



Cost of Living Insights Report

November 2022



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

INSPIRING SCOTLAND

INTRODUCTION

This report provides insights on how Equality and Human Rights funded activity is currently helping alleviate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable communities in Scotland. We have found the majority of the 48 funded organisations (79%) are actively taking steps to address this vital issue.

This report also demonstrates the flexibility of the 3rd sector in Scotland to pivot and respond to community needs.

The Scottish Government's Equality and Human Rights Fund (E&HR Fund) aims to "Support Civil Society organisations and partners to develop, embed and mainstream equality and human rights within policy and practice in Scotland in line with the ambitions of the National Performance Framework and relevant Scottish Government Strategies." The Fund has been operational for 14 months.

The 48 funded organisations deliver a mix of direct work tackling inequality and discrimination, infrastructure support, and policy work that advances equality and the realisation of human rights in Scotland. The E&HR Fund covers a broad range of activity, including direct service delivery to individuals who share protected characteristics, building the capacity of other organisations, and strategic work for local and national policy makers.

Earlier this year, Scottish Government colleagues asked Inspiring Scotland to share data and insights on how E&HR funded activity helps to alleviate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on communities in Scotland. To learn more, we analysed most recent progress reports covering April-September 2022. We supplemented this with a survey of funded groups asking for examples of direct support, and details of any data gathering activity they may be undertaking to better understand the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on their service users and stakeholders.

COST OF LIVING

DIRECT SERVICE PROVISION

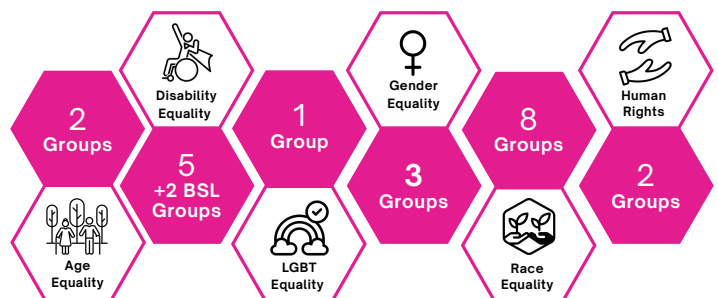
Analysis of progress reports and survey results reveal that at least 23 of the 48 E&HR funded organisations provide direct support to individuals to address the impact of the cost of living crisis with E&HR funding. Key features of this support include:

- The provision of helplines, providing one-to-one advice sessions, small group activities, and support via text, email and interactive web platforms.
- Main topics covered range from benefits advice, actions to address food poverty, and housing advice.
- The provision of advice on home energy and heating has increased dramatically over the last six months.
- Support with mental health and wellbeing continues to be a dominant feature among the funded organisations.
- A number of groups use their E&HR funding to leverage other funds to undertake direct service provision to alleviate the impact of CoL.



Overall, approximately 108,500 individuals have been provided with advice and support to help alleviate the impacts of cost-of-living between April and October this year.

The diagram on the right shows that there are organisations across all 6 Scottish Government policy areas who are providing direct advice and support to help alleviate cost-of-living crisis.



Stories of Impact

In their progress reports and survey responses, E&HR organisations told us about the the stark impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on the communities they support. They provided examples their ongoing work to alleviate these pressures.

"Due to the ongoing cost-of-living and energy crisis, older people need our help more than ever and we have seen an increase in older people seeking support. Many have described how they are struggling with bills and are worried about how they will make ends meet this winter. The deadline for pension credit applications in August, to allow people to receive the cost-of-living payment, increased calls to our helpline, resulting in longer than average call back times. As a result of 313 benefit checks, client financial gain was £276,000, money which older people would not have been receiving to help them with bills"

Age Scotland

"The biggest challenge has been the extreme rise in cost-of-living and the increased poverty and trauma that is now hand in hand with this. This has been the biggest rise in a very long period and the cost of energy and fuel is becoming too much for many of our service users to bear. We are trying our best to deal with these issues.

The circumstances are now beginning to effect staff and we have seen an increase in vicarious trauma when staff are dealing with telephone and face to face appointments. We are currently very conscious of staff wellbeing and in instances like this, offer a safe space for them to feel better. Many of the project staff are from diverse minority ethnic backgrounds and are facing similar challenges."

E&HR-funded organisation

"In terms of our informal advocacy, the challenges facing our community are numerous. The increased cost of living is having an impact on many of our women+

We provide pre-loved clothes, baby items and more from our space. We have created a cost-of-living flyer to share resources and services available to families. We've partnered with Renfrewshire Toy Bank to provide toys to families over Christmas."

Kairos Women+

"Lots of information about cost-of-living is available in English only, so Deaf people face barriers to access this in BSL format.

A recent example to our helpline was of a Deaf couple who wants to set up smart meters in their home to control their gas and electricity usage. They have no access to BSL resources and information as most of the information is in English only, which is unsuitable for Deaf whose first language is BSL.

Also there are no specialist social workers to support Deaf clients to access benefits information"

British Deaf Association

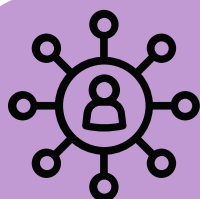
COST OF LIVING

DATA AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

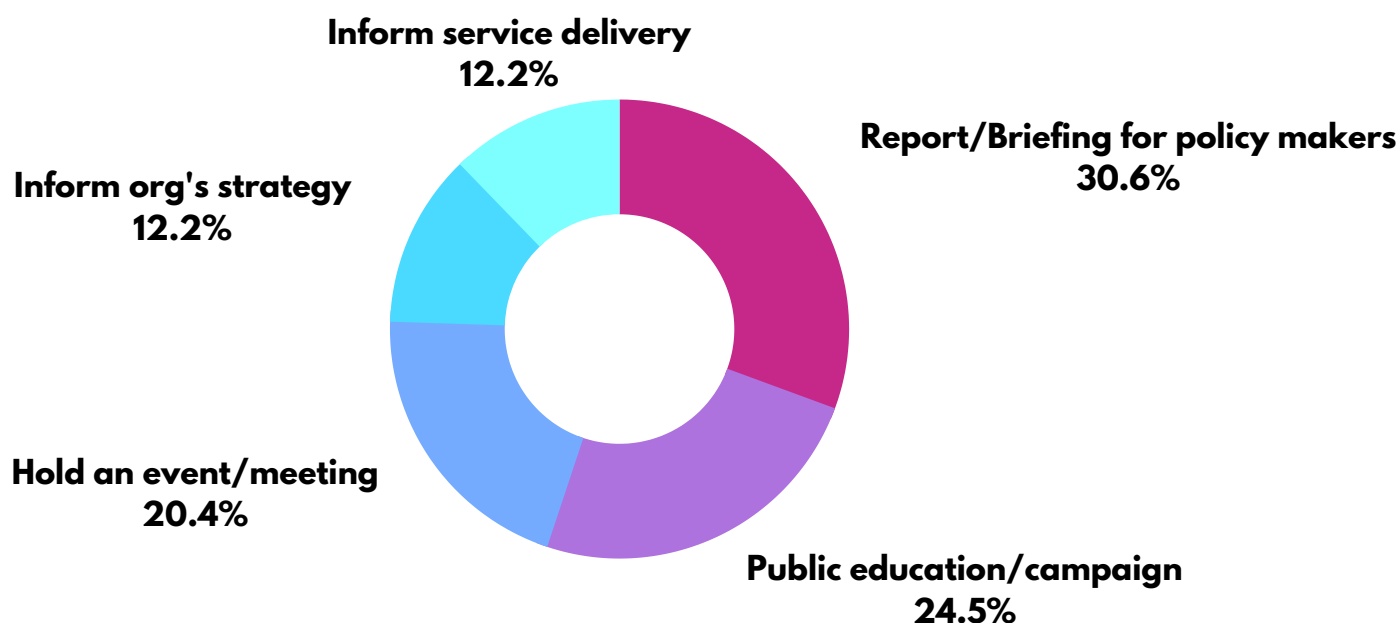


As a strategic fund, E&HR is well placed to use knowledge and intelligence to inform policy makers of the impact of the current crisis on some of the most vulnerable communities in Scotland. We asked E&HR funded organisations to tell us about the information they are gathering (via surveys, consultation events, interviews, etc) on the the impact of cost-of-living crisis impact on the service-users and communities they support.

- Just over half of the portfolio (25 organisations) told us that they have recently completed, or plan to gather evidence on the impact of the crisis.
- Twelve of these organisations provide front-line services as well as informing and influencing policy.
- A number of groups use their E&HR funding to leverage other funds to undertake further engagement and research work.



The chart below shows how the funded organisations intend to use the data and insights they have gathered.



"We have conducted a survey about the impact of cost-of-living on disabled people. A report is pending. The analysis of survey findings has enabled us to identify and develop asks of decision-makers and to position these, via Parliamentary Briefings. We have also delivered mainstream press work, for example via BBC Reporting Scotland."

Inclusion Scotland

Data and Intelligence

In their progress reports and survey responses, E&HR organisations shared with us the data and intelligence they are collecting from their communities.

"I have been doing research on rising food costs and from this took a decision to target the supermarket giants and ask them for some sort of discount incentive scheme specifically for older people. Asda have rolled out an initiative in their cafes over the winter months and we are asking the others to follow suit.

Scottish Pensioners Forum

We sent a letter out and issued a press release earlier today which has already been picked up by journalists (link below)

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/5038297/scottish-pensioners-forum-support-elderly-people-supermarket/>

CRER recently published on local child poverty action reports (LCPARs). This stems not only from the critical nature of local action to address BME child poverty but also from previous work to amend the Child Poverty Act to include a requirement for local authorities to describe in LCPARs any measures taking in relation to equalities groups who are more likely to experience poverty due to their shared protected characteristic.

The link to the publication is:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/615c1bee105b4f55a98326d0/t/63402dd9c5d4a10c2e7d6134/1665150614233/LCPARs+Report+2020-21.pdf>

"We produced an initial report on the cost of living crisis, 'Women and the cost of living: a crisis of deepening inequality', which sets out the wide ranging and intersectional ways in which women are disproportionately impacted by the Cost of Living Crisis. We plan to bolster this work in the new year. We have applied for additional funding from Rosa's Voices from the Frontline to further engage women from marginalised groups to gather as robust and up to date evidence as possible to surface the challenges that they are facing and to propose and advocate for policy solutions that address these.

We will use a range of methods to ensure that we reach as many women as possible. We are particularly keen to engage with disabled women, unpaid carers, Black women and women from ethnic minority communities. This may include surveys, focus groups and interviews. We will work closely with partner organisations to ensure that approaches are inclusive, accessible, trauma-informed and culturally competent."

Engender

Data and Intelligence

"We are feeding in to the Scottish Human Rights Commission's work on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the cost-of-living, to inform their report on ICESCR. We are also working with the UK wide research based at Stirling University into LGBT Welfare and Assets, and in relation to this will hold an event for LGBTI people to engage with the research, in the New Year."

The Equality Network

"We use this information to feed into the various strategic groups that we are involved with, such as accessible transport, hate crime, cross party group on disabilities, national care service stakeholders group, and the disability equality strategy steering group. We also use the information to inform how we can support our members going forward."

Disability Equality Scotland

<https://disabilityequality.scot/category/we-ekly-poll/>

"We will use this information to influence decision makers to ensure the needs of older people are being met."

Age Scotland

Keeping the Doors Open

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-research-influencing/reports-research/keeping-the-doors-open/>

Taking the Temperature

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-research-influencing/reports-research/taking-the-temperature/>

Turn up the Heat

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-research-influencing/reports-research/help-to-turn-up-the-heat/>

Conclusion

The majority of the Equality and Human Rights-funded organisations are responding to the needs of their communities, and pro-actively taking steps to combat the impact of the current crisis. Many of these organisations are working directly with, and championing the rights of some of Scotland's most vulnerable communities. This report demonstrates how the third sector can flex and pivot to respond to community needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the E&HR Funded organisations for sharing with us how they are responding to these challenges.

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