Background

Inclusion Scotland (IS) is a network of disabled peoples' organisations and individual disabled people. Our main aim is to draw attention to the physical, social, economic, cultural and attitudinal barriers that affect disabled people’s everyday lives and to encourage a wider understanding of those issues throughout Scotland.

Given the breadth and scope of the Committee’s inquiry and the limitations on the length of submissions we intend to restrict our evidence to those areas where we can speak with some knowledge and authority – i.e. welfare and equality.

National Performance Framework

The Scottish Government and all publicly funded bodies in Scotland are working to the Strategic Objectives and National Outcomes set in the Performance Framework. The Strategic Objective on creating a “Wealthier and Fairer” Scotland, and the National Outcome on tackling “the significant inequalities in Scottish society”, seem the most relevant to the inquiry’s stated interest in the future of “Welfare and Equality”.

Whilst Inclusion Scotland would of course endorse the Strategic Objective on calling for greater “fairness” in wealth distribution and the National Outcome on reducing inequalities we have to question what priority Equalities outcomes are given within the overall Framework and in measuring the attainment of National Outcomes.

To give an example - one National Indicator is to “increase the proportion of young people in learning, training or work”. This is a laudable aim which aims to reduce inequalities between younger and older people. However it can, unfortunately, be achieved without in any way reducing the “significant inequalities” between different groups of young people living in Scottish society.

To explain we can reduce the overall proportion of young people not in learning, training or work without for example reducing the inequality that exists between non-disabled young people and disabled young people. In fact inequalities may even increase whilst overall improvement occurs – because excluded groups can be left even further behind.

Last year Inclusion Scotland analysed the destinations of school leavers with identified Additional Support Needs (ASN). Just 8.9% of school-leavers with no support needs were workless. However the following impairment groups were more than twice as likely to be workless as school leavers with no ASN –

- 23.9% of young people with a speech/language impairment were workless
- 22.8% of Learning Disabled young people were workless
- 20.5% of school leavers with a mental health issue were workless

1 Destinations of ASN School Leavers with an identified impairment 2011/12, Inclusion Scotland, July 2013
- **19.5%** of school leavers with a physical or motor impairment were workless

Similarly only **16.3%** of those with a physical or motor impairment managed to secure a university place (despite having no identified learning difficulties) compared to over **40%** with no ASN. Overall school leavers with Additional Support Needs (please note: not all of whom have impairments) were almost twice as likely to have negative outcomes as those with no support needs.

Moreover even this may be an underestimate of the real gap between disabled and non-disabled school-leavers as a disproportionate number of school-leavers with impairments go onto further education. Our analysis last year found that school leavers with a Learning disability (**54.5%**), language/speech impairment (**56.7%**) or on the autistic spectrum (**57%**) were all more than twice as likely to be in college than those with no ASN.

But earlier analysis we carried out\(^2\) comparing disabled school leavers with non-disabled school leavers found that at age 16 disabled school leavers were, like last year’s leavers, twice as likely to Not be in Employment, Education or Training (NEET); yet by age 19 they were three times as likely to be NEET than non-disabled young people of the same age\(^3\). This suggests that further education, far from being a “positive outcome” for disabled school-leavers, is instead just a way-station on their journey to complete workless-ness.

An EHRC report also shows that out of 26,000 Modern Apprenticeships made available in Scotland, only 74 went to young disabled people – that’s just 0.5% when disabled people make up 20% of the Scottish population.

This is reflected in overall employment figures. The proportion of disabled people in work rose from 38% in 1998 to 48% in 2008\(^3\). But employment of disabled people, in Scotland, has fallen during the ongoing “recession” and stood at 42% last September. Yet the employment rate for non-disabled Scots is currently 79% - nearly twice as high.

Given this ongoing disparity Inclusion Scotland believe that much more needs to be done to address the massive inequalities in employment, and other, outcomes between disabled and non-disabled people and ask whether the reduction of inequalities is sufficiently prioritised, addressed and measured by the Indicators used to judge the progress of Outcomes in the National Framework.

**Welfare, Poverty and Equality**

High levels of inequality in a society are associated with higher levels of ill-health and reduced well-being.\(^4\) According to Leonard Cheshire over one in three disabled people of working age live in poverty – more than twice the rate for non-disabled adults\(^5\). Disabled are also more likely to be reliant on benefits for all or part of their income as they are less likely to be in work (see above).

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\(^2\) Inclusion Scotland (2010), School Leavers - Destinations Analysis

\(^3\) Labour Force Survey


Disabled people’s small incomes are further eroded by Care Charging. Whilst Health Care is provided free to all citizens free at the point of need disabled people are required to pay to have their daily care needs met.

Thus although millionaires are only required to pay tax at 45p in the pound the marginal tax rate imposed on disabled people by this “Care Tax” can exceed 90% of their income – and leaves thousands on subsistence income levels despite the fact that they work full-time.

With budgets reducing care support for a large proportion of disabled people is gradually being reduced, via entitlement criteria, to life and limb cover which effectively traps disabled people in their homes preventing them from participating in family and community life; taking part in education, volunteering and seeking & retaining employment.

Inclusion Scotland believe that any future welfare system should, at the outset, review the funding of social care to ensure that it is both more equitable and in line with wider health & governmental aims to include disabled people in wider society.

Providing welfare benefits on the cheap also has costs in terms of the inclusion of disabled people in economic and wider societal life; their long-term health & well-being and the consequent health & social care costs which are in turn passed on to the taxpayer. Investment in effective welfare provision helps to reduce inequality leading to better outcomes, not just for individuals but for society as a whole.

Enabling disabled people to participate in the economic, social, cultural and civic life of the community does not only allow them the freedom to exercise their human rights, it also benefits society as a whole. Therefore we believe that the over-riding principle of any welfare system should be to support all of Scotland’s people, including disabled people, to reach their full potential and play a full, active and equal role in community & economic life.

At present the Scottish Parliament does not have the powers necessary to reform the welfare benefits system. To evolve a system that properly supports people to fulfil their potential and become active citizens will require the further devolution of powers over benefits such as DLA, ESA, JSA and Housing Benefit.

Further we also believe that funding for employment support programmes such as the Work Programme and Access to Work (which supports disabled employees in overcoming barriers to employment) would also need to be devolved in order for a holistic approach to welfare support to be created.

Currently, although Scotland has a higher proportion of disabled people than the rest of the UK, they receive less support via Access to Work (AtW). In the UK there were 31,400 disabled people assisted through AtW in 2012/2013. Proportionately that means that around 3,450 (11% of the UK total) disabled Scots should have been helped. Instead only 2,490 were assisted (i.e. just 0.4% of Scots disabled people of working age received any AtW support whatsoever)\(^6\).

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\(^6\) Inclusion Scotland analysis of figures provided on the regional breakdown of Access to Work, from the Strategic Directorate Disability Analysis Division, DWP in October 2013:
This means that AtW take-up in Scotland is about 30% lower than we would expect it to be based on the proportion of Scots disabled people in the population. An aim of any future Scottish welfare system should be to ensure that more Scots disabled people are assisted in overcoming the barriers to work.

In conclusion:

Rather than taking a ‘safety net’ approach to welfare, Parliament should consider how welfare can empower people to be equal and participative citizens. This means recognising that culture and personal relationships are key to better quality of life and well-being.

At the moment, the UK welfare system is geared to one outcome, placement in the labour market. By making the links between welfare, health, social care, housing and well-being, the aim of policy should be to achieve broader outcomes which recognise the social & economic value of a range of roles within the civic, cultural & social life of society, including voluntary & care work.

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