

Your Voice – Inverclyde Community Care Forum is a registered charity & voluntary organisation.

We work to create a collective voice and enable the voice of service users, carers and communities of interest (voluntary/community groups) to be heard in the planning and provision of services.

We work to develop the Your Voice Network – to ensure the widest range of local people have the opportunity to be involved in community engagement/consultation processes.

As commissioned engagement partners to the HSCP, we support the [HSCP Advisory Group](#) - made up of officers from the HSCP and local people representing the following key areas:

- [Addictions](#)
- [Adult Protection](#)
- [Carers](#)
- [Children & Young People](#)
- [Disability inc physical & learning](#)
- [Healthier Lifestyles & Health Inequalities](#)
- [Homelessness & Housing](#)
- [Long Term Conditions & Self Care](#)
- [Mental Health & Well – Being inc dementia](#)
- [Older People](#)
- [Secondary Care inc hospital discharge & palliative/end of life care](#)

Benefits, sanctions, debt and housing and lack of meaningful activity and employment opportunities are continually highlighted as issues / concerns in our community.

On hearing about the Social Security (Scotland) Bill, we utilised the opportunity to inform people of the call for views, encouraged people to view the video, respond online and took the opportunity to engage with members of the network face to face (30 in total), to converse about the Bill and ask for their views. Feedback is indicated in Green below, hope this is of use, thank you for your time...

## **Social Security (Scotland) Bill – call for views**

Control of a number of existing social security benefits is being passed from the UK Government to the Scottish Government.

The Parliament would like your views on the Scottish Government's plans before they become law.

The **Social Security Bill** is the proposed law.

### **1. The Bill aims to provide a framework for the creation of the Scottish social security system.**

- The Scottish Government has chosen to put most of the rules about the new benefits in Regulations, and will develop Regulations with external help (whom?)
- Regulations will make things clearer and less confusing
- Parliament cannot change Regulations, only approve or reject them.

### **Q. Do you have any views on this approach?**

- Sounds good – proof will be in the content, context and implementation
- Agree that regulations make things clear and understandable
- Sounds good – people find it hard to understand certain legislations.

### **2. The Bill proposes that the Scottish social security system will be based on the following seven principles:**

#### **Social Security**

- Is an investment in the people of Scotland
- Is a human right, it is essential to accessing other human rights
- Respect for the dignity of individuals is at the heart of the Scottish social security system
- The Scottish Government has a role in making sure that people are given the social security assistance they are eligible for

#### **The Scottish social security system**

- Will be designed with the people of Scotland
- Will be based on evidence
- Should always be trying to improve
- Any changes should put the needs of those who require social security first
- Is efficient and delivers value for money (often means cuts)

### **Q. What are your views on these principles and this approach? Please explain the reason for your answer.**

- Clear and precise information on eligibility

- Meet the needs of a range of people
- Principles are all well and good, need to be adhered to and mechanisms in place to challenge systems when not adhering to them
- Participants keen for the people of Scotland to inform the social security system, need to make sure you get the voice of the vulnerable people, for whom benefits are essential to their quality of life

**Q. Are there other principles you would like to see included?**

More needs to be done to:

- Challenge stigma and negative attitudes towards people receiving benefits
- Sanctions not working, need to be axed – denying people human rights
- Universal Credits challenging for people in communities (at least 5 weeks without anything)
- Travel expenses should be considered within benefits payments / reduce price bus travel cards should be available for people on benefits

**3. The Bill proposes that there will be a publicly available social security ‘charter’.**

- This will say how the Scottish Government will put the seven principles above into practice
- It will also say what is expected from people claiming benefits
- A report on the charter will be produced by the Scottish Government each year

**Q. Do you agree with the idea of the charter? Please explain the reason for your answer.**

- Majority think this is a good idea
- All involved need to have a positive and supportive attitude
- Support and encouragement towards people to assist them in and out of the social security system
- Transition period
- Zero hour contracts
- Opportunities to get a benefits increase
- Incentives to assist people out of benefit system

**Q. Is there anything specific you would like to see in this charter?**

- Should be on show in public buildings
- Charter champions - people to ensure they are adhered to, if not, what are the mechanisms to challenge – go to person

#### **4. The Bill proposes rules for social security which say:**

- how decisions are made and when they can be changed
- how to apply and what information people have to provide
- how decisions can be challenged
- when overpayments must be repaid
- what criminal offences will be created relating to benefits.

#### **Q. Do you have any comments on these rules?**

- Often told what we cannot do, would like to know what we can do?
- More information regarding unclaimed benefits

#### **5. The Scottish Government will take over responsibility for some current benefits.**

- The Bill does not explain how they will work in detail
- This will be set out in Regulations at a later date
- The current benefits which will be run by the Scottish Government are:
  - disability assistance (including disability living allowance, personal independence payment, attendance allowance and severe disablement allowance)
  - carer's allowance
  - winter fuel payments
  - industrial injuries disablement benefit
  - cold weather payments
  - funeral payments
  - sure start maternity grants

#### **Q. What are your thoughts on the schedules in the bill in regard to these benefits?**

- Good that Scotland are doing this. Need to take responsibility for their people and the needs of them
- Scottish Gov only responsible for 15% the rest sits with Westminster, people need to know who's doing what
- Important that money is allocated correctly to accommodate those who need it the most

**6. The Bill proposes that a new type of short-term assistance will be introduced.** This will be for someone who is challenging a decision to stop or reduce a Scottish benefit.

**Q. What are your views on this proposal?**

- Great idea
- This can cause untold stress, appeals are challenging for people and can lead to relapse, mental health issues and housing arrears – destitution and homelessness
- Early intervention and prevention is a must
- Can this be used to assist people whilst waiting on Universal Credit payments (at least 6 weeks with no money)

**7. The Bill includes the power for the Scottish Government to be able to top up 'reserved' benefits (ones controlled by the UK Government), but does not say how these will be used.**

The Scottish Government also has the power to create new benefits. This is not included in the bill.

**Q. Do you agree with these proposals?**

- Agree – person centred – needs of individual
- Not all people can be categorised the same!!!

**8. The Bill proposes that carer's allowance should be increased as soon as possible to the level of jobseeker's allowance (from £62.10 to £73.10 a week).**

**Q. What are your thoughts on this proposal?**

- This would be a start, important to top up when differing needs arise
- People sometimes give up their jobs to care
- Children looking after parents / what do they get – impact on health and education
- More for young carers – human rights of the child
- Must make sure money is allocated correctly, make sure not robbing Peter to pay Paul

**9. The Bill proposes that discretionary housing payments continue as they are**

- They will still be paid by local authorities

- The Bill does not require any local authority to have a discretionary housing payments scheme but if they do, they must follow Scottish Government guidance on running it

**Q. Do you agree that discretionary housing payments should continue largely as they are?**

Could this be used to assist people to pay their rent whilst waiting for their Universal Credits payments to come through (6 weeks wait)

**Q. Do you have any other views on the proposals for discretionary housing payments?**

**10. Q. Is there anything else you want to tell us about this Bill?**

- Continue supporting services to alleviate suffering due to welfare reforms
- We could try and get the transport providers round the table to look at transport infrastructure and discuss subsidies for low income / people less well of