Inclusion Scotland is a network of disability-led organisations, individual disabled people and other organisations that support the principles of the Social Model of Disability. Our main aim is to draw attention to the physical, social, economic, cultural and attitudinal barriers that affect disabled people’s everyday lives and exclude us from participating in the mainstream of society. Our role is to enable meaningful communication and consultation between disabled people in Scotland and policy makers at local and national government levels. We want to reverse, through civil dialogue, partnerships, capacity building, education, persuasion, training and advocacy, the current social exclusion experienced by disabled people.

Introduction

We are generally pleased to see that widening access is a priority of the bill and of the SFC. Our evidence below examines the links between socio-economic deprivation and disability; showing that disabled young people (and their families) are a key disadvantaged group to consider in the legislation generally and also within the general principle of widening access in particular. We also look at other access issues in relation to post-16 education and the experiences of young disabled people, including some already previously identified by the Scottish Government, by the Education and Culture Committee, and in other reports, that encompass the various barriers to further and higher education that young disabled people face.

In response to the report of National Review of Services for Disabled Children an Action Plan was developed by Scottish Government. Its objectives were that (i) mainstream services should offer equal access to everyone, (ii) the costs of inclusion should be an integral part of service planning, and (iii) meeting an identified need for stronger capacity building in mainstream organisations so that they could welcome and include disabled children. Overall we give support to the implementation of these recommendations through the post-16 education bill for young disabled people.

Disability and poverty

Disabled young people are less likely to go on to higher education due to a variety of barriers. But disabled people are far more likely to experience poverty, and the number

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1 February 2011 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/25151901/0
2 During its enquiry into Access to further and higher education for disabled school leavers during 2006.
3 The most detailed of which is Stalker, K and L Moscardini (April 2012), on behalf of Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, ‘Critical Review and Analysis of Research and Policy related to Disabled Children and Young People’.
affected is going to grow with the introduction of benefit changes under welfare reform this year.

Leonard Cheshire research shows that disabled people have about 25% extra costs compared to non-disabled people. Less than 50% of disabled people are in paid employment compared to 80% of non-disabled people, and disabled people are twice as likely to be poor than non-disabled people. In addition, around half of disabled children have one or more parent who is also disabled, further compounding their likelihood to be living in poverty.

Changes to disability benefits include abolishing DLA in favour of PIP, with a cut of 20% to the total budget. To qualify for PIP, most disabled people of working age will need to attend an assessment. Changes to the regulations introduced after consultation mean that even fewer people are likely to qualify for this benefit. Disabled people are eligible to be tested for the new benefit any time after their 16th birthday.

Inclusion Scotland have estimated that disabled people in Scotland will lose over £1 billion in benefits due to cuts to various benefits they are likely to receive (DLA/PIP, ESA, housing benefit, etc.).

At present, Child Tax Credit and Income Support contain an additional element for families with a disabled child. The basic payment for a disabled child, whether made through Child Tax Credit or Income Support, is £53.62 per week (2011/12 rates), based on receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for the child at any rate. An additional £21.63 is payable to families in receipt of DLA at the highest rate of the care component for day and night care.

However when Universal Credit replaces Child Tax Credit and Income Support the lower rate payment for a disabled child will be around £26.75 a week and the higher rate, around £77 a week, depending on their current DLA rate. This means that, for over 50% of disabled children, the additional payment will be cut roughly in half. There will be transitional protection for existing claimants but if they are new claimants or there is a change in circumstances families with disabled children will face an annual loss of income of nearly £1400.

Because 50% of disabled children also live with a disabled parent many disabled parents will be affected by the reforms in their own right (see above for some estimates of the cumulative impact). These cuts in the benefits payable to disabled children and adults therefore have profound implications for disabled children’s inclusion in wider society as the remaining available income is likely to be spent on basic necessities such as food, heat and clothing rather than on activities which promote social inclusion.

**Recommendation:** The Scottish Government should prioritise tackling the social and economic disadvantage facing disabled children within its poverty and social inclusion policy development.
Transition planning
The transition from childhood to adulthood is of enormous significance to all children but for far too many disabled children it often seems to signify the end of state support of their inclusion in mainstream society and the beginning of a life without purpose or employment. For parents of young disabled people in Scotland, recent experiences of their children moving from children’s to adult services have been “unanimously negative”. Clearly this is not in line with the GIRFEC framework and as such, in our response to the Children and Young People Bill consultation, we recommended an extension of the single point of contact (named person) from 18 to 24, in order to ensure that young people are not ‘lost’ during or just after transition.


Our analysis found that young disabled people had consistently poorer outcomes than their non-disabled peers -

- the worklessness (“unemployed and looking for work” plus “unemployed and not looking for work”) rate for disabled school leavers group was 50% higher than for non-disabled school leavers (21% as compared to around 14%).

- Disabled school leavers were also much less likely to be in higher education – just 14.4% had attained and maintained status as university students as compared to 33.6% of non-disabled school leavers.

- The other disparity was amongst the proportions in Further Education. There were almost twice as many disabled school leavers in FE as non-disabled (44.7% compared to 23.6%). This initially looks like a positive outcome but previous research has shown that young disabled people are more likely to remain in FE longer than non-disabled students and yet attain far less by way of educational outcomes. Therefore instead of FE being a positive outcome for disabled school leavers it is much more likely that it simply masks even higher levels of deferred worklessness amongst that group.

- National figures collected on NEET suggest that a young disabled person is twice as likely to be NEET at age 16 as a non-disabled peer and three times as likely to be NEET at age 19.

There have been a number of significant Scottish Government initiatives in recent years which have taken into account this high prevalence of young disabled people amongst those who are most likely to be NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). These include the “More Choices, More Chances” strategy (2006), “Partnership Matters” (2009), the “Post-16 Learning Choices Initiative” (2010) and the Modern

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5 Outlined in pp 13-14 of Stalker and Moscardin’s Critical Review (referenced above).
Apprenticeships programme (2011-12). Inclusion Scotland particularly welcomes the Scottish Government’s guarantee of a minimum income of £7000 pa for all learners in Post 16 education as this is most likely to benefit young disabled people who are more likely to come from poorer homes.

However it is of concern that a Scottish Government push to increase FE Colleges provision of accredited courses has perversely disadvantaged learning disabled students. Part-time courses offered by FE Colleges for this group were cut by over a third in 2011. The Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability has called for evidence that these cuts to courses were subjected to Equality Impact Assessments.

Recommendation: That young disabled people are better supported through their transition from children to adults with clear targets set for better forward planning for transitions (which has inclusive living and the needs & views of young disabled people at its centre), better educational outcomes and more young disabled people in employment. Much of this can and should be addressed in the Children and Young people’s Bill.

Recommendation: Recognition within the post-16 education bill that widening access should include access to courses of real value for learning or employment being offered that link in with real opportunities for that young person.

Learning Environment If colleges are to widen access there needs to be thought given to college environment and how this, for instance, may impact on young people with conditions such as Autism and how they will manage in over stimulating confusing environments. Such consideration doesn’t only extend to the actual physicality of the buildings but also to timetabling of classes and the experience of free unstructured time in between classes for individuals who find it hard to manage these situations.

In terms of college regionalisation, it is important to make sure when widening access to potentially more disabled individuals (due to increase in understanding of the difficulty faced by some socio-economic situations) that a ghettoed from of college provision doesn’t happen. All colleges should offer a range of courses even if they are different campuses for the same college. It would be disheartening to see a specialist college created for disability, as although a residential college has been previously identified as a lack, this would prevent integration to the fe/he environment and the kind of mainstreaming for inclusion that the Scottish Government has specified in its action plan.

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