



Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS) is an alliance of Scotland's major disability organisations: Action on Hearing Loss (Scotland), Capability Scotland, ENABLE Scotland, RNIB Scotland, SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) and Sense Scotland. Together our experience, expertise and interests cover physical disability, sensory impairment, learning disability, communication support needs and mental health.

Disability Agenda Scotland welcomes this opportunity to respond to COSLA on their UNCRPD Scottish Local Government Delivery Plan (2015-2018), which we read with interest.

DAS members broadly welcome COSLA's intention to support local government in Scotland to protect and promote the rights of disabled people in Scotland. Disabled People's rights are human rights and everyone in a local authority has a duty to ensure that these rights are protected and supported.

DAS believe that there are some key areas which require further focus; where the plan could be strengthened to provide a more holistic approach and deliver more positive outcomes for disabled people.

DAS would be keen to invite COSLA to meet with DAS member Chief Executives to discuss further some of the comments made in our brief response.

In General, DAS notes that Disability Organisations should be recognised as having an important function that complements the identified crucial role that Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) play in the delivery of the Plan. It is key that COSLA recognises the important voice of disabled people in this process and the myriad of groups and organisations that involve them. Given the presence of a variety of organisations led and informed by disabled members, and specialist policy and practice expertise which they bring to the sector it would be remiss of the plan not to consider their role in delivery.

DAS members note with some initial caution the decision for the Scottish Local Government Delivery Plan (2015-2018) to sit independently, and with a distinct time-frame to the Scottish Government's Delivery Plan (2016-2020).

Disability Agenda Scotland also notes with some concern, the absence of significant reference to disabled children and young people. The Policy Context, for example, is not

reflective of the holistic policy landscape that applies in regards to Children and Young People.

Disability Agenda Scotland would be keen to work with COSLA in the following particular areas that we feel could be strengthened by our input:

Employment

Disability Agenda Scotland emphasise that there is a need for Local Authorities to work with specialist disability organisations currently delivering employment support and already part of their Local Authority Employability Partnerships.

Local Authorities, as some of Scotland's largest employers should set a standard in inclusive recruitment and employment. With that in mind Disability Agenda Scotland emphasise that Local Authorities should have an ambition in their delivery plan that their workforce reflects the demographic of their local community. The unexceptional commitment made at Action 9: *each local authority will offer a paid internship for a disabled person and will work with managers, trade unions and DPOs to ensure that the workplace is adapted to meet that person's requirements and that support is provided as well as training and development opportunities* is unlikely to make significant progress to such an ambition.

Disability Agenda Scotland is supportive of COSLA's position at 4.11: *While we recognise that supported businesses can play a vital role in enabling people with disabilities to participate in the labour market, with the renewed focus on tackling inequality in Scotland's Economic Strategy, COSLA would argue that now is the time for a discussion about the involvement of people with disabilities in the economy more widely.*

Disability Agenda Scotland further believe that further analysis and consultation is required to evidence the position taken by COSLA at 4.12 that: *devolved powers rest at LA/ CPP level, rather than national government.*

Education:

The Scottish Government's renewed focus on the educational attainment gap, and as COSLA notes, and a focus on multi disciplinary working via the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, provides a timely opportunity look at education for disabled children and young people who; and consider a progressive approach to delivering a truly inclusive education system.

Many DAS partners would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with COSLA and beyond that, inform the delivery of the plan.

Many of the individual organisations have proposals and resources that can support the commitments made by COSLA in this part of the plan. ENABLE Scotland, for example, have worked with Strathclyde University and Glasgow University to produce a suite of school lesson plans that would support the realisation of Action 15: *Local authorities should build on existing work to educate children and young people about disability, using the opportunities provided through the Curriculum for Excellence to ensure that young people leave education with a full understanding on to what is meant by disability, and how society should respond to and interact with disabled people.*

Social Security:

Disability Agenda Scotland know that as a direct result of the welfare reform agenda:

- Households with disabled adults and children have faced a total reduction of £1,900 per year in annual income.¹
- This is three times the reduction experienced by non-disabled households.

Disability Agenda Scotland is supportive of COSLA's position at 6.19: *the purpose of a welfare state is to ensure all citizens have the right and opportunity to live purposeful and productive lives, irrespective of their social circumstance. This will normally involve participating in the labour market but not always.*

We would however highlight that at 6.10 COSLA should also recognise the need for an effective system of social security benefits to:

- Mitigate the recognised additional costs of raising disabled children²
- Top up low incomes of disabled people part time working and on low rates of pay

In Conclusion, Disability Agenda Scotland is keen to work with COSLA in the development and delivery of the Scottish Local Government Delivery Plan. We welcome opportunity to engage further on this. Please contact Disability Agenda Scotland Policy Group Chair should this be agreeable to you.

For more detail on any part of this briefing paper, please contact:

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¹ Financial Impact of Welfare Reforms on Disabled People in Scotland, Scottish Government, 2014

² Contact a Family (2012), Counting the Cost: the financial reality for families with disabled children across the UK.