

## SCVO briefing to Scottish Parliament

# The UKSPF and the UK Government's Levelling Up Agenda in Scotland

November 2021

### About us

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the national membership organisation for the voluntary sector. We champion the sector, provide services, and debate big issues. Along with our community of 2,600+ members, we believe that charities, social enterprises, and voluntary groups make Scotland a better place.

### About the Scottish voluntary sector

Scotland's voluntary organisations are focused on delivering vital services and empowering some of Scotland's most marginalised communities. The sector has a role in all aspects of Scottish society, from tourism and housing to the justice and social care systems.

The sector is an essential part of Scotland's economy, encompassing an estimated 40,000+ organisations, from grassroots community groups and village hall committees to over 6,000 social enterprises, and approximately 25,000 registered national charities.

## Our position

Scotland's voluntary sector relies on funding from a variety of sources to provide support and services across the country. In 2018, the sector received around £787m from public sector grants.

Voluntary sector funding is often precarious and short term, making it difficult for voluntary organisations to plan ahead, and frequently placing jobs within the sector at risk. It is important for voluntary organisations to have as much certainty as possible about future funding, and so levels of uncertainty around both UKSPF and Levelling Up are of significant concern.

Both UKSPF and Levelling Up have been talked about for some time by the UK Government, yet detail on how they will both interact with Scottish policies, and implications for voluntary organisations in Scotland, remains sparse.

While we welcome the recent announcements on the successful bids to the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), the Community Ownership Fund (COF) and the Community Renewal Fund (CRF), we have serious concerns about the implementation of the funds so far, including regarding the timescales used throughout the process for example. We also know that questions remain for organisations across civil society as to how the Levelling Up agenda will be delivered and monitored.

Scotland's voluntary sector has benefitted hugely from European funding in the past and our communities have been strengthened as a result. Across 2014-20 Scotland has been allocated a maximum of €476 million from the ERDF and €465 million from the ESF<sup>1</sup>. The National Third Sector Fund (NTSF), for which SCVO has acted as the consortium lead, is currently scheduled to stop in June 2022, and with less than two months left of this year it is not clear what replacement funding will be available.

We remain optimistic that the UKSPF and the Levelling Up agenda will potentially lead to greater involvement of voluntary organisations in delivering life-changing services and opportunities in Scotland. However it is now more than five years since the United Kingdom decided to leave the European Union, and with so little detail having been shared this optimism is becoming harder to maintain.

Scotland's voluntary sector would appreciate any support that the Scottish Government is able to provide in encouraging the UK Government to make timely and appropriate decisions about this funding for Scotland.

## Contact

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