

Inquiry into Preventative Spending

Response from the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into preventative spending, the more especially since we have some concerns about the impact of current financial policy on minority communities in Scotland.

1. How can public spending best be focussed over the longer term in trying to prevent, rather than deal with, negative social outcomes?

The Scottish Government's localisation agenda, which envisages the withdrawal of central funding in favour of block grants to local authorities, fails to take account of the situation of minority communities in Scotland. The localisation of budgetary decision-making would impact disproportionately on minority communities, and in particular isolated individuals from those communities, especially those living in rural areas, and, in consequence, may contribute to, rather than address, much less prevent, negative social outcomes.

By their very nature, there are unlikely to be significant numbers of any minority community in most local authority areas, so they will not be regarded as a spending priority at local level. At best, a local authority may fund an umbrella "minority community initiative" in their area, but this can be little more than a tick-box exercise. The fundamental point is that there is no such thing as a single homogenous "minority community" – indeed even some individual communities may not be homogenous. Rather there are many distinct minority communities each with individual, diverse, and sometimes even conflicting needs. An elderly non-English-speaking Chinese woman, for example, has as little in common with a Muslim teenager of Pakistani descent, as with the indigenous majority. Some, such as the Jewish and Sikh communities, have both ethnic and religious facets to their identity, whilst others may depend only on ethnicity or religion. A generic approach to consulting with, and providing services to minority communities cannot but fail to meet the needs of those that are minorities even among the minorities; failure to take account of the diversity of diversity must inevitably condemn any project to failure.

We are also concerned that localisation is likely to result in a postcode lottery, whereby individuals living in one local authority area have access to effective support, whilst those, perhaps from the same minority community, in another area, do not. For example, whilst the Jewish community in East Renfrewshire is large enough to be visible to service providers, the small numbers of Jewish people living in the Western Isles are not. This is true even if local authorities are encouraged to form consortia: almost all minorities have insignificant numbers even in the entire area north of the central lowlands.

National networks, and national funding of those networks, are, therefore, the only means by which minority communities can receive appropriate services and support throughout Scotland. Activities, whether national or local, that could not take place if not funded nationally, must be funded nationally.

2. What evidence can you provide from the UK and abroad to show that promoting preventative spending has been effective?

In recent years, the number of reported antisemitic incidents throughout the UK has increased¹, and the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities is often the first port of call for isolated Jewish people living outwith any settled community, often in rural areas, who have either been the victim of an incident, or else are apprehensive that they may become victims. ACPOS has stated “*fear of hate crime escalates dramatically in those who share with an immediate victim, the same group identity that has made a victim a target.*”² and, although it is statistically unlikely that any individual Jewish person in Scotland will be the direct victim of an antisemitic incident, there is, undoubtedly, a heightened level of apprehension. Typical comments from people who were not themselves victims of abuse have recently included that “*it’s quite a dangerous thing to say that you’re Jewish, especially because of what’s happening in Israel*”, and “*I think very carefully before deciding to tell someone I’m Jewish.*”

Allaying this concern is obviously time-consuming, and therefore costly in financial and other terms. The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities has responded by establishing an outreach programme to develop contacts between isolated Jewish people in Scotland, many of whom thought, incorrectly, they were the only Jewish person in their area, and with the wider Jewish community. Programmes such as this, including social events that enable isolated individuals to meet one another, sometimes for the first time, encourage the development of mutual support systems, increasing confidence, and reducing anxiety. Responses to a recent series of events included “*I often feel like an outsider but tonight I feel part of a community.*” And “*Events like this make me feel that I belong – “Four Corners” [the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities newsletter] does that too.*”³

Although clearly both effective and cost-effective, programmes like this will not be funded at local level because, as has already been stated, the small size of any individual minority means that targeted spending cannot be a priority for any individual Local Council. When there is no significant local community, effective support can only be provided nationally, and must, therefore, also be funded nationally.

¹ *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2009* (Community Security Trust)
<http://www.thecst.org.uk/docs/CST-incidents-report-09-for-web.pdf>

² Draft Hate Crime Guidance Manual (ACPOS, 2010)

³ Information about the “Kosher Ceilidh Tour”, organised by the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities as part of its outreach project, is available at
http://www.scojec.org/events/2009/09xi_soul_train/soul_train.html

Back issues of *Four Corners*, the quarterly newsletter of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, are available at http://www.scojec.org/four_corners/four_corners.html

3. The Finance Committee has recommended that the Scottish Government continue to direct its spend towards preventative programmes. Which programmes should be prioritised?

Priority should be given to funding programmes that could not be implemented without central government funding.

4. To what extent is preventative spending effective in addressing the financial impact of demographic change?

Advance strategic planning, whether for issues that impact on an aging community, or on significant numbers of migrants from the EU Accession States, is obviously a more effective use of available resources than the continual “firefighting” required to resolve issues piecemeal as they arise. Moreover, by sharing expertise, and joint commissioning and procurement, local authorities and other service providers will be able to develop and implement strategies more effectively and cost-effectively than by working alone and on the basis of “instant need”.

5. What are the main barriers to trying to focus spending on preventing, rather than dealing with, negative social outcomes? Is a focus on preventative spending less likely in the current financial climate?

There is always a temptation to focus on what is urgent (in this case negative social outcomes) rather than what is important (preventative spending). However, whilst it is certainly necessary to support people currently experiencing difficulties, it is more important, for both social and economic reasons, to give priority to ensuring that communities and individuals do not find themselves in similar situations in future.

6. How do we ensure that we monitor the impact of preventative spending over the longer term and shape budgets accordingly?

Effective monitoring, which is essential to ensure that services are reaching those for whom they are intended, should involve all relevant parties in the public, private, and voluntary sector. This may include input from organisations that do not currently engage at this level, but which are in close touch with the intended beneficiaries, such as umbrella groups for particular minority communities, or for communities of interest.

It is important not to measure effectiveness purely in terms of the number of beneficiaries, as that will inevitably result in further disadvantage to the smallest and most isolated (and so most vulnerable) groups.

7. Is the effectiveness of a preventative spending programme influenced by whether the relevant services are provided by the public, private or voluntary sector?

Whether a service is provided by the public, private, or voluntary sector is less important than that appropriate planning has been undertaken in advance to ensure

that the service and its implementation are relevant and appropriate to its intended recipients. Since different minorities generally have different needs, for example in terms of language, and culture, that again requires that all services are appropriately tailored, and not rolled up into a generic programme that is aimed at a supposed homogenised “minority community” (singular) but is in fact appropriate for no-one. In relation to minority communities, that may often mean that planning and delivery should be undertaken in partnership between, for example, the public sector and organisations working in the relevant community. Current examples of best practice in the Scottish Jewish community include:

- Jewish Care Scotland⁴, which has developed a unique partnership with East Renfrewshire Council that enables it to provide a full range of social services with a strongly Jewish ethos not only in the settled Jewish communities of the Central Belt, but throughout the whole of Scotland.
- Calderwood Jewish Education⁵, which works closely with East Renfrewshire Council and Calderwood Lodge Primary School⁶ to provide pupils in Scotland's only Jewish school with culturally and religiously specific education which is fully integrated with the Curriculum for Excellence Outcomes and Experiences. This is a unique example, because the localisation policy already in place with regard to schools results in an uneven approach and so is either not replicated elsewhere, or at best requires duplication of effort across different local authorities. The resulting uneven provision demonstrates that our concern in relation to budgetary localisation is not without foundation.
- The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities⁷ works to provide support to the smaller Jewish communities and isolated individuals throughout Scotland, amongst other activities by providing information and advice on request to local authorities, health boards, police forces, etc. It is of the nature of this provision that, except in the larger cities, it can only be provided nationally. An isolated Jewish single mother in the north-west of Scotland has no local support mechanism, but can only be given any sense of security by being connected to our national network.

Conclusion

We have grave concerns that the blanket extension of the localisation agenda will militate against preventative spending, and isolate members of minority communities, including the Jewish community, particularly those living in rural areas outwith any settled community. As the Scotland-wide representative body of the Jewish communities in Scotland, our Council is currently able to provide a measure of support to these, and to foster a feeling of community that transcends locality. We have been enabled to do this thanks to funding initiatives that view the Scottish Jewish community nationally, rather than merely scattered individuals and small

⁴ www.jcarescot.org.uk

⁵ <http://www.ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk/calderwoodlodge/pages/CJE/cjeaims.html>

⁶ www.calderwoodlodge.e-renfrew.sch.uk

⁷ www.scojec.org

groups, and the same is true of other national umbrella organisations. This cannot be done adequately by generic provision to an imagined single “minority community”, so to change that view would be to condemn many people to isolation, and, given the increasing level of antisemitism, often anxiety.

Note: The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland comprising Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee as well as the more loosely linked groups of the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands, and of students studying in Scottish Universities and Colleges. SCoJeC is Scottish Charity SC029438, and its aims are to advance public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community. It works with others to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality, and represents the Jewish community in Scotland to government and other statutory and official bodies on matters affecting the Jewish community.

In preparing this response we have consulted widely among members of the Scottish Jewish community.