

A reminder: The community and voluntary sector make a significant contribution to local economic development too. Their worth and contribution to the economy must be considered. Across the wards, in the Area Partnership, community and voluntary organisations work tirelessly and aim to provide comprehensive support across various health and social care needs, with a focus on accessibility, person-centred care, and community integration. As we are approaching the funding arena many community and voluntary services are going into competition for resources with others. Charities and community services were set up to tackle unmet needs or to mitigate against the reduction of public services across the spectrum. We have cut our cloth and now our cloth is threadbare! Across a range of services for our people and communities we are now grappling with several key issues affecting the sustainability of charity and community services:

Funding Challenges

1. Funding cuts have significantly impacted community services in Anderston, City Centre and Yorkhill: particularly youth services and services which help people (of all ages) to cope. Many services are struggling with reduced budgets, forcing them to take a more reactive approach rather than focusing on proactive, preventative work. (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/reviewing-scotlands-approach-antisocial-behaviour/pages/7/>)
2. The loss of funding has led to a reduction of youth services, diversionary projects, community facilities and resilience developing services (services which provide support when things go wrong in people's life). This has created gaps in service provision and limited opportunities for early intervention programmes.

Service Delivery Impacts

1. Services in the area are having to restrict use of facilities, advice sessions and programmes which help people to cope and improve the quality of their life.
2. The shift in funding of many of the foundations and funders means a constant 'hamster-wheel' of rethinking projects to be innovative rather than focusing on the simple demands and services that communities and people need.
3. Many community facilities and services struggle to re-establish themselves after the pandemic, reducing the availability of spaces and activities for young people, the lonely, the elderly and the vulnerable.
4. Reserves, if they have any, are dwindling against a cost of living crisis.

Employees and Resources

1. Community services are experiencing increased pressure, with employees and volunteers often "firefighting" rather than addressing issues at the grassroots level.
2. The impact on the whole team's level of stress, anxiety and precariousness of their employment is profound.

Community Engagement

1. Building trust is crucial for community engagement, but it requires time and shared community-focused activities (<https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/09627250608553176.pdf>)

2. Conventional participation mechanisms have often been unsuccessful in engaging certain communities, particularly minority ethnic groups, the vulnerable, the disconnected and difficult to reach populations.
3. Now is the time for a long-term commitment and localised strategies to build community capacity and engagement, rather than applying uniform approaches and non-nuanced decisions around funding and services.

Housing and Urban Planning

1. Much has been said about planning policies locally. Planning policies have been criticised for not considering the impact of developments, eg student housing, on community dynamics and individual wellbeing.
2. There's a lack of support for residents, who are having to cope with daily disruption, changes in their community demographic and an investment driven planning system which creates ghettos.
3. Our urban planning, at individual community level in ACCY, needs to consider the provision of safe spaces and facilities for all residents; not just the few and the itinerant populations. Places where people want to live and enjoy local services.

To ensure the sustainability of charity and community services in ACCY, these issues need to be addressed through genuine collaborative efforts, innovative funding strategies and funding mechanisms which are negotiated and are not competitive, and community-centred approaches that focus on building trust and engagement over the long term. This is true social investment and social development on the ground.

Therefore, to mitigate the impact of funding cuts on community services we are calling on several strategies to be considered:

Focus on local Services

1. Understand the ecology of existing services to identify those that are most critical to community wellbeing, resilience and needs.
2. Focus available resources on maintaining and supporting the ecology and sustaining community-driven approaches

Secure and Explore Funding Sources

1. Build co-operative links to charitable foundations or other non-governmental organisations that align with our community service goals.
2. Help to broker potential partnerships with local businesses for sponsorships and support.

Be Sensitive to Critical Issues

1. Ensure decision-making allocates resources where they will have the most impact: that is obvious. But sometimes prevention services are not that obvious but are critical in the community.
2. Enable our community groups to use technology and digital solutions to streamline operations and help to reduce administrative costs.

Our Ask We are advocating for sustainable funding for our local organisations

1. We are highlighting the importance of community services and pushing for more sustainable funding models, not just streams of competitive funding.

2. We continually promote evidence-based arguments demonstrating the long-term cost savings and societal benefits of maintaining community services.

By implementing a combination of these strategies, our community services can work towards maintaining essential support for residents despite funding challenges. It's crucial to approach this issue with creativity, collaboration, and a focus on long-term sustainability.

In the face of budget constraints, community services can be prioritised through several strategic approaches: Therefore we are calling for Glasgow CC and the ACCY Area Partnership to Implement Priority-Based Budgeting
Priority-based budgeting effectively aligns resources with community needs and:

1. Focuses on service areas and outcomes rather than individual line items
2. Identifies those at risk and allocates budgets accordingly
3. Evaluates the relative impact of different programmes and initiatives

This approach allows for more precise and focused distribution of available resources based on importance and community needs. (<https://envisio.com/blog/the-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-priority-based-budgeting/>)

Analyse Performance Metrics

This is not just about using data-driven decision-making to allocate resources effectively, it's about understanding the community 'feel-good' factor (<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/h/happiness-economics.asp>) :

1. Understand each service and organisation which is in the community and their effectiveness in delivery to meet people's needs.
2. Adjust budget allocations based on impact, employment and the feel good factor
3. If services are underperforming, help and support them to show better results- a business improvement programme.

Address Equity Concerns

Ensure that budget cuts don't disproportionately affect vulnerable populations:

1. Use analytical frameworks to understand the impact of cuts on different groups
(<https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/beacons/inequalities/understandingthecostofthebudgetcuts/>)
2. Prioritise services that support vulnerable populations, such as health, well-being and social services

By implementing these strategies, community services can be prioritised effectively even in the face of budget constraints. The key is to focus on what is working decision-making, community engagement, and innovative approaches to resource allocation and funding.