

Manifesto Briefing

1

Disabled people and their organisations must be properly resourced to participate in Scotland's Democratic Renewal

The problem:

- Disabled people face additional barriers to participating in community and public life, including holding elected office.
- Only 3 out of 129 Members of the last Scottish Parliament self-identified as disabled even though disabled people make up one in five of the Scottish population.

Our Solutions:

- Recognising the right of disabled people to participate in political and public life and the value of their potential contribution and lived experience, with the proper resourcing of disabled people's organisations.
- A Scottish Parliament Intern Scheme for disabled people
- All MSPs to commit to Disability Equality Training

Key Facts:

Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRDP) requires State Parties to:

Promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs, including:

- Participation in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country, and in the activities and administration of political parties;
- Forming and joining organizations of persons with disabilities to represent persons with disabilities at international, national, regional and local levels.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx#29>

As a result of our lived experience, disabled people can make a positive contribution to improving the decision-making of public bodies. If it works for disabled people, it will work for other service users too.

Disabled people face massive physical, informational and attitudinal barriers to participation in Scottish political life. As a consequence, we are under-represented as Local Authority Councillors, on Health Boards and in the Scottish Parliament.

A Community Empowerment Act has also been adopted to provide legislative support local communities who wish to become involved in decision making about their own futures.

Disabled people as a community of interest also need to be supported so that we can be properly represented on Community Councils, Health Boards and other Public Bodies. Yet many Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) are facing reductions in funding and possible closure because of austerity cuts.

If disabled people are to be represented within local and national decision making then their organisations need to be properly resourced. We are calling on all parties to commit to supporting the continued existence and resourcing of DPOs.

From 2011-15, the UK Government ran a pilot 'Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund' to assist disabled people planning to stand for election to the Westminster Parliament or English Local Authorities. However it didn't apply to the Scottish Parliament or Scottish Local Authorities.

After much campaigning and lobbying by disabled people and the cross party One In Five organisation, a Democratic Participation Fund has been established here to provide funding, advice and practical support to disabled people wishing to be candidates in next year's Scottish Local Authority Elections. This fund will be managed by Inclusion Scotland and involve disabled people and cross party representatives.

In 2014-15, Inclusion Scotland ran a pilot Scottish Parliament Intern scheme to encourage and support young disabled people who wished to be involved. The Scottish Parliament Intern scheme needs to be revived, expanded and funded on a long-term basis. We also think that MSPs should commit to Disability Equality Training so that they have a better understanding of the barriers that prevent disabled people from participating in political, social and community life. For more information please contact us.



Hayweight House, 23 Lauriston Street,
Edinburgh EH3 9DQ.

Telephone: 0131 281 0860

Email: info@inclusionscotland.org

Website: www.inclusionscotland.org