

Disability and Carers Benefits Expert Advisory Group:

To: Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People
By e-mail

11th October 2019

Dear Shirley-Anne,

LONG-TERM PRIORITIES FOR THE DISABILITY AND CARERS BENEFITS EXPERT ADVISORY GROUP (DACBEAG) EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT YOUNG CARER GRANT

I am writing in relation to the request in your letter of 31 July, for members of the advisory group to provide advice in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment for Young Carer Grant regulations.

I am writing to update and inform you that, three members of the group attended a meeting within the Scottish Government on the 3rd of September. The topic of the meeting was the Equality Impact Assessment for the Young Carer Grant. I have enclosed the list of attendees in the annex.

We continue to be in contact with your officials, and look forward to engaging with them moving forward. I have attached in the annex our recent correspondence to officials for your reference.

Your sincerely,

Tressa Burke
Deputy Chair

Disability and Carers Benefits Expert Advisory Group:

To: Ann McVie, Deputy Director, Social Security Policy
By e-mail

11th Oct 2019

Dear Ann,

Young Carer Grant, Equality Impact Assessment Meeting

I am writing to follow on from our recent meeting with officials in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment for the Young Carer Grant (YCG) on the 3rd September. This meeting was a follow up to one on the 27th February 2019, which looked more generally at equalities data and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA).

At this meeting, members of the Advisory Group heard about progress with YCG in terms of take up and communications, and the wider consultation on Mainstreaming Equality Outcomes. We were pleased to hear that the process of co-designing YCG with young people had including testing and feedback.

The meeting was a positive opportunity to discuss the approach to equality analysis and impact assessments. Overall, we were pleased to hear how findings from consultations had been practically, and successfully, applied in a way that informed decisions on policy. The meeting discussed how stakeholder engagement had facilitated the understanding of the need to extend this benefit beyond just young carers in education and to a wider age group. This analysis resulted in a significant change in policy which is a positive example of the process of effective consultation and EQIA in practice.

Whilst we were pleased to hear about the positive changes in relation to one aspect of YCG, we were still left unsure about how equalities data was being applied across the formulation of social security policy to ensure clear decision making. For example, it is not clear if there is an understanding of data analysis, beyond quantitative analysis of Protected Characteristics, in terms of the reality of people's lives. In addition, we would like to better understand how these insights then inform policy: for example, that very few Black and Minority Ethnic young people self-identify as carers suggesting that some further positive action is necessary to reach out to this under-represented group. A narrow reading of the data risks overlooking the need for more nuanced policy responses.

The importance and practice of EQIAs goes beyond collecting information and should extend into further engagement and consultation around take up strategies for example.,. This was seen with the YCG in terms of removing the attachment of this grant to education, and therefore widening its remit and benefitting a further 700 people.

Effective engagement and meaningful consultation are essential for shaping clear and targeted outcomes across the social security system as well as on a per benefit

basis. Likewise, robust monitoring, that is informed by an understanding of the dynamics of intersecting inequalities, is also essential. We would welcome knowing more about how the Scottish Government is seeking to integrate across monitoring, evaluation, EQIAs and human rights, to assist in fully-informed policy decisions, both in terms of the social security system as a whole and the development of future policy for individual payments. As a group, DACBEAG have discussed the importance of Monitoring and Evaluation as a meaningful foundation to the new social security system in Scotland. We would be interested in knowing more about how monitoring and evaluation at systems-level is developing, and whether this is something which could benefit from external evaluation and independent scrutiny..

We understand that Social Security Scotland will begin a consultation in relation to Mainstreaming Equality Outcomes in November and welcome the opportunity to support that process through the advisory group. In addition, we understand that the Charter Measurement Framework is shortly due for publication. We hope and expect that the Charter Measurement Framework will go some way towards achieving the goal of effective monitoring and evaluation of the social security system as a whole. The full Advisory Group would welcome further discussion about these plans..

The September meeting highlighted the goodwill and positive intentions of all the officials to ensure an understanding of equality, human rights and informed objectives. Practical actions to translate this intent into practice could usefully include: training and building knowledge on equality and human rights issues in everyday contexts, and building closer links with the Equality Unit, particularly around revisions to EQIA processes and the proposed review of the Public Sector Equality Duty. At this meeting, we also discussed encouraging closer links between officials in the Social Security Directorate and the Equality Unit. We have requested a meeting with new senior colleagues joining the Equality Unit to discuss future approaches to equality analysis and impact assessment.

We appreciate the time officials took in preparing for and attending the meeting, and the commitment to follow up, and look forward to working with them on this important and foundational element of Scotland's new social security system.

Your sincerely,

Dr Angela O'Hagan

Equality Impact Assessment for Young Carer Grant Meeting
Victoria Quay, Edinburgh
3rd September 2019

Attendees:

Tressa Burke: Deputy Chair of DACBEAG, Chief Executive Officer, Glasgow Disability Alliance

Angela O'Hagan: Senior Lecturer, Glasgow Caledonian University

Fiona Collie: Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Carers Scotland

Victoria Miller: Secretary to DACBEAG

Matthew Duff: Senior Policy Advisor, Carer Benefits Policy Unit

Nicola Davidson: Senior Policy Advisor, Carer Benefits Policy Unit

Donna Hosie: Statistician, Social Security Operations and Delivery Analysis

Cheryl Bailey: Research Officer, Governance and Strategy

Jonathan Wright: Principle Research Officer, Social Security Analysis, Forecasting and Evaluation

Pippa Stone, Assistant Statistician, Social Security Operations and Delivery Analysis

Nicola McBain: Corporate Assurance Manager, Strategy, Policy and Corporate Assurance

Jane Sterry, Senior Policy Advisor, Disability Benefits Policy Unit.