

## **RNIB Scotland**

**29 June 2022**

### **Background and participants**

RNIB Scotland actively campaigns on matters of interest or concern to blind and partially sighted people, engaging with MSPs, MPs, councillors, civil servants, media, and commercial, public and other third sector bodies. They host these Campaign Connect Calls every two weeks and PACT were invited to join on Wednesday 29 June to discuss the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee inquiry into Public Participation. Five people in total joined the call to share their views.

### **Discussion**

#### **Have you ever engaged with the Scottish Parliament before?**

Two people stated that they hadn't engaged before

- "I'm not really politically engaged"
- "I'm not aware of what cross party working groups there are"

Three people said they had engaged in the past

- "I have met with my MSPs in the past"
- "I'm involved with the visual impairment cross party group"
- "I have written to MSPs and feel confident to engage"

#### **On a scale of 1 – 10 how connected do you feel to the Scottish Parliament?**

One participant stated 5

One participant stated 6

One participant stated 6/7

One participant stated 7

One participant stated 7/8

#### **Is there anything the Parliament is currently doing that would put you off working with us?**

- Getting over my own self-doubt. Being part of the campaign group, you are representing others which adds pressure.
- Uncertain of how to go about getting yourself in front of committees.

- Road crossings outside Parliament can be hazardous.
- If you spot something that could be done better sometimes it's hard to know where to take it.
- We are activists, we try and knock barriers out of the way.
- They do not listen to us, our issues are not on people's radar.
- We get around the barriers. We are all representing a group of people and we chat to the other people first.
- Everything is remote, online. Filling out a form to get to a meeting is tricky to navigate with accessibilities difficulties and wondering if we are answering the questions correctly.
- You have to read the consultations, quite difficult to fill in the boxes, utter frustration with form filling.
- Accessibility of websites, tiny writing.
- Issues with physical accessibility of MSP offices.
- People do not know who to go to, which one is my MSP? Local or Regional, which one has the most weight.

## **What can the Parliament do differently to help people to engage? How do we overcome these barriers?**

- Accessing online, feedback loop,
- Awareness of consultations.
- Language we use, for example I am not a disabled person, I am a person with a disability.
- If we do not see positive results, likely to not engage in the future
- Simple consultations, not massively complicated forms.
- Use the contacts you have, continued communication/feedback.
- Keep banging on the doors, do not see the change implemented.
- Human Based Approach. Have a number you can call and be able to speak to a person. This could be helpful to people who are new to this.
- Talking to someone is very important, live stories, case studies, brings things to life.
- Tell us why things cannot be implemented, so we know.
- Human based way- call for views.
- Form filling am I using the right language? one to one with someone helps break this language down.
- Has implications for other disabilities, such as dyslexia.
- English as a second language, need to rethink twice and also using a screen reader. Wondering if getting the right message across, using the right words?
- Overlooked in rural areas.

There then followed a brief discussion of some of the main methods of engagement currently employed by the Parliament including Community engagement, digital engagement and deliberative engagement. Participants were invited to comment their thoughts on these methods and how they could be improved. Most of the views

on community and digital engagement had already been well made but on the topic of deliberative engagement there was a question about how representative this was. For example, if a person with a visual impairment received the letter would they have enough time to get support to read it and then further support to respond to it?