Finance committee

Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill’s Financial Memorandum

Submission from Dumfries and Galloway Council

Response

Consultation

1. Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so, did you comment on the financial assumptions made?

No

2. If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?

N/A

3. Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?

N/A

Costs

4. If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.

The Financial Memorandum anticipates no new costs falling on local authorities, however recognises a potential cost to Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service in light of the very large volume of cases relating to domestic abuse. Local authority criminal justice social work services and partner agencies apply more stringent, complex and in depth assessment tools and process when assessing and reporting on domestic abuse cases and any increase in numbers of cases referred from the Courts to CJSW would have an increased cost. There is likely to be training needs arising from the proposed changes which also have a cost to the local authority that is not accounted for in the financial memorandum or assumed will be absorbed in existing resources.

5. Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?
Can’t comment on the detail of the figures presented but question the assumption that there will be no cost to local authorities. Estimates are predicated on the assumption that numbers will be within the parameters already known to COPFS, however other national initiatives have seen higher than expected responses/outcomes.

6. If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

Given the reducing budgets and increasing costs faced by local authorities I would suggest that any increase in work, including training needs, however small will incur a cost for the local authority. I think consideration should be given to increased costs being covered by Scottish Government.

7. Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?

I think that the FM perhaps underestimates the upper margin of uncertainty. In comparison with recent trends associated with reporting of sexual abuse as a result of changes in approach and increased publicity, there could be a similar or even greater response in relation to the behaviours covered in the Bill.

Wider Issues

8. Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?

It would be reasonable to assume that there will be a training need for staff in a range of agencies in relation to the changes proposed which are not adequately reflected in the Financial Memorandum.

9. Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?

N/K

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