

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Disability Commissioner (Scotland) Bill

Engagement with Glasgow Disability Alliance – 10 September 2024

Barriers

- One of the biggest barriers faced by disabled people is getting people to listen to them in the first place.
- People are able to engage with the committee today because GDA have supported them to do so otherwise it would be a tick box exercise.
- Not all barriers relate to health and accessibility. There are housing and transport issues as well as many other barriers.
- People have confidence in DPO's but less so in Government.
- DPO's are great at championing the rights of disabled people but lack the teeth to make real change.
- People just want the right information and the right help at the right time.

On a Disability Commissioner

- They must understand disabilities.
- If they are to be a champion for disabled people, they must be a champion who can actually achieve and deliver.
- They would need to be a central body for information and complaints and for holding public bodies to account.
- DPO's are able to champion people's rights but a commissioner should have power to actually affect change.
- A Commissioner could help to provide long term support rather than the short-term support currently available from services like advocacy.
- A commissioner should be seen as cost effective for government by providing long term support rather than crisis intervention.
- Important that the commissioner has an understanding and experience of disability and has a team around them with different "specialist" knowledge.
- A commissioner needs to be able to demand information of services other than health and social care such as holding housing to account on accessible housing targets etc.
- It is important that the commissioner can champion the social needs of disabled people and not just the health and care requirements.
- A commissioner should advocate on behalf of disabled people and then provide feedback on the result.
- A commissioner should be able to get local authorities working together to prevent a post code lottery on available services.

On Communication

- Essential that a future commissioner comes out and speaks in person to disabled people.
- Different formats of communication is fundamental.

- Online is not enough, not everyone has digital access.
- Continuity is important. People currently fall between the gaps when moving between services and end up repeating themselves.
- We hear a lot about population wide issues like waiting times etc but very little about disabled specific issues. A commissioner should be able to shine more of a light on these issues publicly.
- They must be visible and known to the community.
- Disabled people don't get enough information from the likes of GP's, Social work, resource centres etc. A Commissioner should put pressure on those services to deliver better information and advice.
- The Commissioner would need to be a voice for everyone but able to adapt to the needs of individuals.