

Corra Response

Call for Views Public Service Reform Committee Pre-Budget Scrutiny

August 2026



In July 2026, Scottish Parliament's Public Service Reform Committee sought views as part of its pre-budget scrutiny 2027/28. The Committee's pre-budget scrutiny inquiry aimed to consider how the 2027/28 Scottish Budget can promote public service reform. This document shares Corra's submission to this call for views. As with all submissions like this, Corra only responds to questions where we hold knowledge and evidence from our work.

At the outset of our submission, it is important to note that Corra Foundation's Chief Executive Officer is a member of the Public Service Reform Board.

Secondly, for clarity of terminology used throughout our response, we've included how we understand Public Service and the Public Sector.

Public Service includes any services provided to meet the needs of a population. These are most often provided by, or funded by, government or public bodies but also by voluntary or charitable organisations and private business.

Public Sector includes the infrastructure of parliament, government, and public bodies such as local authorities or arm's length bodies. This includes some public services, but not all.

Beyond the financial benefits that the Public Sector Reform (PSR) Strategy aims to achieve, what are the key outcomes that reform should be aiming for?

Outcome 1: People across Scotland live good lives with high levels of individual wellbeing and community cohesion.

Achieving this outcome is both good for our population and brings financial benefits. Through a shift to prevention and early intervention, it is possible to reduce future demand on services, and through strong communities we unlock community-owned and responsive solutions.

One contribution to achieving this outcome would be to adopt learning from Corra's Place Based work delivered through two programmes: Getting Alongside Communities (<https://www.corra.scot/people-in-place/getting-alongside-communities/>) and Every One Every Day currently running in Kirkcaldy (<https://www.corra.scot/people-in-place/appetite-for-change/>). These programmes see communities supported to create vibrant initiatives and activities that make the most of local assets and address the local challenges that matter most to people, such as access to space, transport, health inequalities and wellbeing. Investment levels are modest and the most powerful impact often comes from work that is asset-based and inclusive. For example, in Cumnock the community created new spaces, homes, and a sense of community belonging recognising how important these aspects of life are for people to be healthy and well (<https://www.corra.scot/cumnock-annual-update-2024/>).

Additionally, to improve outcomes for people we must work across areas such as health or housing to address underlying drivers of inequality such as racism, poverty, and gender. We see many examples of how to do this well by groups funded through Corra. One example is the Scottish Ethnic Minority Deaf Charity who've created the Healthy Deaf Minds Project in response to the lack of support available to access mainstream advice and information on health-related subjects, including mental health support services for Black and racially minoritised people (<https://www.corra.scot/scottish-ethnic-minority-deaf-charity-healthy-deaf-minds-project/>).

Outcome 2: Public Sector Reform creates the conditions that enable, rather than hinder, such as flexible funding and multi-year funding.

There is an opportunity to shift how we fund the Public Sector and Public Services that would provide certainty across sectors to deliver whilst also reducing the costs associated with funding allocation, application and reporting cycles. The third sector plays a vital role in the delivery of public services. Multi-year and flexible funding could support preventative approaches to the big challenges facing Scotland. Grant

holders tell us that funding that lasts a single year restricts their ability to plan, innovate and to tackle issues effectively.

Important work is being undertaken by the Institute for Voluntary Action Research to advance Open and Trusting Grant making Principles (<https://www.ivar.org.uk/open-and-trusting/>). These principles aim to create better funding conditions that enables organisations to deliver change. Embedding these principles within the Public Sector could be an important way to deliver Public Sector Reform.

Multi-year funding could also reduce the estimated £900million spent by the Third Sector on applying for funding every year (<https://pbe.co.uk/publications/giving-pains-the-cost-of-grant-making/>). Lastly, staff retention is continually highlighted by Corra's grant holders as an ongoing challenge tied to short-term funding:

"... a lack of clarity on the continuation of [grant fund name] and the inability to provide realistic cost of living pay rises, we have seen all three of our Programme Managers move on and we have not been in a position to replace them. This has caused significant pressure of workload on the existing team." Grant Holder

"We need long term secure funding to maintain delivery levels in this vital specialist service. The recruitment crisis in qualified childcare workers has limited the qualified ratios within creche, therefore having significant impact on the service." Grant holder

Outcome 3: Systems shift to preventative investment prioritising intervening earlier before challenges become too complex and ultimately more expensive.

There are significant resources invested in our public services but too much of the resource is focused on crisis services focused on complex problems. In many parts of our systems, there is enough money to deliver high quality services but sometimes the money is in the wrong places and arrives too late. If we can shift to early intervention, supporting people and communities before challenges escalate and require more complex intervention – this should deliver better outcomes for people. Temporary services and arrangements are an example of this. Generally, solutions such as temporary accommodation, temporary care placements, or temporary staffing are both very expensive and deliver poor outcomes for people experiencing them. As an example, we could shift money from housing families temporarily to funding permanent accommodation that suits their needs.

An example from our own work where we see the effects of missed opportunities in preventative approaches is through the Birth Parents Fund. This fund supports parents, predominantly women, who have had a child(ren) removed from their care,

whose lives are often characterised by layers of compounding inequality and missed opportunities for preventative intervention. Birth parents have shared their stories (<https://www.corra.scot/stories-from-birth-parents/>) highlighting how the compounding effects of inequality and lack of support lead to negative outcomes for Birth Parents who've had a child(ren) removed from their care. Our report on the Supporting Birth Parents Fund (<https://www.corra.scot/wp-content/uploads/Supporting-Birth-Parents-Fund-Report.pdf>) shares more of this work.

One strand of Corra's work is exploring how we shift to funding that focuses on investing in preventative spending and leads to eventual disinvestment in crisis funding. This work is in the early stages of development, but we hope it will offer a roadmap of how investment can navigate the transition to preventative spending. We're taking learning from our own work, and other funders and public sector partners, on how to invest in prevention, alongside alternative funding models that support community led responses.

An example of this is our small grants delivered through the Boost Fund which is a collaborative funding partnership creating a pooled fund. These small grants create positive change, enabling communities to deliver wellbeing activities and physical activities in a cost-effective way compared with the costs of statutory service provision. It is designed to fund small community groups, including those without a formal constitution, and the reporting and payment process is designed to get money quickly to groups with minimal administrative burden. You can read more about this work and the impact at <https://www.corra.scot/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Micro-Grants-for-Small-Community-Groups.pdf>. There is also a series of stories documenting community led activity through this fund which you can access at <https://www.corra.scot/boost-fund-stories-gallan-head-community-trust-western-isles/>

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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