action have thrived. This has led to urban regeneration – through the ownership of spaces, provision of new services and activities, and stronger communities. Our long-term commitment to get alongside communities providing staff time, small pots of money, and connections has supported communities to:

- Acquire, create, and take ownership of community assets and space.
- Create and establish services that support local people.
- Nurture community leadership and widen participation.

Through Participatory Scotland, we have tailored the 'Every One Every Day' approach to building participatory neighbourhoods for the Scottish context. This approach creates a free-to-access network of high street spaces, where local people can learn, discover and connect with others. We've spent time working in depth to understand the Kirkcaldy area - building relationships with its communities, people and organisations – and the work is now at the exciting stage of moving into delivery. This model provides a community centred approach to urban regeneration and strengthening communities.

Workforce

There are significant barriers to disabled people and those from BAME backgrounds. How can we reduce those barriers and close pay gaps for those in employment? How can we ensure employers recognise and support people with disabilities, neurodiverse conditions and hidden disabilities?

By prioritising funding available to lived experience led organisations – including those that are Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic-led alongside Disability-led.

Racism is a systemic issue. As funders, we are part of ‘the system’, and therefore of the problem. We need to be anti-racist, by working deliberately to dismantle racism from systems, including within our own organisation. We have taken action to progress racial equity in our own systems, and within our grant making. You can read about some of the [changes we’ve made to our internal systems on our website](#) which include providing all applicants with questions in advance of interview, a new pay policy giving all staff automatic increments and removing salary negotiation, and developing alternative mediums for applications such as video and audio. We know we have more to do to take a trauma-informed approach to support our staff team. Our Racial Equity and Engagement Officer has established a People of Colour group which provides a safe space for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic colleagues. Further insight on barriers to public sector employment for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people can be found in CRER’s excellent report on [Ethnicity and Public Sector Employment](#).

Since 2020, we have distributed £5.3m of funding to organisations led by communities who have experienced racial inequity. With Corra’s own funding, we commit at least 30% to organisations led by Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic-led communities. This is delivered through funds such as Henry Duncan Grants, Sky Grants, and the Equity Programme. Ensuring that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic-led organisations can access funding is vital and is a core part of supporting the workforce. We have also funded projects that provide support for Black, Asian, and Minority ethnic people working within the third sector. This includes:

- Funding The United Voices Network which provides support and opportunities for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic youth workers, in addition to supporting youth workers providing support for young people experiencing racism. [Read more about the United Voices Network in this blog](#).
- An event, and follow up report, to understand how to progress racial equity in drugs and alcohol support services. The cohort identified that developing an

inclusive and diverse workforce including people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds is an important step to improve engagement with services.

Commission 2: NHS

Prevention

What are the best ways to prevent obesity, drug and alcohol addictions, and what is the best way to support people who are already obese or have addictions?

By taking a preventative approach that acknowledges and addresses the circumstances often driving alcohol and drug addiction – poverty and inequality. Importantly, we should prioritise a rights-based whole family approach.

We know that people in Scotland's most deprived communities are 18 times more likely to experience problem substance use, than those living in the least deprived ([Poverty Alliance, 2022](#)). Reducing poverty and inequality is a highly effective way to prevent problem substance use. Preventative approaches should focus on this but must not come at the expense of frontline services. Preventative approaches should consider the whole family by providing early intervention that provides practical, long-term and relational support for families who are struggling. Our research [Connections are Key](#) outlines the positive impact of relation approaches and what these approaches should look like.

To support people who already have substance use problems we must fund services properly including vital third sector services. A connected and joined up landscape of support and services across sectors in a place is vital. This is about providing good services, harm reduction and community-based support that meets people where they are. Everyone's journey to recovery is unique to them and support and services must take rights-based approaches to reflect this. People with lived experience should be meaningfully involved in shaping effective support and services. Within funding, we do this through lived and learnt experience panels across our many of our funds. When doing this, it's important that a trauma-informed approach is taken.

Many examples of impactful third sector services can be found in the recent [National Drugs Mission Fund Report](#). Many third sector organisations provide holistic support across a range of issues that an individual or a family may be experiencing which we know is important in creating lasting change. An example of this is Barnardo's funded through the Children and Families Fund. They deliver whole family support for families affected by substance use across Dundee. Activities include emotional support, practical advice, confidence building, mentoring, and peer support. The organisation takes a holistic approach to working with families, identifying risk at an early stage, and implementing appropriate harm reduction and support methods.

Lastly, we must fund organisations providing support to Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people. Our recent insight report on [Racial Equity in Substance Use Services](#) identifies that more needs to be done to take an anti-racist approach within the sector ensuring that people are supported in ways that work for them. The report highlights several opportunities to strengthen support for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic people with substance use addictions. This includes addressing structural issues by providing dedicated funding to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups working within the drugs and alcohol sector to make strategic change in policy and service delivery.

Additional Support Needs

What is the role of the third sector? Are there any examples of good practice of supporting young people with ASN across the public, private and third sectors?

The third sector delivers vital support for young people with additional support needs providing opportunities to learn, connect with others, and participate in society.

We fund many organisations and community groups delivering a range of support – all designed to widen access and ensure that young people with additional support needs can thrive. Many of these are small community groups set up by community leaders who want to create change and provide safe spaces for young people. Through our Getting Alongside Communities programme, a local mum, Stacie, was able to speak with a Corra Community Coordinator about an idea she had for a tabletop gaming group for neurodiverse young people:

“We spent weeks looking into funding and how to start a group but nothing I found was particularly helpful for our situation. I spoke to Angela from Corra about setting up the group and she was extremely helpful. She talked through the idea with me and gave me some advice on things I was not sure about. She made me feel confident that we could start the group and be successful.

The [application] process meant we did not wait months to see if we were successful, no public voting system to see if we got money, no huge list of requirements and restrictions and no submission windows.

We have now received funding that will allow us to continue the youth group for at least the next 2 Family Activity Group contd. years and buy all the supplies we need to continue. Now that our groups future is secure and we have more volunteers, we are now working on promotional materials to increase our members. The group is doing fantastic and the feedback and thanks we have had from parents is very positive.” Stacie, Langlees

By providing small, flexible funds to test ideas – the group was set up quickly with support and is now thriving. Through our larger grants, we also support many third sector organisations providing a range of important support to young people. This includes:

- **Autism and Neurodiversity – North Scotland** received £125,000 through **Promise Partnership** funding for a pilot project to #KeepThePromise for neurodivergent children and their families. This work takes a preventative approach focused on building trusting relationships and keeping families together. You can read more about this [work on a blog here](#).

- The Beeslack Allstars who use sport to connect and support young people with additional support needs. One young person says *“Club is a safe place where I can have fun and feel a part of it and fit in and not made to feel different.”* Read more about the [Beeslack Allstars on our website](#).
- Through our Henry Duncan Grants, we support many charities providing a range of cultural and social opportunities to young people with additional support needs. One of the funded groups Just Dive In provide swimming, water safety and accessible scuba diving to people with disabilities or mental health conditions. [Read more about Just Dive In CIC in their blog](#).

Care experienced children and young people

What is needed to keep The Promise made to children and young people? How do we improve the provision for care experienced children?

Challenges remain for organisations working to Keep the Promise. Long-term funding, support for the workforce, and taking an anti-racist approach is needed to Keep the Promise to children and young people.

The Promise Partnership has provided £20m million in funding to support organisations to #KeepThePromise and help drive forward change that matters to children, young people, and families. This includes investment from STV Children's Appeal and Cattnach Trust, in addition to the funding we manage on behalf of the Scottish Government. These funds have supported many interventions to improve the provision for care experienced young people.

- 95% of grant holders are changing their systems and support for children and young people with care experience.
- There is increased partnership working, with 80% of grant holders reporting that partnerships were working well.
- Most importantly, the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of Scotland's 'care system' is valued, with 80% of grant holders involving people in the design and delivery of their services.

We know challenges remain for organisations working to Keep the Promise. Our work alongside funded organisations, and analysis of their reports, tells us there are opportunities to strengthen work to Keep the Promise. Many of these are system-wide challenges facing the third and public sectors.

Progressing anti-racism within the care sector would support organisations to Keep the Promise.

Insights from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic-led organisations working to Keep the Promise highlight a significant need, and opportunity, to take an anti-racist lens to Keep the Promise. Passion4Fusion have developed a Toolkit for the Social Care Workforce to support delivery on The Promise to African Diaspora children and families. Project Esperanza deliver training for organisations on keeping the promise for all of Scotland's children. This training explores bias in child protection policies, how to create a culturally sensitive care system, and shares first-hand the care experiences of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic children. We know, from conversations with grant holders, that there is more to do to mainstream anti-racist approaches across the sector including within the workforce.

Improving workforce wellbeing and remuneration levels would support organisations to Keep the Promise.

36% of organisations have experienced staffing challenges - a combination of burnout, and remuneration levels that may not reflect the complexity and demands of the role.

Providing longer term funding would support organisations to Keep the Promise.

39% of organisations told us time constraints and short-term funding cycles, alongside recruitment challenges mean that one or two years is sometimes insufficient to deliver innovative systems change work.

We know that important and meaningful change is happening across Scotland and funding has played a role in Keeping the Promise and improving the 'care system'. The third and public sectors collectively face constraints of resources, finance and timeframes and addressing these will be vital to Keep the Promise to Scotland's children and young people.

Further reading about the Promise Partnership Funds in our [Promise Partnership briefing](#).

Having a home

What can be done to prevent people becoming homeless?

Addressing the cause and effects of poverty is a vital step to prevent homelessness. Providing person centred support through schemes such as Housing First alongside advice and legal support helps to reduce homelessness.

Housing's position between market and state offers governments a significant opportunity to create a housing system that prioritises houses as homes. As with many of the challenges facing society, tackling poverty and its effects is a fundamental part of preventing people becoming homeless. Having the solid foundation of a home is essential for people who are struggling under the weight of poverty. We know that a safe and affordable home relieves pressure on people's lives and on their mental health too.

Housing First

Preventing people becoming homeless will take a whole system approach that addresses housing inequalities across place and across tenure. However, Housing First tenancies provide an important part of ongoing work to prevent recurring homelessness for vulnerable populations. Corra delivered the Housing First Pathfinder – which scaled up Housing First delivery to 579 individuals across Scotland. Many of the people supported had been homeless for long periods, with 44% having been homeless for at least five years during their lifetime. There were many accounts of improvements in Housing First tenants' health, reduction or stabilisation of substance misuse, and increased engagement with healthcare services (Scotland's Housing First Pathfinder Evaluation, 2022). A housing first approach should be central to any housing strategy designed to prevent people becoming homeless.

Legal support

Through the Third Sector Homelessness Fund which we delivered on behalf of the Scottish Government, several projects were funded to provide legal support for individuals to prevent homelessness. One of these, Legal Services Agency provided emergency legal representation to people at risk of homelessness by developing a presence at Glasgow and Dumbarton Sheriff Court Emergency Help Desks and providing weekly outreach clinics in court on the days when eviction and mortgage repossession hearing days. This legal support, provided when people needed it most, prevented people from being evicted or from having their home repossessed. This work showed that there are many avenues for preventing homelessness if legal advice is received at the right time.

A long-term approach to tackle the causes of homelessness alongside person-centred services to support people at risk of homelessness is core. The examples included here are just some of the ways this could be effectively done.

Commission 4: equal and safer communities

Local Government

In what ways can an incoming Scottish Labour government use the decentralisation of power to build communities, tackle poverty and grow the economy? Should the level of ring-fenced funding from the Scottish Government to local government be reduced?

Throughout our response, we have referenced the need for communities to be supported and resourced in ways that work for them. Each community is different, and support needs to be flexible adapting to each community. We know that some communities will require more support and resource to build capacity because of historic inequity. Communities will require long-term support, independence, and the ceding of power to transition into increased community led decision making. Practical steps could include work to simplify opportunities and processes for community voices to influence. In each local authority area, there are an array of plans (LOIP, Locality Plans, HSCP Plans, CLD Plans, Local Development Plans, Local Place Plans) each led by a different organisation or local authority department. Communities tell us that current decision-making opportunities are onerous and require a certain degree of confidence and experience in communities – e.g., Local Place Plans/Community Planning Partnerships. Work to support communities and people to meaningfully engage with existing systems would be beneficial.

Social Justice

How can we regenerate urban areas for the benefit of their communities? How can we also regenerate our town centres, increase retail, hospitality and the night-time economy?

We believe that providing support and resource to communities in ways that work for them is vital. Throughout this response, we have shared ways that this can be done providing flexible, supportive and responsive funding and support structures that take a place-based approach. This includes our work to develop Participatory Scotland in Kirkcaldy seeking to providing flexible and easy to access community spaces alongside staff to help bring ideas to life.

On the night-time economy, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights have produced [research on racism in the night-time economy which](#) would be important to consider when thinking about regenerating the night-time economy. This research finds that **racism remains a prevalent issue within Scotland's night-time economy**. As a result, not all bars, pubs and nightclubs are welcoming spaces to people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, which can discourage them from fully participating in the night-time economy and enjoying all the live music, dance and socialising that can come with it (Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, 2023)

What is the best way of tackling fuel poverty in rural and remote areas and for those on the lowest incomes within devolved powers?

At Corra, human rights and action on equity are a golden thread throughout our work. Cash first approaches offer a rights-based and dignified way for people to pay for their essentials.

Cash first is an alternative to food banks or in-kind support providing people directly with money or vouchers. It offers flexibility for people to decide what their immediate needs are; that might be purchasing the essentials, buying school shoes for their child, or paying an energy bill. Cash first can be an effective and dignified form of support for people facing hardship.

Whilst food insecurity and fuel poverty continue to rise across Scotland – we think that ensuring choice and dignity in how people guarantee their essentials is vital. Since 2021, we have made 800 cash first grants to 600 community groups across Scotland. These 600 groups have distributed over £3million in cash or vouchers to people on low incomes or those struggling with the effects of the cost-of-living crisis. People have been supported to pay for essential living costs with dignity through a cash first approach.

The third sector delivers essential services across a range of social justice priorities, how can the Scottish Government work better with the third sector to help deliver effective services?

There is a great opportunity for the Scottish Government to take a progressive and trusting approach to provide fair funding for third sector organisations. We know that multi-year funds that are unrestricted, or flexible, allow third sector organisations to plan and deliver more effectively. Writing funding applications takes a lot of time and third sector applicants rightly weight up whether the time they spend will be valuable in terms of the funding secured. Writing one application to secure multiple years funding is more efficient. At Corra, applicants conservatively spent over 3100 hours completing 822 application forms in 2023.

Long term funding allows organisations to take preventative approaches alongside creating solutions that stick.

The third sector is a diverse group of organisations working to achieve positive change across society. Each has their own social goals they work to realise. These are big goals which take time to achieve. Transitioning to longer term funding arrangements could provide security for the third sector to take preventative approaches alongside creating solutions that stick.

“We are hugely concerned that the funding is likely to run out... this year and that we have created a service with a wide geographical reach and capacity to work with a large volume of parents including those with drug and alcohol issues, who are impacted by poor mental health and some of whom are families on the edge of care. It will feel hugely detrimental to have to end this work. We are attempting to secure funding from elsewhere within a hugely competitive fundraising environment with no guarantees that this valuable and valued work can continue.” Grant Holder

Grant holders have told us that when grant programmes start out as a single yearly programme, and then are extended for single years repeatedly – that this restricts their ability to plan and to tackle issues effectively. One organisation told us that had they known a fund would eventually run for nine years (albeit under different iterations) they would have operated and planned differently, they would have had more confidence to take bold action.

Long term funding improves staff recruitment and retention which is a recurring challenge across the third sector.

Transitioning to longer-term funding arrangements could allow organisations to keep staff, skills, and knowledge. Research from the Scottish Centre for Employment found that insufficient and unstable funding are key factors in employee insecurity.

We regularly hear similar challenges from Corra's grant holders. A key challenge in delivering work is keeping skilled staff if funding is allocated often on a yearly basis.

There is also an opportunity to deliver more equitable access to funding – particularly for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic led organisations.

Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities are among those most impacted, and historically have been under resourced and underfunded. The transition towards ring-fenced, unrestricted, multi-year funding is a key solution to address this and ensure equitable access to funding. Corra are committed to increasing the resources available to Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic community-led organisations. We seek to do this through establishing dedicated programmes and ring-fencing proportions of funds wherever possible. When grants are made from Corra's own funds, there is a commitment to ensuring there is a minimum of 30% ring-fenced for Black, Asian, and Minority ethnic-led groups. We now provide unrestricted funding of up to five years through our Henry Duncan Grants which includes a 30% ring-fenced funding pot for Black Asian and Minority Ethnic organisations.

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights have written an insightful blog outlining how funders can better support anti-racism in Scotland. In this blog, they share their reflections on the impact of short-term and project-specific grants particularly for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Led Organisations.

"...the rigidity of the short-term and project-specific grants favoured by funding bodies [...] can pressure organisations to conform to rushed, top-down ways of working in order to deliver institutionally recognised outcomes to grant-makers."

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

We believe that providing multi-year unrestricted funding with ring-fenced funds for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic led groups is a key way to advance anti-racism and address historic inequity in funding.

International Development

In funding international development work in partner countries, there are opportunities to ensure key values and commitments to shifting the power are reflected in any approach to grant making.

We explored how progressing equity and shifting the power could be strengthened in our international grant making processes. We did this through the [Voices, Relationships, and Partnerships in International Development project](#). This is a collection of briefings, reports and presentations that highlights feedback from participants about how funders can support respectful and equitable partnership work between organisations based in Scotland and those in partner countries.

About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

Our ways of working

At Corra we have a set of principles that we strive to put into practice across our roles as an employer, independent funder, charity and partner, as well as in our influencing activity.

We will:

- Listen and respond to people, communities and organisations and amplify voices that are less well heard – their wisdom is at the heart of Corra's approach.
- Build relationships, always working alongside others on the basis of shared power, mutual trust and shared learning.
- Pursue diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), trying to challenge structural discrimination and contribute to radical shifts in the funding sector.
- Be an open, trusting and flexible grant maker.
- Ensure we contribute to tackling climate change, through our investments, operations and grant making and encouraging others to take action alongside us.
- Be bold, taking considered risks and supporting others to do the same.

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