

# **Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee**

## **Disability Commissioner (Scotland) Bill**

### **Engagement with Glasgow Disability Alliance – 10 September 2024**

#### **Poverty – cost of living**

Choosing between heating and eating. Taxis for appointments – higher needs, higher costs. Diet affected by poverty and lack of social care – no support to cook proper meals.

If you are poor you can only afford the cheapest service/items. This costs you in long term as things need replaced all the time and you have to budget for e.g fixing glasses or buying food.

#### **Lived experience**

Commissioner should have lived experience and awareness of issues that disabled people face. Also, where would they work? Does it have to be Edinburgh? There are more disabled people in Glasgow.

They need understanding and empathy as life can be very hard – lots of things you can't do and also living with pain. Understanding the daily struggles is important.

#### **Communication**

Listening to disabled people is crucial. Don't put words in their mouth. Giving different options to communicate – not everything online. Take the time to be visible and meet in person.

Close the feedback loop – people in power always come and ask for opinions, lots of "consultation" but then they never come back and tell you what they did with what you said. Commissioner needs to report to DPOs at least once a year to say what they did. It needs to be a two-way conversation. "We're employing them".

#### **Additional barriers**

Some people have multiple barriers – e.g. asylum seeker who is disabled has language barriers as well as financial barriers due to both disability and no recourse to public funds (depends on Home Office for support). Then asked to pay £50 for a medical report – impossible.

Physical barriers – can't get into certain buildings (steps). Still too common. Accessible toilets are not always accessible (i.e space to turn a wheelchair around). These are basic requirements but huge barriers if they are not available.

### **Is it a good idea?**

As long as it's independent and has power – not a talking shop. They need to do something, something, have power to get things done and clout so that there's consequences if bodies/orgs do not protect/respect disabled people's rights. Accountability.

Skepticism as to whether it will come to anything because there was a lot of work and consultation done on Human Rights Bill but then it was dumped. So it was for nothing. What will happen if the Bill is not through before the end of this Parliament?

The Right to Food was supposed to be enshrined in Scot Law through Human Rights Bill but didn't happen so waste of time and money.

### **Different commissioners?**

Different commissioners for different disabilities (e.g Learning disabilities) would dilute the power and meaning – it should be about the social model of disability and the barriers that ALL disabled people face, not individual impairments. At the other end of the Spectrum EHRC/SHRC are not focusing enough on disability.

For people who have additional barriers, or face discrimination due to other characteristics such as gender, age or race, the commissioner needs a team of people who are all knowledgeable about disability as well as other issues – specialists.

Get to know people – it's about individuals, issues depend person to person. Not all disabled people are the same.

### **Complaints**

If the Commissioner is not doing their job, then disabled people should be able to complain. There needs to be a way to make them accountable.