EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
DRAFT BUDGET SCRUTINY 2020-21
SUBMISSION FROM MAGGIE MELLON

What are the key public policy areas where individuals and protected groups are struggling to access their rights?

The comments that I make are underpinned by an understanding that the impact on poverty on people’s ability or otherwise to exercise their rights is a fundamental structural inequality that should influence all decisions on funding.

Racism and sexism are two other built-in causes of oppression and denial of human rights. Food, housing, financial security, health and education are central to the realisation of rights. Those without access to these rights whether they hold a protected characteristic or not are the most deprived of rights. Therefore, all funding for equalities work should consider the material conditions in which the organisation is working and what resources are already available or not to the members of the group and whether their work prioritises or even recognises the needs of the least resourced.

Which groups of people are most likely to be affected and why?

I particularly wish to address the failure to uphold and realise the rights of women and children. These are related to the structural oppression of women by reason of their sex, the problem of male violence and hegemony, and the burden of responsibility for the care and protection of their children and of older people which is increasingly unrelieved by properly funded support services. Women bear an unequal burden of austerity. Women and girls have been forced into prostitution to feed their children. These are objective realities about the facts of women’s oppression. They were recently underlined by Caroline Criado Perez’s Invisible Women book which shows that toilet provision, sport, health care, and education to costumes for space travel are based on data about men and men’s needs. To realise equality for women these and other areas all need to be redesigned on the basis of the actual needs of real material women. The only acceptable definition for identifying the key areas where women are struggling to access their rights is a definition of women as adult human females.

Are there public funding challenges for the third sector; if so what would be the implications for delivering equalities and human rights outcomes?

It has been revealed recently that the government has for some time operated a specific rule that funding is only made available on condition that third sector organisations support a major and controversial change in the law that the government itself is proposing. The change that the government is committed to is that anyone who declares himself a woman or a girl should be assumed to be entitled to the rights and protections that women and girls enjoy as a result of the protected characteristic of biological sex. The implementation of this belief as policy in public and private services has already affected women’s enjoyment of their rights.
and protections quite severely. Not only that but the government’s support for this position has led to a situation where women have been effectively prevented from objecting or from even discussing our specific oppression and our needs. Those individuals and organisations who try to raise the sex-based oppression of women are routinely harassed and denounced. Meetings called to discuss women’s response to the changed definition of woman to include men are routinely subjected to protests, calls for the sacking of women, and intimidation of the venue and of the organisers and the attenders. In a society which is overwhelmingly designed around the needs and realities of men, the obliteration and denial of the reality of women’s oppression and the routine problems that we face as a result clearly represents a major obstacle to the protection of women’s and girls’ rights. This condition of funding conflates subjective feelings of “gender” with the reality of biological sex and is a major barrier to delivering women’s equality in every single sphere of public and private life. Organisations which are supposed to represent women have argued for the government’s position and are often quoted as insisting that there are no problems with self ID of men as women. I believe in reality they have very little experience of offering services on that basis.

Organisations which seek to promote and combat women’s and girls’ sex-based oppression must be able to access funding on a level playing field with organisations which deny that women are female humans. Transwomen are an oppressed subcategory of men, not women, and need to get their rights to self-expression from men.

What type of administrative systems are in place to monitor the impact on equalities and human rights outcomes from public sector funding to the third sector?

From the above, and the widespread adoption of gender self ID as the norm in the public sector, it is clear that the systems to monitor the impact of the skewing of funding have been seriously weakened or destroyed. I have not received a reply from a letter to government asking them if or how they have sought to verify the claims that there is “no problem” in providing intimate personal services on the basis of allowing men to self id as women. I have had no reply. I am also aware that the Government made no effort to check the governance of LGBTY Scotland after its chief executive James Rennie was convicted of very serious sexual assault of children.

This is evidence of the demand that organisations commit to the inclusion of men who describe themselves as, or believe that they are, women in order to receive funding. This is without any risk or rights impact assessment having been carried out by Government of this position.