

## **Call for evidence: The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Integration Joint Boards) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2025**

**28 January 2026**

### **About Inclusion Scotland**

**Inclusion Scotland is a ‘Disabled People’s Organisation’ (DPO) – led by disabled people ourselves. Inclusion Scotland works to achieve positive changes to policy and practice, so that we disabled people are fully included throughout all Scottish society as equal citizens.**

**Since 2018, the Scottish Government has funded the People-led Policy Panel on adult social care support (PLPP). This is a group of disabled people and unpaid carers who have experience of adult social care support.**

Inclusion Scotland is pleased that the Scottish Government has amended the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. Inclusion Scotland welcomes the decision to give service users, unpaid carers and third sector bodies voting rights on Integration Joint Boards (IJBs).

Inclusion Scotland has long campaigned for meaningful participation for people with lived experience and unpaid carers on IJBs. In our consultation responses to the National Care Service Bill at [stages 1](#) and [2](#), we called for the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience.

**We strongly believe that service users, unpaid carers and the third sector should be given voting rights.** We will refer to service users and unpaid carers as people with lived experience throughout.

[The Independent Review of Adult Social Care \(2021\)](#) said that “Every member of the Integration Joint Board should have a vote. Membership should include but not be limited to representation of the workforce, people who use services, carers, providers, professionals, localities and local communities”. This amendment would achieve that goal.

### **Meaningful Involvement and Accessibility.**

By extending voting rights to people with lived experience (PWLE), this is a significant step forward for individuals with lived experience to have a direct influence at the local level. However, resources will need to be provided to make sure that this is meaningful participation.

Inclusion Scotland proposes that support for people with lived experience to be accessibly involved in IJBs needs to be written into the legislation. A guarantee that people with lived experience will be supported according to their needs (communications, accessible information, etc) needs to be included in the legislation. In other words, set out how they will be involved. There also needs to be resources attached to the decision-making structures to ensure disabled people can equitably be involved in the process. PWLE may require training and support to engage fully. Anything less is not meaningful involvement.

Support will need to be provided to ensure PWLE can be meaningfully involved. Papers should be provided in accessible formats, such as plain text and Easy Read. Papers should be sent at least a week in advance. Preparatory support, for example, might help some PWLE to understand papers and what is required of them.

We would like to see co-design from people with lived experience around IJBs. One PLPP member said, “co-production and Co-design involvement needs to be a definite statutory requirement. ...We need assurances that any secondary legislation such as an SSI (Scottish Statutory Instrument) must involve [co-design by] PWLE.” It needs to be ‘must’ not ‘may’ to ensure accountability.

## **Power Dynamics**

It is important to recognise the power dynamics that exist in IJBs. Most of the members of IJB on the board are professionals. Their interests may differ from the needs of people who have experience with these services, and they hold greater power. However, for PWLE, such discussions can speak directly to recent or less recent issues they have themselves faced.

While we welcome voting rights for all, we need to consider the weighting of votes. If it is 1 person, 1 vote, there would need to be equal representation of PWLE so that they are not outnumbered by council and health board representatives. If they are fewer in number, their votes could carry more weight, e.g. 1 counts for 3, depending on the ratio of civil servants to PWLE.

Another recommendation we can make comes from the practice of our own co-design work between the People Led Policy Panel and Scottish Government, that not only might PWLE need additional support to learn about the culture/ work of the IJB, but that those civil servants and Councillors may also need support to ensure they are being inclusive and accessible to PWLE.

The legislation needs to set out how we can deal with unequal power dynamics and provide support for PWLE to be involved in the IJB.

Inclusion Scotland has been a member of the Expert Leadership Advisory Group (ELAG). We felt that most people in that group were professionals from different interest groups (workforce, local integration authorities, etc.). Representatives of disabled people's organisations, such as Inclusion Scotland, felt outnumbered by the other professionals. Most of them did not have disabled people's rights or outcomes in mind. Some may have had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. We must ensure that such power dynamics are not replicated. Through both legislation and practice, there are ways to ensure that both representatives of Disabled people (DPOs) and PWLE themselves, are not excluded through discriminatory practices by unwitting design.

Contact

April O'Neil, People-Led Policy Coordinator, Inclusion Scotland