



**The Scottish Parliament's Finance Committee
Scrutiny of the forthcoming spending review and Draft Budget
2012-13: Preventative spending**

General call for evidence

Response from Learning Link Scotland

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About Learning Link Scotland

We are the national organisation representing the interests of adult education, learning and skills delivered by the voluntary sector. We support, develop, promote and represent a dynamic membership of organisations across Scotland. Our members are voluntary organisations providing a wide range of adult education, learning and skills opportunities. Our members are leaders in addressing inequalities, empowering people and communities, and effecting positive change. By working together, we improve opportunities for communities and contribute significantly to national outcomes and achievements.

Introduction

Delivery of adult education, learning and skills is taking place against a backdrop of economic recession and cuts in public spending. Voluntary sector organisations are competing for decreasingly available funds and are being challenged to think and act differently in this economic context. There is increased emphasis in becoming more self sustaining through social enterprise activity, on clearly evidencing impacts and outcomes of programmes and interventions, and on being efficient, prudent, innovative and creative in how we run our services.

At the same time, this challenging context also generates increased demand on our services and on those of our stakeholders. As well as the big reductions in public spending, Scotland is also facing tough challenges in terms of demographic change, growing international business competition, technological developments, and the drive to a low-carbon economy.

‘Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth’ (Oct 2010) describes clearly that learning and skills are key to Scotland’s recovery and sustainable economic growth. Additionally, the Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services report (June 2011) highlights the need to focus public expenditure towards empowering people, on preventing negative outcomes and early intervention, on partnership and integration of services, and becoming more efficient as a means to ensuring that services are fit for the future.

There is widespread recognition of the potential role of the third sector in contributing to Scotland’s recovery and future delivery of public services.

An emphasis on preventative spending and partnership working is crucial to securing Scotland’s future and speaks to the heart of our members’ work in adult education, learning and skills. The Finance Committee’s Consultation on Preventative Spending is a welcome opportunity for our membership to engage with policy makers on these key issues and share their experience and expertise from the field.

Spending Commitments and Priorities in 2012-13

The commitments and priorities that will be made in Scotland must recognise and include the role of lifelong learning and collective responsibility in achieving positive social and economic outcomes for the Scottish population.

We believe that education is absolutely the key to achieving preventative outcomes – education of parents to support the Early Years Framework, education of young adults to prevent offending and re-offending, education to prevent and address negative health trends, education to support economic activity, learn to earn and education that builds community capacity are just some of the examples. Effective preventative spending starts with a simultaneous focus on a parent’s education and the link with their children’s health and well being within the community, alongside a high quality early years programme. Isolated, vulnerable and at risk communities can be prevented through multi-agency approaches, support and guidance and engaging learner centred programmes that provide an understanding of the importance of home and community.

There is generally a greater understanding of the wider benefits of education and we now require a system that reflects a holistic model of education, which puts the person at the centre to meet their needs and aspirations. For some adults who are not aware of their own multiple barriers, they might recognise they have a drug addiction but they are not aware of the education needs to prevent and improve their lives. What Voluntary Adult Learning Organisations know and do is invest their time and energy into encouragement, engagement; outreach services and working with other agencies to ensure they reach these adults to bring them into learning and education. Despite the lack of resources to do this they know this is what is needed to make the holistic model of education work.

Supporting Increased Preventative Activity

We know that preventative intervention at the right time, delivered in the right way with the right people will make the difference. This potential is not always realised at the start of a project, they need to grow and develop over time before that impact is understood.

Preventative spending will require understanding that some outcomes will not be achieved in short periods of time, because the issues that need to be addressed are generational. This will require long term thinking, planning and action, with appropriate measures to evidence impact and success. Members who work with communities who feel isolated and vulnerable know it will take years before the individuals they work with will feel empowered and able to evidence their active participation in society. We have provided examples of this in the appendix.

Important Additional National and Local Indicators

There must be careful consideration of how outcomes and impacts are measured. As well as being long term, there is a challenge in evidencing preventative outcomes. We are supporting delivery organisations in various contexts in evidencing outcomes and impacts and we have provided some case studies of these in the appendices. In working with some of our members on a programme of evaluation (Explaining the Difference), learning to plan and set outcomes and evidence their contribution. This has been mutually beneficial for us in also identifying the collective impacts that can be achieved. These organisations equally understand what can be achieved in the short term but equally what is a long term goal. Listening to them is part of the preventative approach.

The Importance of Models for Public Budgets and Joint Spending

We have seen through our members work the importance of clarity in planning and a long term investment/commitment that will not fluctuate with short term demands.

We need to foster a culture of creativity, innovation and enterprise and consider how services can be delivered to generate capital and offer leverage for further investment. We see the potential in voluntary sector skills and employability programmes being developed through a franchised model, sharing the learning and process of establishing effective programmes.

Effective Collaborative Working

Voluntary sector need their place within the Partnerships to ensure that the unique and specialist contributions they can make to achieving positive outcomes is realised. Voluntary organisations are well placed to understand the issues and needs of communities and individuals because they work with them rather than doing to them.

Voluntary sector can also add value in empowering people and communities to ensure services are designed and delivered with and for communities, addresses priority needs, and where required effect change and improvement.

There is a need for better leadership in the planning, delivery and evaluation of public services ensuring that limited resources are maximised and valuing the contribution and leadership that voluntary organisations can provide.

Transfer of Learning

To transfer the learning from a local intervention to mainstreaming and replicating what works must be in a considered and measured way. Voluntary organisations know how positive outcomes can be brought about, and are skilled at the interventions and models which bring success. With the right investments and thinking, these specialist packages

could be replicated and tailored, at the same time offering return to the organisation, for sustainable development.

Community Planning Partnerships Focus on Preventative Spending

The focus and commitments of the Community Planning Partnerships must mirror those of the Scottish Parliament and the Finance Committee in their recognition of the importance of a long term strategy and holistic approach to preventative spending.

Barriers to Collaborative Working in Community Planning Partnerships

The power imbalance is a barrier to collaborative working in Community Planning Partnerships. Voluntary organisations do not 'hold budgets' and therefore the value of their contribution can often go unrecognised.

Appendix

In 2010/11 we worked with members to evidence the impact of their work. We have highlighted 4 examples of organisations who work closely with specific groups and communities through programmes of education, learning and skills to achieve preventative outcomes, work in collaboration, transfer their learning and create models.

Voluntary Action Orkney

[Voluntary Action in Partnership](#)

Sikh Sanjog

[Using Social Enterprise to Help the Transition from Learning to Employment](#)

Rosemount Lifelong Learning

[Making a Difference; the Contribution of Community Based Learning](#)

Lead Scotland

[Taking a Lead on Learner Centred Approaches](#)

Deaf Action

[Using the Language our Learners Understand](#)

Voluntary Action Orkney

Voluntary Action in Partnership

Project outline – identifying needs

The need to address the issue of young adults with severe barriers to employment has been recognised for some time and following completion of short term projects, a gap in provision was identified by the More Choices, More Chances (MCMC) Development Group. The Group is a partnership comprised of Orkney Islands Council Education and Recreation Service, Careers Scotland, Job Centre Plus, Orkney College, Schools, Employability Orkney, and ourselves, Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO). The Orkney Young People's Employability Study (Durie and Coutts, 2008), had identified between 50 and 80 young people in Orkney in the MCMC category.

"I have enjoyed getting involved with the team activities...these are fun ways of learning skills such as working with others, communication, motivation and confidence"

The MCMC Group identified the gap, agreed a solution and worked collaboratively with us (VAO), who took on the development and management of this project. The Connect programme provides young adults (16 to 19), with up to a year's training and education. The programme, offers flexibility during the first 3 months for participants to build up to full time attendance. During this initial phase, particular emphasis is placed on the development of "soft skills". All the Partners in this project work together to ensure that participants receive a "stepping stone" to other opportunities, with the ultimate aim of improving employability.

Outcomes and impact

Fairer Scotland and Orkney Leader Funding awarded grants in the early part of 2009, allowing us to recruit staff and launch the project to deadline, aiming to provide opportunities to 20 young learners.

All of those recruited and engaged so far have Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). Headline figures to date include:

- 90% have engaged fulltime
- 45% have improved their life skills (measured using a skills scale)
- 25% have completed Learning Byte courses and subsequently have taken part in Manual Handling and Food Hygiene courses
- All now have CVs and 36% are in placements,
- 90% have completed mock application forms and all have volunteered
- 2 trainees have already left for employment

Amongst a wide range of activities, they have engaged with local MSP, Liam McArthur, both by presenting at the VAO AGM and through Liam's "Make A Difference Day" volunteering with the project; resulting in each receiving personal letters from the MSP commending their skills and commitment.

The project focuses on one to one, tailored personal and skills development within a dedicated environment to ensure these young people gain the confidence, skills and commitment to enable them to move on to the more formal programmes/opportunities offered by partner agencies.

Ensuring quality

VAO has a long standing proven track record of effective project management. We have grown and developed a number of organisations under the VAO umbrella and floated them off as independent, self sustaining organisations/businesses. We have effective internal controls in place regarding finance and management systems and a fit for purpose organisational structure.

“If I wasn’t in Connect, I would probably be drinking right now or partying last night”

A small sub group drawn from the Partnership agencies has been formed and incorporated into the management structure. Progress towards project outcomes is monitored through quantitative and qualitative data. We monitor participant’s progression through their ILPs and a Rickter Scale baseline evaluation is used together with observation, partner feedback and weekly review sessions with each

learner. The pace of the programme and duration depends on the individual participant and their individual targets. We have planned for transitions; staff will provide up to 3 months support in this transition stage to reduce the “revolving door” scenario and improve outcomes for the learners, training providers and employers.

Sikh Sanjog

Using Social Enterprise to Help the Transition from Learning to Employment

Project Outline – identifying needs

Sikh Sanjog is a voluntary organisation that works with women from the Sikh community. Our range of provision focuses on personal development, and articulating pathways including undertaking training to move on to employment. The women that use our service have missed out on formal education and have culturally defined roles that have prevented them from participating in community and society out-with the family.

In response to this, Sikh Sanjog is establishing a social enterprise community café that provides traditional Punjabi cooking. The café has run a pilot project in a community hall re-opening in new purpose built premises in spring 2010. The café is staffed by Sikh women both paid and voluntary.

Outcomes and impact

Some of the women are using the experience they have gained to enhance their CVs, find employment and access further training. A small group of women have undertaken an SQA accredited module, a first for our organisation, provided by Sikh Sanjog in partnership with the WEA (Workers’ Educational Association). Through this, they have developed the skills to take on paid employment in the new café. They have become role models; with other women now requesting this opportunity for themselves.

Sikh Sanjog staff have regular individual contact with a learner which allows us to identify barriers to participation. We then meet regularly as a team to plan, monitor and evaluate our work to meet

these needs. Our success lies in us being able to provide local training in a format that is tailored to be accessible to our women and their personal needs.

The women participating in this learning experience are gaining confidence and self esteem to allow them to participate in the wider community. The café is also providing an arena for the general public to meet a community who would otherwise be hidden. Customer feedback forms and front of house contact has monitored this.

Ensuring quality

To ensure there are opportunities to meet the individual learning needs of each volunteer, we provide a tailored induction training that provides the women with the skills needed to be a volunteer with the café but also addresses their individual development. Our learners complete Individuals Learning Plans (ILP) and sessions are run to encourage the women to think about options and choices otherwise not considered. The ILPs are reviewed at the end of the training. Ongoing training is also being developed to up-skill the community café team but also to allow for personal development.

The programme is evaluated by the participants at regular intervals and opportunities for individual feedback are provided which are then reviewed by the staff team to enable us to respond to ongoing and developing needs of the women.

Sikh Sanjog also offers a range of other opportunities to build skills, experience and employability including communication and computing classes offering accredited qualifications. Additional support is available through the offer of mentoring in a chosen area of work; this is run in partnership with other agencies. Partnerships with other organisations and the local college are vital for the responsive breadth and quality of our provision.

Rosemount Lifelong Learning

Making a Difference; the Contribution of Community Based Learning

Project outline – identifying needs

Rosemount Lifelong Learning is an established voluntary sector learning provider in North Glasgow offering a unique balance of childcare, education and guidance for adult learners. This is the story of the Making a Difference (MAD) programme, which has been developed and piloted by Rosemount and now being delivered at Rosemount's base in Royston.

With the support of the Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) and the Big Lottery, we are also delivering the MAD programme in the Gallowgate area and we are about to deliver it in two other areas in Glasgow. The MAD programme aims to improve the life skills of young parents (aged 16-25) who are social housing tenants and who are at risk of being unable to sustain their tenancies. Young parents attend for three days per week, with on-site childcare for their children, a majority of whom are under three years old. The programme includes a mix of confidence building, health promotion, financial management, parenting skills, and core skills. It's delivered in an active and attractive way, by Rosemount tutors and by partner agencies such as local colleges and drama groups. Parents receive a weekly attendance allowance and a donation towards a Credit Union

savings account. Rosemount staff provides guidance which helps parents to identify and overcome barriers, discuss and review aspirations and progress.

Outcomes and impact

The young parents have increased their confidence and self esteem since the course started. This was demonstrated recently at a Big Lottery event where the learners each spoke about their experiences since they started the MAD course. This was done through song and poetry; this growth in the ability to speak in public is a major achievement developed in only a few months. All of the young parents now have a personal development plan. As a result of this learner centred approach, five learners are now going to college, four are exploring volunteering opportunities, three are seeking part-time employment, and one has secured part-time work.

Ensuring quality

We work very closely with a wide range of local partner agencies to ensure we are not duplicating each other's work, we regularly have one-to-one support and guidance, and we complete evaluations after every 6 week block. As the service is very much holistic and learner centred we ensure all of the elements/components are up to a high standard by our on-going support and guidance and frequent evaluative work.

Lead Scotland

Taking a Lead on Learner Centred Approaches

Project outline – identifying needs

Lead Scotland exists to:

- Empower disabled people and carers of disabled people to make well informed choices and engage confidently in learning;
- Provide person centred, individualised support for learning;
- Combat exclusion from learning;
- Inform and influence the development of policy and learning provision.

We work across Scotland delivering services to meet local needs and aspirations. This year we supported a group of learners to research, design and produce a booklet for disabled students who are intending to move into Further and Higher Education. The booklet was written from the students' perspective giving practical information about obtaining the support that can be requested and included case studies which showed how barriers can be removed and aspirations and dreams achieved. We have been working with a group of Young Carers, developing their Peer Mentoring skills so that they can support others who face the same challenges as themselves. Building on our relationship with NHS professional we offer a 1-1 service where adults with acquired disabilities can re-learn their literacy skills. Learning Co-ordinators work with trained volunteers to ensure that learners have the opportunity to achieve their aims and potential at a time and pace that suits their individual needs.

Outcomes and impact

Lead's aim is not to be the sole provider and supporter of learning but to support individuals to progress to and with other learning providers. We offer a transition service which means we can assist with the process of moving on, but also retain contact with the learners and their progress. Each learner has their own aims so each measure of impact is individual. We support learners who are developing literacy and learners who are working for Higher degrees - each achievement is important and the impact for the individual is a measure of their success. For Lead, the measure of success is when a learner no longer needs our support but has become an 'independent learner'.

Ensuring quality

Each project is closely monitored by managers and staff, with input from learners and volunteers. The learner centred Action Plan provides the basis for activity and this is reviewed at regular intervals, according to individual need, to ensure that action and support needs are being met as agreed. If changes should be necessary they are put in place straightaway if possible. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their progress and activity, and staff reflect on their input and effectiveness through regular support meetings. Because each learner has an individually designed programme each project is a sum of the whole - and overall quality standards are measured within various frameworks, such as HGIOCLD?2 and PQASSO. We have bi-annual Stakeholder meetings when we gather large groups of people together in various locations to consider Lead's service and impact, and changes and improvements which can help to maintain a high standard of delivery.

Deaf Action

Using the Language our Learners Understand

Project outline – identifying needs

Deaf Action's Learning Centre for Deaf People provides accessible, "deaf friendly" community-based adult learning opportunities for people with a hearing loss in Edinburgh, Lothian and beyond. We provide courses for both people who use British Sign Language (BSL) and people with an acquired hearing loss who tend to use speech and lip-reading to communicate. We are an SQA approved centre, and provide both accredited and unaccredited courses in English and IT, and a range of other courses including BSL for hard of hearing people, photo editing, patchwork and art.

Deaf people often struggle to access mainstream community-based adult learning for a number of reasons:

- Centres can be inaccessible with, for example, reception staff unable to communicate with deaf people, voice operated entry systems, lack of induction loops, radio microphones etc
- Centres may not have the time, budget or knowledge needed to organise communication support such as BSL / English interpreters or note-takers
- The lack of qualified interpreters and note-takers in Scotland means that it can be difficult to get communication support, even if other barriers are overcome

- The experience of being the only deaf student in a class, unable to communicate with peers during breaks, for example, can be daunting and isolating

For many people who have BSL as a first language, English is, at best, a second language. At the same time, BSL users may need to rely on written English more than hearing people, simply to carry out day-to-day transactions without the use of voice telephones, and to communicate face-to-face with many services. Our English courses are delivered in BSL (which has its own grammar very distinct from English) and have proved popular with those adult learners who want to improve their functional literacy for work, day-to-day and family life.

Impact and Outcomes

Our learners tell us that they appreciate the chance to learn directly in their own language, alongside others who are deaf and share the same language or methods of communication.

Our IT and English classes have enabled deaf people to make practical improvements to their lives, including:

- Using social networking sites such as Bebo and Facebook to stay in contact with friends
- Using email to contact friends, family and services
- Producing publicity materials for community activities such as Edinburgh Deaf Sports and Social Club

Hard of hearing people can lack social confidence. As well as delivering useful skills, our courses enable hard of hearing people to communicate freely using technology such as radio microphones, in an environment where appropriate communication tactics are used and the day-to-day struggle to understand what others are saying is overcome.

Ensuring Quality

We ensure that we are delivering the courses that deaf people want, and carry out regular consultation and feedback. Our Learning Centre Course Organiser is herself a Deaf BSL user, and all staff at our Learning Centre base are able to communicate with learners.

We deliver courses directly to deaf people in their first language or method of communication, so our courses for BSL users are delivered by deaf BSL users directly in Sign Language, without the need for interpretation.

We use personal learning plans, which are regularly reviewed to ensure that learners set their own learning goals and make progress to achieve these. We carry out course evaluations in groups and individually to ensure that we are meeting the stated needs of our learners.