

GCIJB Response to Health, Social Care & Sport Committee Call for Views

Scottish Statutory Instrument on Voting Rights Regulations for Integration Joint Boards

January 2026

Glasgow City IJB does not have a unanimous position on voting. Some Members, particularly stakeholder Members, are supportive of extending voting rights noting that voting rights for stakeholders is an important sign that everyone's views are valued and treated with equal respect. While others express reservations on how this would improve representation of the communities across the city, as well as concerns regarding accountability and legal implications.

There is strong, shared support across GCIJB for ensuring that the voices of people affected by health and social care services, particularly carers, people with lived experience and third sector partners, are heard clearly within decision-making structures and that those voices should represent communities as widely as possible. However, GCIJB remains keen to understand how members representing large, varied and possibly complex networks or communities utilising a singular voice and vote on the Board and how such members would be identified. Will the extension of voting rights acknowledge that in some areas representatives will be representing the views of significant numbers of people, and therefore is one rep' sufficient to do this effectively. Any decisions on how many representatives would receive a vote would need to take into account the potential effect of negatively impacting the decision-making process due to unwieldy numbers on Boards.

GCIJB would also stress that an extension of voting rights (e.g. to people with lived experience) would require them to abide by the same standards as current voting members. Current voting rights are aligned with those who deliver services rather than those who receive them. There is an inherent conflict of interest in asking recipients of services to vote on proposals that might change, reduce, or remove those services. In circumstances where a conflict must be declared, such Members might be prevented from participating in the debate or vote under consideration, undermining the intention behind the Scottish Governments proposal. The current structure allows such individuals to remain fully involved in discussions and potentially influence decision-making without such restrictions.

A further area of concern relates to the legitimacy and democratic accountability of voting members on IJBs. Currently voting members are nominated to sit on IJBs having been appointed to the Health Board or elected on to the Council. Extending voting rights to members that have no such legitimacy in terms of their role as volunteer representatives again brings into question who would they be representing and how might they be best able to do that?

Additionally, extending voting rights could lead to situations where, for example, financial allocations are approved or voted down with elected Members in a minority, arguably diluting

the role of the democratically elected member. Decisions made by IJBs can attract public scrutiny, raising questions about who non-elected voting Members would be accountable to, and the appropriateness of volunteer representatives potentially being held legally accountable in fulfilling their role.

GCIJB notes that the extension of voting rights does not extend to other members on IJBs, such as those that are appointed to reflect the interests of the Independent sector. In omitting these members from the right to vote we introduce a power imbalance amongst stakeholders that risks disengagement of these rep's.

Further detail is also needed on the infrastructure and recruitment processes required to support meaningful representation. All Members must be adequately briefed and prepared in the event that votes are required, particularly on matters such as savings or service reductions, where IJBs must meet statutory duties such as agreeing a balanced budget. It will be essential to understand how new voting Members would be supported to make informed decisions on such complex matters, and where the responsibility for any consequent costs sits. The requirement to vote and to adequately therefore represent their respective communities of interest might require a recruitment process that disproportionately disadvantages volunteers with lived experience in favour of those from more professional backgrounds in the sector.

Further detail is also required on the impact extension of voting rights has on the Integration Schemes. The Schemes would need to account for the fact that voting members would no longer only be drawn from the two organisations that are signatories to the Schemes.

GCIJB also highlights the risk that introducing more voting Members may shift Boards away from a culture of discussion, debate and consensus, an approach that currently characterises GCIJB and often removes the need for formal votes. Increasing the number of Members with voting rights may encourage more frequent use of voting and lead to greater polarisation, potentially undermining the collaborative culture that has been carefully developed.

GCIJB would suggest exploring existing structures of expert panels or models of engagement used in Glasgow City, such as the arrangements in place in the Alcohol and Drug Partnership and the community engagement work undertaken by Promise Participation workers, to form informed collective views rather than an individual voting member on behalf of all would be more beneficial. Additionally, GCIJB has recently changed how it recruits stakeholder members representing carers and users of services. Instead of appointing named Members and substitutes the IJB has recently appointed a pool of 5 stakeholder reps (2 carers and 3 service users) to work together to ensure appropriate representation at IJB commitments based on experience, availability and interest. This will guard against lack of representation caused by lack of availability and promote high levels of informed engagement and influence by stakeholders of voting members.

GCIJB recognises this is a polarizing issue and wishes to support the Scottish Government to arrive at a solution that ensures IJBs continue to be able to make decisions in the interests of their communities, and which support the involvement and engagement of those communities. GCIJB has however not been able to reach consensus on whether this should be via extension of voting rights. There is considerable concern and lack of clarity regarding how extending voting rights can be achieved, but support for the principle and an eagerness to overcome the

challenges and understand how best to make extension of voting rights work if that is the route taken.

On balance the views of those opposed outnumber the views of those who support the extension as currently outlined.