

Draft Budget Scrutiny 2020-21

Scottish Parliament: Equalities and Human Rights Committee

August 2019

1. What are the key public policy areas where individuals and protected groups are struggling to access their rights?

As the national charity for older people, Age Scotland has found that older people are struggling to access their rights for a multitude of different reasons. This is in part due to a lack of advice services which are accessible to them, meaning they are not aware that they are missing any support and services to which they are entitled to.

Digital exclusion can mean older people are unable to access information about their entitlements. With benefits such as Universal Credit and Blue Badges often 'digital by default', this excludes the 500,000 people in Scotland over the age 60 who do not use the internet. It is important that information is available in different forms such as paper, on the phone, and face to face. The option of being able to talk to someone can be greatly beneficial which is why our freephone helpline provides information, friendship, and advice for people over the age of 50 and their families in Scotland.

Older people who require advice about issues in later life (organising care at home, benefits, specialist housing, care homes, legal and end of life issues) can find it difficult to access holistic information about their rights as they need to navigate new systems at a time of ill-health and intense pressure on their family. Our information guides act as a central point where older people can get information and advice as well as be signposted for more specialist advice.

We have found that older carers are at risk of not accessing support they are entitled to due the fact they do not self-identify as a carer. This in turn is more likely to effect women who are more likely to have caring responsibilities.

Research has also shown that people begin to face age discrimination at the age of 50 in the workplace. Centre for Ageing Better found that 14% of employees believe they have been turned down for a job due to their age and 18% have or have considered hiding their age in job applications. We know that people are delaying their retirement due to rising cost of living or insufficient pension savings, therefore, age discrimination in the workplace must be tackled. Employers are missing out by not supporting older workers with career development, health support, and flexible working arrangements. Age

Scotland has helped more than 200 Scottish companies and 4,500 people create more age-inclusive workplaces and plan for their future effectively.

2. Which groups of people are most likely to be affected and why?

As outlined in question one, older carers are particularly affected due to not self-identifying as carers. People living with cognitive impairments such as dementia, and disabled people with mobility issues are also most likely to be affected and would benefit from targeted face-to-face services which can help explain their rights in way that suits them. Accessing face-to-face support, however, continues to be difficult for many older people.

Our research has found that 100,000 older people Scotland feel lonely all or most of the time and it is likely isolated older people do not know that services are available to help them, or they don't know how to contact them.

What type of public sector funding (European, national or local) is provided to your organisation to support vulnerable groups and those with protected characteristics to access public services?

We receive funding from the Scottish Government Equality directorate for our membership services and the helpline.

Life Changes Trust also funds much of the charity's work which focuses on helping and working with people affected by Dementia.

3. Is the level of public sector funding provided enough to deliver national priorities and better outcomes for people and communities, please provide evidence?

Our freephone helpline has observed an increase in calls relating to lack of public services such as foot care, advice, public transport and taxi card systems, and garden maintenance.

All this evidence has led us to the conclusion that public sector funding to provide national priorities and better outcomes for people and communities is not sufficient, with the voluntary sector often left to plug the gap for services that used to be publicly funded. For instance, Age Scotland is seen as the go to place for care home funding advice and are signposted by other organisations such as Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and Citizen Advice Bureaus.

4. What type of administrative systems are in place to monitor the impact on equalities and human rights outcomes from public sector funding to the third sector?

Age Scotland uses the following administrative system to monitor the impact:

- Case checking and quality assurance
- Reporting and monitoring of trends
- Joint up working between different teams at Age Scotland such as the Policy & Communications team with the Helpline team and Information & Advice team
- Network meetings with veterans' projects and community groups.

5. What changes could be made to improve accountability for national priorities being delivered by the public sector in partnership with the third sector?

Increased long term funding options would help to improve accountability for national priorities, and there should be recognition that budgets need to include costs for independent evaluation. As well as budget for targeted promotion of services to affected groups in order to ensure maximum take up.

Want to find out more?

As Scotland's national charity supporting people over the age of 50, Age Scotland works to improve older people's lives and promote their rights and interests. We aim to help people love later life, whatever their circumstances. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

Our Policy, Communications and Campaigns team research, analyse and comment on a wide range of public policy issues affecting older people in Scotland.

Our work is guided by the views and needs of older people themselves.

Further information

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