By email

7 June 2024

Dear ...

Our sister organisation in England, NCVO, has produced a manifesto for the forthcoming General Election, which we are happy to endorse. In it you will see calls to invest in the voluntary sector as an equal partner of the state, unlocking the talent, expertise, and innovation that is embedded in communities. If realised, they would improve outcomes for charities here in Scotland and, crucially, the people and communities they serve. For example:

- ensuring there is a successor to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Delivering a fairer charity tax system
- Investing in public services
- Implementing the recommendations of The Future of Gift Aid,
- Valuing and enable volunteering including allowing people in receipt of benefits to volunteer and giving employees the right to time off for volunteering
- Respecting devolution.

We have decided not to produce our own manifesto because the vast majority of what the voluntary sector in Scotland is involved is devolved to the Scottish Parliament. It’s sad to see much of the campaign discourse so far relating to devolved issues rather than the significant areas that are reserved or where Westminster’s approach has a significant impact on Scotland.

The next UK Government’s approach to matters such as immigration, social security and the economy will impact people and communities here in Scotland, with charities, community organisations and faith groups having to step in to support people living in poverty, experiencing extreme inequalities and in crisis. From advice services to homelessness, housing, social care and mental health, from food banks to domestic abuse. We are seeing cash-strapped public services retrenching and voluntary organisations, their staff and their volunteers worn out from their determination to do everything they can to support people, communities and the environment. We know that people living in poverty, at home and overseas, are disproportionately impacted by climate change.
Voluntary organisations have a huge amount of experience in addressing major societal issues and the public trust them. The knowledge they hold should be seen as an asset in developing policy and legislation, and the voice of the sector welcomed and respected. They also provide a voice to seldom-heard people in our communities.

My asks of all parties therefore are:

- Adopt an economic strategy that is about prosperity and wellbeing for all, including the planet.
- Invest in public services, and recognise that public services are not just delivered by the public sector.
- Ensure the benefits system enables people to live as independently as possible, with dignity and respect at the heart of the system.
- Use the levers of employment law to reverse the rise of precarious, low-paid work.
- Make sure the benefits system enables people to access employability and health support, as well as volunteering as a way to build skills and confidence.
- Introduce a welcoming, fair immigration system which not only offers sanctuary to people fleeing war and tyranny, but also ensures our labour market can access the skills it needs.
- Engage the voluntary sector in the development of policy and legislation as early as possible to maximise the chances of success.
- Welcome campaigning as a healthy part of democracy.
- Invest strategically and purposefully in addressing and mitigating climate change.

I would of course be happy to discuss any aspect of this with you.

Best wishes

Anna Fowlie, Chief Executive