Shaping and Leading Disability Equality in Scotland

Scottish Disability Equality Forum (SDEF) works for social inclusion in Scotland through the removal of barriers to equality and the promotion of independent living for people affected by disability.

We are a membership organisation, representing individuals affected by disability, and organisations and groups who share our values. Our aim is to ensure that the voices of people affected by disability are heard and heeded within their own communities and at a national and political level.
About this Consultation

The purpose of the Scottish Welfare Fund is to make arrangements on the maintenance of welfare funds and to provide them to be used to help certain individuals.

The interim Scottish Welfare Fund aims to:

- provide a safety net in an emergency when there is an immediate threat to health and safety, through the provision of a non-repayable grant which is known as a Crisis Grant; and

- enable people to live independently, or to continue to live independently, preventing the need for institutional care, through the provision of a non-repayable grant which is known as a Community Care Grant. This includes providing assistance to families facing exceptional pressures. For example where there has been a breakdown in family relationships, perhaps involving domestic violence, which is resulting in a move.
General points

- SDEF, alongside the majority of its members, are in favour of the Bill.

- Our members feel that this Bill will provide Disabled People with a more independent quality of life.

- Many of our members feel disabled people may not get to know about the fund and therefore not be able to access it.

- Our members feel the costs are very high for the running of the fund.
Answers to specific questions

Before completing this response, SDEF polled its members, made up of Individuals, Organisations and Access Panels, with a shorter version of this consultation. We have used these to help develop our response.

Question 1
Are you in favour of the Bill and its provisions? Do you think the Bill fully achieves the Scottish Government’s aim of providing assistance for short term need and community care?

- Yes.
- Our members feel this support is needed
- Our members feel the existence of the fund will need to be widely promoted to ensure everyone is aware of it.
- “it’s existence need better publicity”
Question 2
The interim Scottish Welfare Fund scheme has already been running for two years. Do you feel that the Bill has suitably taken on the learning from this time?

- The majority of our members agree.
- Our members feel there is not enough accessible information about this.
Question 3
Is there anything else that you feel should be included in the Bill?

- Our members suggest Carer’s under 16 be included in the Bill.

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Question 4
Will the Bill and its provisions have a particular impact on disabled people?

- Our members feel the Bill should provide a safety net in the future years to come.
- Our members feel the Bill should allow more disabled people independence.
- Our members also felt that disabled people may not be aware of the fund or feel too proud to apply.
Question 5
Do you agree with the proposal that local authorities have the option to outsource the provision of the fund to a third party or jointly administer the fund across local authority boundaries? What are the benefits or drawbacks to this approach?

- The majority of our members do not agree with this proposal.
- It is felt this may cause confusion and the possibility of one area receiving more help than another.
- “A loss of accountability if jointly controlled – outsourcing should not be allowed”

Question 6
What are your views on the proposed internal local authority review process?

- The majority of our members agree with the review process
- Our members feel if this process is in place the right people in need are receiving the correct amount of funding required
- “A fair provision”
Question 7
Do you agree that the SPSO is the appropriate body to conduct secondary reviews?

- The majority of our members agree that the SPSO is the appropriate body to conduct secondary reviews
- Our members feel it is important to review where the funding is going, making sure it is being spent on the right items and for the correct purpose.

Question 8
What are your views on the level of detail that will be contained within the regulations? Is there any aspect which you feel would benefit from being on the face of the Bill?

- The majority of our members feel it is important to detail as much as possible about the bill so people will understand it.
- Our members feel the process should be clearly explained and for all to understand.
Question 9
Do you think that the costs attributed to the running of the fund and the set-up of the SPSO to administer secondary reviews are realistic and proportionate?

- Our members feel the costs are very high.
- Our members suggest that a voluntary organisation could potentially manage this at a lower cost?

Question 10
Do you have any comments on any other provisions contained in the Bill that you wish to raise with the Committee?

- “There should be as much flexibility and discretion built into the system as possible”
- “I think the running cost of £400,000 to be very extravagant, how can this be justified?”
- “Since the introduction of all welfare reform, it has taken longer and cost more to deliver, this may fall into the same trap if not resources properly”
- “there should be a contingency plan built-in”

Morven Brooks
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1 September 2014