

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

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

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

#### **Summary of key points**

There was strong support for a Disability Commissioner to represent all disabled people in Scotland. Set out below is a list of key themes that were raised during the session and reflected in the separate anonymised notes:

- The word 'trust' came up a lot, i.e. that the Disability Commissioner would have to work to build trust with disabled people, and the role Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) could have in this relationship building. For this to happen, the Commissioner needs to be willing to engage, listen and learn from disabled people sharing their experiences.
- The support for a single-minded champion for disabled people, but a concern that it could become tokenistic.
- The need for proper resourcing in order for the Commissioner and their office to be able to meaningfully engage with disabled people, given the additional access costs that incurs.
- The relationship between the Commissioner and DPOs to be a two-way street: DPOs to work with the Commissioner to engage with their members and as bodies amplifying their members' voices, but also for the Commissioner to be a champion for DPOs, particularly in facilitating access to decision-makers.
- The Commissioner must have real power to get redress for disabled people where their rights have been breached e.g. sanctioning service providers with fines/removal of contracts. However, this was caveated with concern those being penalised would divert resources earmarked to provide services to disabled people to pay fines.
- Acknowledge that the need for a single-focussed Disability Commissioner comes, at least in part, from the lack of urgency/absence of action across government at all levels towards tackling disabled people's poverty and inequality. Participants wanted "no more false hope".

Key requirements of a Disability Commissioner:

- needs to have 'teeth', such as powers to enforce action or to request reports from public bodies.
- must have an awareness of issues across urban/rural areas and the islands.

- must communicate in a range of accessible ways.
- must engage with and include disabled people in its work.
- must raise awareness of issues, eg, through social media.
- should provide a central space to raise complaints and achieve remedy.