

CORRESPONDENCE

Invitation sent from the Scottish Government to the British Deaf Association, Inclusion Scotland, Glasgow Disability Alliance, Voices of Experience, Capability Scotland, and an individual Deafblind BSL user

From: [redacted]

Sent: 29 November 2017 12:08

To: [redacted]

Cc: [redacted]

Subject: Invitation to a discussion about parental disability and child poverty

Dear all,

I'm writing to ask whether you would be able to join us for a discussion about links between disabled and Deaf parents, and child poverty.

Colleagues in the Social Justice Strategy Unit are driving work to tackle child poverty as set out in the recently introduced Child Poverty Bill. An important new provision which is set out in the Bill requires Scottish Ministers to publish Delivery Plans at 4-yearly intervals between 2018 and 2030 setting out the range of activity they will take forward to support the meeting of the child poverty reduction targets which the Bill also sets out.

In the course of developing the first Delivery Plan, to be published in April 2018, the team is keen to engage widely across government and with key partners. In particular, the Bill includes a requirement for us to consult, among others "such persons and organisations who work with or represent children or parents living in households whose income is adversely affected, or whose expenditure is increased, because a member of the household has one or more protected characteristics".

Given that, the Scottish Government is keen to have a discussion with groups representing disabled parents who might face additional challenges in terms of raising their children on low incomes. Myself and social justice colleagues would very much welcome a discussion with you as a key partner working with parents facing such challenges, to talk about what Scottish Government should be considering within their Delivery Plan to address these.

I wonder whether you would be willing and able to meet with us either just before Christmas or early in the New Year, to share any insights you have from your work with disabled parents. And if you wish to share any personal reflections that would also be welcome.

If you could let me know at this stage that you are happy to participate in principle, that would be great. We can firm up dates shortly. It can be in Edinburgh or Glasgow to suit participants. Interpreters/communication support will be provided.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks, much appreciated.

[redacted]

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Equality Policy | The Equality Unit | Equality, Human Rights and Third Sector | The
Scottish Government | [redacted]

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[contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)

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Following the e-mail sent on 29 November 2017, a subsequent e-mail was sent from the Scottish Government to those organisations accepting the invitation: British Deaf Association, Inclusion Scotland, People First.

From: [redacted]
Sent: 01 February 2018 11:27
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Discussion on Child Poverty - Monday 5 February

[redacted]

<<agenda attached, extracted to page 7>>

In advance of our discussion session on Monday, I've prepared the attached agenda. As this sets out, we'd very much welcome your views on two key questions relating to tackling child poverty, and the sessions are based around those. Please let me know if you have any comments or questions on those. I will provide some brief background on the day, but to set some context in advance: my team leads on delivery of the key provisions of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act. The Act was given Royal Assent in December 2017. The Act sets out targets to substantially reduce child poverty by 2030, as well as interim targets for the period 2023-24, to give a sense of progress at the halfway point between introduction and the final point of the targets.

In addition, the Act brings in new duties on national and local government to report regularly on what they will do, and what they have done, to help meet the targets. Scottish Government's first Delivery Plan, setting out planned actions to tackle child poverty from the 4 year period starting in April 2018, will be published in late March. We are currently working to develop that first plan, and would value your input on what the Scottish Government's key priorities for action in tackling child poverty should be. Specifically, we want to hear from you about the particular challenges faced by parents with disabilities, in terms of how that can lead to and/or make the situation of living in poverty even more challenging.

I look forward to meeting you all.

Regards,

[redacted]
Social Justice Strategy Unit
[redacted]

Read the Fairer Scotland Action Plan here: www.gov.scot/FairerScotland
50 actions for a fairer Scotland

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<<Agenda as attached to e-mail of 1 February 2018 (page 6)>>

CHILD POVERTY DELIVERY PLAN DISCUSSION SESSION 5 FEBRUARY 2018 ST ANDREWS HOUSE, EDINBURGH

AGENDA

- 14:00 **Introduction and Overview** – [redacted]
Social Justice Strategy Unit
- 14.10 **Discussion 1 – *How does living with a disability impact on families raising children with the existing challenge of living on a low income – what are the additional barriers?*** – whole group discussion
- 14.40 **Break**
- 14.50 **Discussion 2 – *What could Scottish Government and others such as local councils and employers do to improve the situation for families living with disability and in poverty?*** – whole group discussion
- 15.20 **Close**

CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail correspondence with INCLUSION SCOTLAND

From: [redacted]
Sent: 05 February 2018 13:47
To: [redacted]
Subject: Apologies

Hi [redacted],

Was looking forward to taking part today but unfortunately I'm off ill.

All the Best,

[redacted]
[redacted]
Inclusion Scotland
[redacted]
Hayweight House
23 Lauriston St
Edinburgh, EH3 9DQ
<http://www.inclusionscotland.org>

From: [redacted]
Sent: 06 February 2018 09:51
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Apologies

Thanks for letting me know [redacted]. I did pick up your email just before the meeting and passed on your apologies to [redacted] (copied in) but never got around to replying.

I wonder if you would be able to send a brief note of key points you would have made through to [redacted] ? That would be really helpful.

Hope you are feeling better [redacted], and hope to see you soon.

[redacted] | **Equality Policy | The Equality Unit | Equality, Human Rights and Third Sector**
The Scottish Government | [redacted]

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SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

**Parent group including representatives from
THE BRITISH DEAF ASSOCIATION (with interpreters) and PEOPLE FIRST**

Monday 5 February 2018

Key points

- Where a parent was disabled, support provided was for them and not the child: no sense of support being needed for families rather than individuals
- Most parents with learning disabilities were on benefits – there was insufficient support for them to take those up
- Also not enough support in terms of service providers making easy-read documentation e.g. bus companies when changing routes/times, schools/out of school care when sending out information to parents. Technology was also a key challenge
- School uniforms were too expensive and the grants provided by local authorities didn't cover the cost
- Support with managing money would also be helpful
- Services that deaf parents could in theory access for support with finances and wider issues did not routinely have BSL trained staff to interpret e.g. CAS, children's third sector organisations
- Benefits offices staff should have awareness training on the needs of deaf and deafblind clients – currently the system was not well set up to accommodate these clients. Universal credit introduction meant that accessing systems took longer for disabled people. Would be helpful to have an advocate for parents in each benefit office

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

SCOTTISH REFUGEE COUNCIL AND BRITISH RED CROSS

Thursday 14 December 2017

Key Points

- Focus on increasing income levels in the Child Poverty Bill could have knock-on negative effects for asylum seekers' entitlement to Home Office financial support. Better for this group to have non-income, in-kind support which would make their lives easier but not impact on their Home Office entitlement
- Asylum seekers in Scotland largely concentrated in Glasgow. Important for Glasgow City Council to articulate a vision for this group. A place-based approach would be particularly helpful for this population.
- Danger that the official figure for numbers of children under 18 in Glasgow was an under-estimate, as the official figures only reflected those receiving Home Office support
- Social Justice colleagues should look to the "Hidden Lives, New Beginnings" report to inform the Delivery Plan
- An anti-destitution strategy had been committed to – this would put a system in place for those with no recourse to public funds because of insecure immigration status
- The recently convened New Scots focus groups had revealed that access to transport was a major issue for refugee/asylum communities. There was often a choice between travelling and eating. Expanding the free bus pass to those who were destitute would make a big difference to that group
- "Worklessness" was imposed on asylum seekers – they were in the position of having to make the little they are given go as far as possible
- High proportion of those who have been granted asylum are homeless
- Lack of language support was key barrier to asylum and refugee communities. New Scots would look at this but was pressing issue
- Access to advice was also vital – particular challenges faced around the psychological trauma many would have faced in the countries they had left, and in the course of the journey to the UK. Legal support also often needed; as well as in-depth advocacy support – different advice needed than for other groups in poverty
- Where asylum seekers placed in SIMD 1 and 2 areas, increased risk of social isolation as these were difficult communities to join. Holistic support and advice was vital
- Many asylum seeking families faced prolonged and severe poverty, so there was a need for specialist support
- In many cases, children of asylum seekers were moved around a number of schools as the families were placed in different places at different stages of the approval process. Detrimental to attainment – and challenging for families to have the same conversations about entitlements and support a number of times

SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT

LGBT Youth Scotland

Tuesday 9 January 2018

Key Points

- Inter-relationships between protected characteristics and poverty – not always obvious with regards to sexuality and gender identity, which led to a common perception that this wasn't an additional barrier or risk factor.
- A key challenge for LGBT community was family breakdown that could occur where parents did not accept their child 'coming out' – in some cases this led to domestic abuse, and in some cases young people would run away from home.
- Where young people did run away from home, they would become homeless but this could be hidden where they undertook "sofa surfing".
- Young people in this situation were particularly vulnerable and could become the subject of child sexual exploitation.
- Another impact of a member of a family being LGBT could be where a parent goes through transition and this may impact on their remaining in their previous job, thus pushing the family into poverty.
- In this situation, individuals may not qualify for welfare support due to mental health issues linked to being transgender were not always recognised.
- Challenge of being able to afford certain cosmetics and medical products and services to support transition when an individual was living in poverty.
- Many LGBT young people had multiple and complex needs – they may have issues relating to coming from a family living in poverty, exacerbated by enduring LGBT-based bullying at school, and not receive the support they needed from their families as they were under poverty-related stresses themselves.
- Issue of homophobic bullying in schools was still major challenge for many young people – this could lead to LGBT pupils dropping out of school or not achieving to their full potential. The bullying often continued into further education, which damaged prospects at that stage.
- The mental health toll of coming from a disadvantaged background and having been bullied was major on young people. In these circumstances, young people often needed support in building their confidence and self-esteem before they would be ready to enter and sustain employment.
- St Andrews University survey on children and young people's wellbeing in Scotland compared with other countries indicated that Scotland's results were reasonable at the primary school stage, but compared very unfavourably at the high school stage, with pressures around school work, body image and bullying particularly marked.
- Important for services to be designed in an inclusive way – where LGBT young people could not see themselves in the promotion of a service, they would be likely to assume it wasn't "for them".
- Vital that trans women could access women's aid services when needed e.g. sheltered/homeless accommodation which was appropriate and safe.
- Important for rural challenges to be recognised e.g. when LGBT young people were seeking to access a service in rural areas, they would be aware of being more easily identifiable than in larger urban context – problem when a sense of anonymity was important to young people.

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- Seemed to be a general perception that coming out was no longer a big deal for young people, but in fact it still could be in certain communities.
- Discrimination was still a problem for some LGBT people seeking employment – particularly where they looked distinctive.
- More support would be helpful for parents of LGBT young people.
- More research was needed on the impact of a member of a household being LGBT on the experience of living in poverty.
- Data on housing and homelessness could include a question on sexuality, to provide more data on numbers of LGBT facing these challenges.
- Better understanding needed of intersection of LGBT identities, poverty, attainment and employability.

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CONTACT – West Lothian parents group

Monday 15 January 2018

Key points

- Would be helpful to establish if we know how many families with disabled children live in poverty – stats on households with disabled person available, but not specified whether this is a child or not [[redacted] to follow up with analysts]
- Fuel poverty is a key issue missing from the list of matters to be covered in a Delivery Plan. If a child has mobility issues, heating costs can be much higher. Particular conditions can be exacerbated by the cold too.
- Absolutely critical to address the additional costs associated with having a disabled child: costs of equipment, specialist therapies, home adaptations etc. Example was given of an adapted trike costing £700.
- Travel – cost of taxis to and from hospital where it's not possible to use public transport (and public transport may not even be available in some areas).
- Isolation is a particular issue, especially in school holidays.
- Childcare is the single biggest issue. Specialist childcare isn't available, so parents of disabled children are unable to work. Even where it is available, places are so limited that there are huge waiting lists.
- Important to recognise things that are not necessarily related to income, but could really improve quality of life, eg. fitness and music programmes, respite holidays and short breaks.

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RADIANT AND BRIGHTER

Friday 23 January 2018

Key Points

- Client group from a variety of different cultures originally – could be barrier in terms of supporting families out of poverty, as there were different attitudes towards what constituted living in poverty, or towards acknowledging that this was a problem and seeking help.
- Meeting the immediate needs of those living in poverty was important as well as providing support to lift people out of that situation in the longer term
- Key priorities were affordable and accessible transport and support with English language and wider cultural integration.
- Upon arrival in Scotland, refugees and asylum seekers required support immediately to settle them into a new culture and community.
- The basics were important, such as information and advice on where to buy different items and where/how to access services, ideally in an environment with a group of peers so people could form networks and support each other.
- Emergency food provision e.g. food banks often problematic for refugees/asylum seekers e.g. predominantly tinned food where individuals were not used to food in this form, or food that was not Halal for those with Muslim faith.
- Clothing was often made available second-hand, but shoes rarely were – shoes for children were an expensive item so there was a need here.
- Colleges were struggling with demand for English language classes – this meant that people were having to wait too long to learn the language, which was a barrier to accessing services and opportunities.
- Holistic advice/support needed – so English language support vital but not in isolation; advice on entitlement to e.g. housing also essential.
- Language barrier a particular challenge when official documents were sent out by post e.g. Council Tax demands – these were not comprehensible so were often left un-dealt with, leading to the accumulation of debt. Advocacy needed to support here – many were coming from countries which didn't have "benefits systems" so it was alien to have to engage with them, or go through Jobcentres to find work.
- Asylum applications often took upwards of 3 years – difficult when families had children and couldn't work to earn sufficient money; permitting asylum seekers to work would allow them dignity and the opportunity to contribute.
- Work needed with employers to educate them about the contribution those from other cultures could make to their organisations. Still facing prejudice and having their skills and attributes dismissed by employers.
- This would be helped by more visibility of people of colour in different professions – "I cannot be what I cannot see" – it would give young people something to aspire to.
- Racism was still a big problem, not so much in primary school but certainly in high school. Pupils of colour often performed well academically initially but performance often tailed off later. Community groups like Radiant and Brighter could provide training to teachers to educate about how best to deal with it – unfortunate result currently was that young people of colour either retreated into

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- themselves, or became angry and lashed out violently, and consequently be labelled “the naughty one” and excluded from school.
- An initiative Radiant and Brighter were taking forward was setting up some of their female clients to shadow women leaders – mutual mentoring to promote more understanding and empathy of each other’s world and experiences. Could help address problem where those coming from other cultures didn’t have networks in place to support them to take up opportunities in society e.g. with setting up their own business.
 - Cost of transport prohibitive to asylum seekers and refugees travelling to take up opportunities – accessing services, education, leisure, culture, employment. If choice was between £6 per person for a day ticket for the bus or eating, people would of course choose eating. This could lead to families becoming socially isolated. First Bus had a discounted fare system for jobseekers – could this be extended to other groups such as asylum seekers?
 - Practice of employers only providing 3 month contracts and then dropping employees was hugely destructive to their confidence and stability. If employers could not be compelled to cease this practice, could Jobcentres stop requiring clients to undertake such short term placements?
 - “Buddy” system would be positive – so when a person arrived in Scotland from another country they would be allocated a buddy. Shouldn’t be a big organisation who arranged, as an intimate knowledge of local communities was important to identify the best people to take on this role. Often, large organisations would think that handing an asylum seeker or refugee a folder full of information constituted effective support having been provided – a more personal and in-depth approach was needed.
 - Childcare was a huge issue – high cost but also accessing provision where people from other cultures felt they fitted into the ethos and with the parents who used the service. BME-specific child and family centres would be positive to ensure all from those communities felt welcome and fitted in – with nowhere to get together, people could end up feeling “locked up” in poverty, and in remote housing where they didn’t feel part of the life of the city they lived in.
 - Asylum seekers/refugees in 22-25 age group were above the age threshold for many forms of support geared at younger people. An idea could be to provide incentives for employers to take on these “older young people”, even temporarily to give them some experience of the workplace, and show their potential.
 - Grassroots community organisations needed more sustainable funding. At a disadvantage when applying for funding compared with larger organisations who had far more resources to do so.
 - Scope for more effective partnerships between local authorities and grassroots organisations – the latter had the effective relationships with those living in communities. Lots of local authority buildings lying empty which could be utilised for the benefit of communities.
 - National, broad-brush commitments/programmes missed a lot of minority groups as they faced barriers in accessing “universal” entitlements e.g. free childcare. There were “missing links” in support provided.
 - Problematic to assign new Scots to remote housing blocks where they knew nobody and the communities they were being assigned to also didn’t feel part of this process. Children coming in were allocated case workers but they often didn’t understand the cultural differences the children were coming in with e.g.

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what is a GP? Many cultures didn't have GPs – would only visit hospitals with issues.

- Important for those within communities to help provide support to others in similar situation e.g. support with interpreting rather than bringing in people from outside communities.
- Where children were moved to a number of different schools given moves associated with different stages of the asylum consideration process, problematic for their wellbeing and the development of social skills and roots in Scotland.
- Having to pay Council Tax a big burden for refugees – even when studying, must pay if don't want to take out student loan – wish may be to not want to take on more debt but if reluctant to take out loan, considered to be well enough off to not need it. Vicious circle.

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BEMIS

Tuesday 30 January 2018

Key Points

- Disproportionate percentage of BME communities were living in poverty
- Different ethnic communities faced different challenges in relation to poverty – not homogenous group. There was also geographical variation in terms of the challenges
- Nepalese community faced the challenge of having no recourse to public funds – often they were in work but on low wages
- The Polish community often faced the challenge of living in overcrowded accommodation; in-work poverty was often a problem as many worked in agriculture. The Agricultural Wages Board did not pay the Living Wage although BEMIS had lobbied them to do so.
- BME employees under-represented in local authority jobs but it would take time for this to change as the population had only relatively recently diversified and there had been LA budget cuts in recent years which meant lower recruitment rates
- Capital investment projects were the main source of job opportunities – good for procurement processes could have diversity clauses
- BEMIS Policy Position on A New Future for Social Security in Scotland set out their recommendations on tackling poverty for BME communities. Key point was that those with 'limited leave to remain' had no recourse to public funds: if SG could open up social security resources to all, including those with no recourse, in-work poverty, attainment gaps and child poverty would all be positively impacted

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INTERFAITH SCOTLAND

Tuesday 14 February 2018

Key points

- Jewish communities in some areas had set up Jewish care for child refugees, particularly foodbanks as Kosher food was more expensive than non-Kosher.
- Asylum seekers were in the most dire need. Where they had come from Calais they had often had all possessions removed.
- There was research showing that the Muslim community were being discriminated against by employers. Also an issue for those from Romany communities.
- Female employment could lift families out of poverty but there were cultural barriers to that in some communities because of attitudes to women working.
- Affordability of housing and heating can be issues. There were enclaves of religious communities based around proximity to mosques, synagogues etc. This incidence of “ghettos” could hold back young people from social mobility.
- Romany communities: many young people being forced into criminality at an early age through not being able to access legitimate employment.

