Equalities and Human Rights Committee

Human Rights and the Scottish Parliament inquiry

Galashiels Human Rights Focus Group 14 May 2018

Welfare system

- Concern that the most vulnerable people are having benefits taken away from them and that the welfare system is difficult to navigate, having a negative effect on human rights.
- Councillors neglect those on welfare – issues like transport and infrastructure are seen as more relevant.
- People being forced into unsuitable work because they don’t fill in a form correctly. Sanctions are unfair and used indiscriminately – missing a bus to your Jobseekers appointment for example.

LGBTi

- HIV services lost in Borders area. Lack of human rights concerns in health services for LGBTi people.

Housing

- Concerns that housing is inadequate for disabled people and those that care for them
- A lack of basic human rights awareness or training among council/public sector employees.

Disabilities

- Poor services for disabled students in Borders.
- Local authorities prepared to use lawyers to defend a lack of services.
- Difficult to challenge human rights cases due to cost and legal system – risk of being liable for a local authority’s legal costs.
- Lack of Special Needs Assistants in schools.
• Health service can be hard to navigate for disabled people, which can affect other Human Rights issues. Some rights are given more preference within the health service, it was suggested.

**Advocacy**

• CAB is stretched and only available in towns in the Borders. There is some outreach service out to villages through CAB. Lack of resources to cover everything – they can often only refer people to other services outside of the area, in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

**Transport**

• An important issue for disabled people in Borders and other rural areas.
• Bus routes have been taken away which deprives people of other services, (including human rights related services), so problems can be compounded.
• Bus routes cancelled which prevents many young people in the area attending the local college.
• Lack of joined-up infrastructure in thinking about human rights issues. Transport can be seen as an easy service to cut without realising the impact it can have on human rights.

**Young People**

• young people are disadvantaged in rural areas. Lack of support for young people with mental health issues. Usually only accessed through schools – so if not in school/unemployment they can be very disengaged from potential help.
• Initiatives like Scottish Youth Parliament are good but don’t really improve situation for very disadvantaged young people.
• Schools can be sites of human rights challenges – bullying on social media for example.

**Participation and Engagement**

• community groups should have a direct link to communicate with EHRiC.
• National organisations need to have a greater grassroots presence.

**Accountability**

• More accountability at a local level around how funds are spent on human rights issues.

**Human Rights training**

• Basic human rights training should be provided for all those working with the public.