

**Disability Agenda Scotland**  
**Hustings Event - Monday 18 April 2016**  
**Notes: Mel Coulter, Andrena McMenemy**  
**Please Do Not Regard The Following Text as a Verbatim Record**

**Billy Watson:** The room has gone quiet so that is probably the time to start. I'm Billy Watson and I'm Chief Executive of Scottish Association for Mental Health SAMH and we are one of the six members of Disability Agenda Scotland and proud to host today's event. Can you all hear me OK, strange mic sticking out my ear for those who can't see it. Thanks for coming along and a wide attendance from constituency that DAS represents. I should have said that I chaired Disability Agenda Scotland group on behalf of directors and Chief Executives of all six charities and today we represent the whole voice of our constituency. Often the voice of disabled people their issues struggle to be heard in the clutter that surrounds Parliament elections and we want to put them at the fore of the political agenda. Representatives here from all main parties today and let's use the time we have today 1 hour 20 to explore what matters to us. We will do that through set questions and some people who can't be here today and some who are have submitted written questions which I will play in and I also want to hear your burning questions from inside the room.

Disability Agenda Scotland is consortium of six leading charities across Scotland and across the disability spectrum whether physical learning, sensory impairment, communication support needs or mental health. We represent tens of thousands of people and important they are given a platform in this election. We are in touch with people across these organisations to provide support and sitting behind that is around one million in Scotland who are disabled or living with long term health condition that makes this a vital constituency for all of our politicians and these votes really matter and incumbent that we make sure we cover the ground.

In January 2016 Disability Agenda Scotland ran focus groups across Scotland speaking to disabled groups in a set format and pulled together the big issues of concern. DAS had produced an election pledge which summarises issues and agendas and three areas stood out which we want to cover today but not exclusively so if you have questions not under this heading please feel free to raise it.

Employment and employability, welfare, social security and then stigma and discrimination around disability issues.

We have put together an election pledge and asked candidates and politicians to sign up to.

Will read the three headline pledges [reads pledges]

Support necessary action to reshape and improve the way employment services work in Scotland.

Social security - to seize the opportunity presented by devolution of parts of the social security system to design and deliver a system that empowers disabled people and recognises contribution and value to society.

Stigma and discrimination - support our call for new Scottish Government to fund national campaign to raise awareness of disability and reduce stigma across the agenda.

Three big issues that came out of focus groups but happy to hear on any topics but will try and steer some of it round these themes.

Today is an event and enjoyable event but it's also part of a process how disabled people across Scotland can influence politics and governance of their day. This is third hustings that DAS has run and important events and continue to be seen as important events to make sure we just don't do this every so often and we return to the issues. And we try to work across parties and we have a whole selection of candidates so we can hear from them what their party can do post election for disabled people in Scotland.

Lastly by way of instruction a whole series of issues around inequalities for people who are disabled and it's important and matters on an ongoing basis. Disabled people are more likely in deprived areas to live in poverty and twice as likely to have a disability in most deprived areas. 49% of those households have a net income of below £15K per year.

Unemployment rates for disabled groups are on average over 50% and 78% of disabled people over last two years through survey have said assessment process they go through and welfare reform makes them more ill as they go through this and these are huge issues of equality that we want to explore.

Take you through a few aspects of house keeping so we are all safe and know what will happen over next 1 hour and 12 minutes - the clock at the back helps me to be precise. Want to make this as accessible event as

possible so hopefully all you need to help you participate is happening or can happen and if not let us know. There are plenty of people from the organisation in the room that can assist.

No fire alarm predicted or test this afternoon so if we hear it we leave this room through the door we entered and to Middlesex Street.

**New Speaker:** Right down out the back door where Milnpark Street is go down that way. Out through the gate and down to Milnpark Street so out the back door.

**Billy Watson:** Thanks for that I know there are others in the room that can help us.

**New Speaker:** I know the way around the building.

**Billy Watson:** You will be useful for us today. We are also live streaming the event, a lot of people unable to be here today so we are filming from the back of the room the camera is behind most of you, if uncomfortable about that let us know if you don't want to be on camera. Tweeting the event and no good hustings event happens without social media. We will be tweeting and trying to get messages out there for the event.

The event will last about 1 hour 10 minutes from now that will kick off with three minutes from each of our candidates and we have agreed order to do that and I will introduce the candidates in one go and then it's open to question and answer for rest of time. All set we have a great panel and lots to talk about.

Will do the introductions on my right as I face you. Jamie Hepburn SNP, most recently Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health and he is candidate for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth, MSP since 2007 and politically before that through University of Glasgow was convenor of Federation of Student Nationalists and Young Scots for Independence.

Michael Shanks, Scottish Labour who works with disability charity in Glasgow dealing with vulnerable and troubled young people and leads another charity for young people with complex disabilities. He is candidate for Glasgow Kelvin.

Councillor Robert Brown represents Scottish Liberal Democrats and candidate for Rutherglen and top of the list for Lib Democrats in Glasgow and he is former MSP between 1999 and 2011 and consulting partner in

Glasgow firm of solicitors. Robert was Deputy Minister for Education and Young People from 2005 and councillor for Rutherglen South on South Lanarkshire Council think I got everything. Thanks for coming Robert.

Then there is Graeme Brooks, Scottish Conservatives, Inverclyde and he works for not for profit organisation and former centre director for Inverclyde Youth for Christ.

Last but not least and in terms of gender balance we are not well balanced today but Zara Kitson is from Scottish Green Party and is co-convenor of Glasgow branch of the Greens and stood as Green Party candidate in UK. She works in LGBT sector and on executive for women for independence, she is second on list for Greens next to Patrick Harvey. Show your appreciation for the panel. [Applause]

Now hear 3 minutes from each candidate on what their party will do for disabled people in Scotland.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Thank you for chairing today Billy and thanks to Disability Agenda Scotland for putting on the hustings. Billy made the point that this should not be seen as a one off event and a process of ongoing engagement and in that regard looking at the board over there member organisations of Disability Agenda Scotland can say they have been successful in having ongoing process of engagement with current Scottish Government and I have met with all the organisations on various occasions. I won't say too much at outset and leave more time for any question and answer sessions. SNP perspective and ambition for those with disability in Scotland is that they should live as fulfilling and independent life as anyone in Scotland. Our ambition for everyone is to achieve their full potential and there is recognition that for some there is some additional assistance required and that ambition about aspiring to independence is set out in a number of our strategies that we laid out for example autism strategy or keys to life strategy both have that as their hallmark. In trying to reach that ambition I believe progress has been made whether it be through introduction of measures like self directed support for example for people in receipt of package of support from Local Authority or creation of Independent Living Fund (ILF) in Scotland and people can continue to get support. Through our mental health strategy we have seen investment in See Me programme and tremendous strides in tackling stigmatisation around mental health and through the passage of the Mental Health Act and those who have to interact with mental health system and legislating for right for people to attain equipment and empower people to have a voice to communicate with the world or through the passing of the Carers Act and we know

there are unpaid carers and people rely on them for support and I was proud to take that Act through Parliament but much more can be done in this term and I think two areas we can achieve more is through devolution of enhanced powers over social security. I refer to it as social security rather than welfare and additional powers we have over employability. Much still to be done.

**Billy Watson:** Thank you. Now Michael.

**Michael Shanks:** Thanks for all of you for coming along and putting up with those long introductions for us all. Thanks to Sense for hosting. There was samba drumming last time and some noise and activity always which is fantastic. A bit of a reunion and we did National Autistic Society hustings recently. In my introduction since I was 14 I volunteered for a charity for young people with disabilities and Jordan promised he would not heckle me tonight. A lot of issues facing young people in Scotland.

**New Speaker:** Jordan - I'm keeping my mouth shut, promise.

**Michael Shanks:** A lot of issues have not moved on much and we struggle and it goes up to age 25 and that mythical word of transitions and we expect people age 18 to automatically transition into adulthood but the care and support needs don't go away or disappear so there is a lot more work to do on this. I will talk about some of the things Labour is pledging to do. Fundamental thing about disability in Scotland people are disabled by the society they live in. Scotland has done huge amount to be inclusive but for too many it's still not an accessible country and they are faced with barriers and a lot we have to do about this. We want to use powers of Scottish Parliament more and stop damaging cuts coming to services and we do that through tax policies and have been analysed and we want to protect front line services. We talk of a care worker guarantee and planning of zero hour contracts. Thirdly I agree with Jamie the powers that come to Scotland on social security and we have to stop using the phrase welfare reform. In Scotland we have powers to do something different to create a system not penalising people but to give them the support they need to live their lives. Announced the dates for skills body in Scotland and Powers over Work programme coming to Scotland to create one body to pull together all the resources to help people into work or training. That is a bit of our pledge.

**Billy Watson:** I'm being lenient already. Robert.

**Robert Brown:** I join with thanking Disability Agenda Scotland to put on

the hustings. A good deal of what is said already are things I agree with and a lot of commonality across political parties and there is a strength that there can be that commonality and a long term programme. I was MSP previously and I was chair of Cross Party Group on Human Rights, Cross Party Group on Visual Impairment and Cross Party Group on including children. Some of us have forgotten in the furore when you have particular meetings all these particular groups have same issues in common interested in health, education, opportunities for children and care for older people and interest in economy. For disabled people more unemployment for disabled people and more barriers and public services are more significant in the lives of disabled people than they are among population in general terms. We have to have a Government focused on these things and public services and quality of them. In education we talk about focus on this and schools, early years and colleges providing £5M of investment to make up for cut backs seen under current Government and provide a transformation. When chair of education committee I took forward a Learning Act and a lot of these things have to have resource to go with them we have seen salami slicing of teachers, support staff and education system and we have to restore focus. Health service had focus on GP recruitment and mental health and it gets caught on so many things and in summary core liberal values I want to put across is that we want everyone to achieve their potential and tackle the social economic injustices and in all the furore of constitutional change and referendum in Europe we sometimes lose track of the core points and bread and butter issues that matter. Thanks.

**Graeme Brooks:** Thank you ladies and gentlemen I'm Graeme Brooks what I would like to open by saying fantastic to be here and thanks for the invitation. Let me answer Bill's question what is the future tense of this election coming forward and the five years of the next Scottish Parliament. What motivates me as you have heard I worked for a Christian Charity and involved in Christian work for 28 years. Widows in the orphans is a phrase used and Mark's gospel is clear on people who need support most and how we measure and organise society. The people who are left alone, the widows, the orphans and in today's culture the people who have a disabilities. Some have great abilities if you look beyond their disabilities and I would love to be the person that looks beyond their disabilities to find their abilities.

College places have had a massive effect on those who need these places and we want to invest to make sure we reverse this situation. Friends on the panel don't like the phrase welfare and social and health care is coming together and is positive and can we bring disabled

welfare benefits into that. What would it look like if benefit was not centralised in Edinburgh but came via Local Authorities for disabled people.

Family Crisis Fund we want to put £10M into this fund as we believe people with mental health challenges and problems need support and we want to raise that £10M by cutting what the current Government have in place called named person or state guardian up to age 18 and that is how we will fund that policy.

Further policies we don't think a strategy for mental health over 10 years is good enough. Society moves much faster. Think about technology what we have here in the room, Tweeting, Youtube things move fast and every four years we get stakeholders, Scottish Government and Third Sector organisations in Scotland to deliver a four year strategy to help those people. We have policies and plans and want your support.

**Zara Kitson:** Hello it's really good to be here I'm Scottish Greens candidate for Glasgow region. Welcome to all who managed to get along today not an easy journey for some and just getting on a bus or navigating public buildings is a huge issue for disabled people. I got involved with politics and I did not see myself reflected in politics and grew up in deprived community an ex mining village and did not see my voice reflected in politics and I was motivated to change that. Good to have this event and where we need to push to make real change is have disabled people's voices represented in politics and glad we have signed up to 1 in 5 campaign and when disabled people's voices are represented that is when we make better decisions. If we had transport system, public buildings etc designed in consultation with disabled people we would not face an issue where places can't be accessed by people. It's not people with disabilities that are disabled it's our society that does not enable you to be able. If we are going to be visionary on the type of Scotland we want to have we have to take people's voices seriously and how we include disabled people in decision making at local level, Parliament level and across public services and I think it will make a huge difference to people's lives.

As disabled people it's only part of your identity, disabled people are multi-discriminated against in many ways, if disabled woman you face wider discrimination, same for those from ethnic minority origin and disabled you will face wider multi discrimination and we have to make change. We have key commitments and I'm sure your ears are burning and want to get your own questions in. We have to push for a more equal Scotland as we have heard and recognise inequality is having negative

impact on all. Gaps between richest and poorest is growing and causes huge misery in people's lives and in our communities we have put forward serious progressive tax proposals so that those who earn the most and those that make money from the work we contribute to will pay more and people that earn less will pay less. We want to push to have 50% increase in carers allowance to make sure people have a liveable income that provide care. We want commission on social security and want disabled people's voices in there and have it based on human rights dignity and respect and want this embedded in policies that go forward in Holyrood.

**Billy Watson:** There you have it. At the beginning we had themes to structure conversation around. We heard a bit of divergence of opinion around social security which seems to be preferred term of use. One question that I'm going to feed in and want panel to reflect on but as I do that open it up on social security or welfare use whatever term you wish. Burning questions on that subject to get the panel to reflect on.

Question is - Do you think recent welfare cuts to disabled are fair and just. If you were in power how would you improve the disability benefit system.

**New Speaker:** Question - Ken Reid RNIB Scotland and I refer to the future powers that are coming the way the Scottish Parliament have been determined under principle of no detriment. I want to know if panel understands what no detriment means re social security.

**New Speaker:** Joe Neeson acting chair for Family Forum for Sense - question on care charges. When DLA was set up and now PIP it was to enhance someone with disability and their lifestyle. Anyone brave enough to banish the care charges.

**New Speaker:** This is a big question - my question to you is I feel strongly for Conservatives and the mess we are in with financial problem. I don't like PIP. I think DLA and benefits should stay as they are. For the future I think my vote would be going with SNP as they know what it's like to be disabled. My disability because of the Conservatives now my money is going down and do you know why that is it's because Conservatives are cutting everything and that is not fair. I will tell you what else is not fair - jobs being kept for robotics etc. People need jobs.

**Billy Watson:** Current system, fairness and where can improvement be made. No detriment and then no care charges and PIP and financial challenges. Will bring people in at different times. Scottish Labour first.

**Michael Shanks:** Those are good questions and in my introductory remarks we want to use new powers a lot more and can make different choices. On care charges Labour has said they would work to abolish care charges. Raising the revenue set out a penny more on income tax than proposed and raising income tax for those who earn over £150K and this could raise £1.2bn and this would stop some of the cuts happening and invest in different ways to make different choices for the Government. Free personal care for the elderly in the last Labour Lib Dem Government in Scotland and SNP have kept that and we should be working to make sure people's care needs are met. Underpinning all policies is that people should be treated as people with dignity and respect, you get the care you need without having to beg for it and I have met people who have been asked can you get something from top shelf of your cupboard or walk to bus stop as it's that that determines if they need care or not. We want to make sure disabled people get the care they need to lead fulfilling lives.

No detriment one - when the guy who has brought so much misery to those and then resigns as he can't stomach it it gives us an idea. We have to grasp it and have a fairer way to do things.

**Graeme Brooks:** Its good to get an opportunity to answer. Long term benefit welfare reform is the objective. The objective is long term benefit welfare reform for those people who need it. We have to ensure we have an economy that can pay for that welfare reform and pay for disabled benefits required.. strong economy is way forward. Ian Duncan Smith has resigned and I was with him in Easterhouse and he was just about to get the position and his objective was to ensure those who were on welfare or were not able to go out to work that would change and the people that could work would be given the support. We have done that and a massive increase in those being able to go out to work. We have bucked the trend. We have ability to ensure that people can make the best of the world and their lives and move into employment.

PIP - you are right we have had PIP announcement at the budget and that is called democracy and all MPs have said they felt it was not the right way forward and it did not get before the House. I'm happy we have central democracy and not people on the streets shouting or people on the streets with guns. Objective of welfare reform is to make it better and not make cuts we have to ensure that those that can work can take up the opportunity for their well being and sense of contribution for society and sense of being part of society we have. A few people frowning at me but so many people that would rather go out and do a days work rather

than lie in their bed and take a cheque.

**New Speaker:** If you get business to pay their taxes.

**Graeme Brooks:** We have brought in more legislation and there is more to come.

**Billy Watson:** If we can do it through the chair it will make the process better. Hang on to that for a second please. Zara can you elaborate on social security.

**Zara Kitson:** Specific points is welfare reform fair and just I think it's unjust and nothing short of an attack on disabled people and for Conservatives to dress it up it's disrespectful. We are dressing this up as welfare reform and cuts yet we still have big businesses not paying tax and growing inequality is not going away and that is key challenge to address. Most of us will agree that we want to prevent Conservative cuts and a Conservative agenda and important to focus on what we can do. For Scottish Green Party commission on social security what we have recognised is that social security system has become misguided and it's not about a safety net or protecting people or about security and it's a race to the bottom and not humane and no dignity or respect and whatever the Scottish Parliament brings in we have those principles core. As part of it we want commissioners to be people that are in receipt of benefits and social security so their voices shapes things going forward. The collective experiences in the room are most powerful and lived experience enables all to be enlightened. I'm sure we will get a lot of cross party support on that commission.

**Billy Watson:** Let's test cross party consensus then.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Joe's point on care charges. Some work underway with Scottish Government and COSLA to look at this area. I think the fundamental point you make is about the purpose of certain payments and additionality and I agree with that. Earlier with Independent Living Fund the purpose should be an additionality on this and liability for care charges or other support to be taken into account and looked and reflected on and send out a stronger message to those undertaking that process. Question you posed via Twitter you said Billy about the changes to disability benefit are they just. I think the young man who spoke very eloquently there said no they are not just. I think I should point out I'm Jamie that is Michael. People on the streets with guns is an interesting place to end up not sure how we got there Graeme... we have been asked to sign up to the Disability Agenda Scotland pledge on

stigmatisation and we have to be careful on the language deployed and you came very close to suggesting that everyone who is going through social security system is somehow a layabout and not interested in working and wanting to stay in bed and get a cheque.

**Graeme Brooks:** Think you are saying that not me.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Fundamentally misunderstand that most going through the social security system want to work. Change from DLA to PIP has been an unmitigated disaster and the process of welfare reform and purpose is reform not cuts, that is not reality on the ground. Those with disability and in receipt of payments are losing £1200 per household. The fact we get enhanced powers allows us to do something different. We will reverse change to PIP and revert back to DLA Ensure carers allowance is paid at same level of job seekers allowance. Open up ILF to new recipients. When we talked about no detriment we spoke of powers over taxation and interesting perspective to those going through social security system and I believe it should be fair and we set out with a Bill published in first year and we want to create social security administration to empower people going through the system and voices to be heard through the process.

**Robert Brown:** One or two points - worthwhile to look at what we are trying to do here. Why are certain arrangements being devolved to Scottish Parliament as they link well with other topics covered by Scottish Parliament and what it does not do is provide any more money as such with same envelope financially. The idea of magic tide arriving, we want to make it more flexible and person centred than it has in the past. The issue is not so much that democracy did not work due to outcry it was why on earth were these things proposed in the first place. We aim to stop it and make Government think again on this matter. George Osborne had leadership agenda issues rightly behind it as well. Social security system reform - broad cross party consensus that there had to be changes in way these things operated and get away from penalties towards work and complexities of the system. The issues have been in implementation and inability to get to grips with assessment process properly. We should not have a situation where people are disabled and have to go through process and routine and unpleasant interventions included in assessment process Michael spoke of introduction of free personal care. It went against the grain and considerable credit went to Parliament and First Minister to go forward in that respect. Difficulties have arisen with free personal care and to be able to extend it. I think there is an issue with carers as well as for the care system. Carers

allowance and support for carers has to be modernised as it affects many.

**Billy Watson:** A lady who tried to get in on last round, will try and give those who have not had chance to speak the opportunity.

**New Speaker:** We voting next month. People voting for one.

**Billy Watson:** We will get quick response to that on process of voting and accessibility of process and understanding one votes or two votes and getting you to polling station.

**New Speaker:** This is directed at Tory. You got my dander up with that. You are saying up there about folk at Easterhouse and folk being layabouts and not wanting to get jobs. Do you know what mate you are wrong there. You try having a learning disability and trying to go out there and have a job. Even worse if you have dyslexia or whatever and you sit up there slating those guys that is not right.

**Billy Watson:** The toughness around the situation on this constituency around work we will move on to employment in a minute.

**New Speaker:** What it was was you talked about the DLA and you were also talking about the carers allowance and I have been a carer for 28 years and have 28 years experience and very qualified. These cuts that are forecast is absolutely discriminating disabled people because 1, the staffing and the funding to all these organisations is being really really it's going to destroy us and these people's lives and they will be discriminated yet again and face discrimination all their lives. We have people who can't even go to a cinema whereas you can go there every day of the week. They depend on staff to take them anywhere even just to get fresh air. I am part of Government strategy for Keys for Life. These cuts will cause... I don't know what will happen for these people.

**Billy Watson:** If you could finish Jamie on accessibility of the process and cuts to services and cuts in movement for DLA into other benefits.

**Jamie Hepburn:** We met at Cumbernauld John and good to see you again. Graeme got all our dander up with his comments don't worry. I did not catch your name?

**New Speaker:** Liz.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Thanks for your question you will be aware of

changes we have brought forward to better support carers and for too long we have not done enough to support unpaid carers in Scotland. Have taken forward Carers Act to address a number of measures and statutory that provides carer information service and a care support plan or young person engagement. I won't pretend there are not challenges for organisations out there but we as administration are committed to provide this care for loved ones. You talked about support for organisations out there. £4.75M is provided for Carers. £3M for short breaks funding and some of which can be used for short break going to cinema etc. I'm not suggesting its not difficult and we will try better to respond. Accessibility to the system - I recognise at times it can seem complicated and hopefully it's not as difficult as it appears at first glance. You have two votes - candidate you want, and candidate for area/region.

**Billy Watson:** Young man next to Liz.

**New Speaker:** I would like to introduce myself I'm Dominic Howatson [CHECK SPELLING] and I live in care home in Perth. I have a disability which allows me very much pain and I often don't often get to go out and run into situations and problems when I do go out and occasionally I get my advocate involved and due to them becoming involved I have had freedom of speech and ability to communicate with services manager in a better way than I have done. Something she said to me in last meeting concerned me. Issue with funding for independent advocacy in Perth where they only support those up to 25. They said they used to support 25+ and who were disabled across the board and now can't due to funding cuts. How do you think that makes me feel and how can you support me to be allowed freedom of speech under Human Rights Act.

**Billy Watson:** Advocacy is a hot topic will ask that in a moment.

**New Speaker:** What do you think about independence for Scotland and who will care for disabled people?

**Robert Brown:** Quite a few questions and Jamie touched on voting thing. There are two votes for Scottish election one for local constituency Cathcart or Kelvin or whatever it happens to be and other vote is for more proportioned party list system and on Glasgow regional ballot in terms of Glasgow. Talk on carers and support to disabled people going to groups and things of that kind. Been involved in Glasgow when they reviewed community transport a few years ago and more recently in South Lanarkshire when they looked at withdrawal of transport that took wheelchair users and others to evening groups and it highlight pressures faced. It's crucial to support disabled people to go out about ordinary

business and take part in society and we have to look at funding of Local Authorities in that way.

Perth issue that Dominic raised - local issue in immediate sense, I imagine the group is funded by Local Authority or other body. Advocacy is hugely important, does not sound as if you need it to express yourself, but it's important that it gives a voice for those to engage with services. Advocacy services and other support routes need to be in place to support people. Moving into a better period financially hopefully and hope to deal with this better.

**Zara Kitson:** Advocacy is very important for all. I met with a group of young people and lot of commonalities and advocacy is not seen as priority service but an add on but value it brings to you to connect to services is hugely important and we need more priority on that and for it not to be seen as an add on. Anything not seen as statutory is difficult to fund in this era of cuts. We are in a period where Local Authorities are going to be enforcing cuts on local services and often our care services so care for anyone is deprioritised partly because an issue that links to gender inequality and care is traditionally women's work and seen as under valued under paid and often unpaid. Caring work should be seen as core and central to every day lives and no job is more valuable than caring for children, elderly and disabled people and it touches us all. Scottish Green Party has key priorities around this to transform how care sector works. For unpaid care we want to increase carers allowance by 50% to go up to £93.15 per week.

**New Speaker:** Carers allowance comes off the person who is being cared for it comes off their DLA. I have personal experience of that with my own mother and told if I was to look after my mum that amount of money would come off my mum's money. The DLA that someone gets.

**Billy Watson:** Let's carry on and see if other experiences around carers allowance.

**Zara Kitson:** We also push for more of a package for care in terms of benefits and for paid carers in the carers sector to get living wage of at least £9 per hour and people are not getting the care needed as people are unskilled and we need to address this and improve the wage that carers get doing the work and also improving unpaid carers allowance.

**Billy Watson:** Michael and then Graeme and then new section on employment and employability.

**Michael Shanks:** I suspect I don't need to say much only that I agree with you and can move on from those comments. Flexibility of care and support you get - unpaid carers in some ways I think people don't like that label you are a wife or a mother and a lot of people don't think of themselves as carers but are doing the job fantastically well. We need to give you support for you to carry on doing what you are doing and if we don't do this we face the cost of having paid carers to do this.

Accessibility of care packages is another one for me and young people get two or three visits a day and a 20 year old is put to bed at 9pm as that is the only time they can get a care visit so we have to look at flexibility on this. Time for this as well not a 10 minute out the door thing. Those that do it as job want to spend time and build a relationship and put caring in the real definition of what caring is. Labour proposes a living wage for everyone and one that includes time to travel to jobs and cost involved in that too. Trying to put to an end the 15 minute care visit. Dominic Zara's point was made earlier on and it would be useful for us to listen to you and you would be a good person in Zara's commission if we got that set up. These small amounts of money it's critical for you to get that advocacy and in overall spending envelope it's a small amount but without it it makes your quality of life less. Government cuts effects this and they give modest grants or core funding and if we take funding away organisations find it difficult to cope. Labour will reverse cuts to local Government with a penny on income tax to make sure services are fully funded.

**Billy Watson:** Will bring in Graeme.

**Graeme Brooks:** A lot of things we agree on. Fantastic advocate you are Dominic. Zara what carers need is support and funding and I could not agree more. Nothing to add to carers situation. Some of the transport issues required for carers and those with disabilities. We touched on buses and Robert touched on that and good things to be done. Want to review why the companies that get train contracts you have to book four hours in advance, some asked for 24 hour notice. Why can't someone not just turn up like able bodied persons do so that people can just turn up and we want to ensure if we are giving contracts to companies we have a positive sense for that. At the back... I will not discuss my disabilities but will do later when I don't have a mic on. When I was unemployed I did not have the strength to get out and my mental health was down and I got support and energy from other agencies to get out my bed and overcome my disabilities and get out into employment. We want to support people through the system. Not because they choose to lie in bed but because they are having a hard time.

**Billy Watson:** Some questions and some outstanding issues. Some things on discrimination and stigma issues, hate crime up 20% against disabled people. Unemployment rates people with sight loss etc. Three or four questions in a row here.

**New Speaker:** My name is Joe and I work in mental health and I found that in employment education and one thing I find in my experience is that employers needed a lot of help. We had employers keen to take on service users we had and people invested in people with the double tick. What in the manifestos are you doing to help employers take on people with disabilities. It's not as black and white and there are real issues on how to develop structure and have you ever thought of this on working with employers to get more into work with disabilities.

**Billy Watson:** Man down the front. The mic is coming.

**New Speaker:** Why are people allowed to park on pavements it means wheel chair users have to go on the road to get by?

**Billy Watson:** Another question behind you.

**New Speaker:** First point was going to make is will there be support with the arts in the future and in performance?

**New Speaker:** Ken Reid, RNIB Scotland - employment - you mentioned that unemployment rate of those partially sighted is going in wrong direction. 50% of disabled people are out of work and 70% of partially sighted people are out of work and last few years when general unemployment has gone down it has gone up. Failing to get more blind and partially sighted people into work. What are the parties planning to do to change this?

**New Speaker:** Sandra Wilson, RNIB Scotland - one issue that disabled people find is service that is actually there to help them and that is Access to Work. What will the parties do to improve assessment process so it's fair and fit for purpose and delivered at a time that allows the person to get it sorted out before getting into work.

**New Speaker:** I have a brain injury and I can't get respite. They have stopped a lot of respite places and it's my wife that needs me to go because she is my main carer. The one I used to go to in Irvine is now closed. And there is nowhere else I can go and I need respite for the sake of my wife.

**Billy Watson:** So respite is another big issue. One more question.

**New Speaker:** Malaika I'm member of Action on Hearing Loss Scotland, first of all 3 main issues faced being gender balance of being a woman, being from ethnic minority and having disability and I'm all three. I'm very fortunate to be in employment but I have found stigmatism from employers if I put on form that I'm deaf and they think I can't use a phone despite the fact that I can amplify a phone or have a loop system to make it easier for me to use but employers may think deaf people cost a lot of money and don't want to take them on so stigmatism there so I want to know what you will do as a party to encourage employers to take on people with a disability, in my case deafness.

**Billy Watson:** Two minutes each. I will sweep from right to left if that is OK. A few questions on employment and we want to hear about additional powers and want to get some focus on employment. Also parking on pavements, supporting performing arts and Access to Work.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Parking on pavements is a good question and we are aware of it and support for performing arts would there be support for it generally yes we continue to fund Creative Scotland and the performing arts. Question from Jim and need for support for your wife who is your carer. Carers Act passed would improve support for carers like your wife and entitled to Adult Carer Support Plan and part of that is to give her respite and support to be put in place for you. Employability more generally we are getting enhanced powers and we have less resource and 87% less resource but 20M going into employability and a lot of this involves coproduction with organisations in this room and we have set out broad principles by which we take forward employability programme. To adopt a flexible tailored approach and also for those with high level of needs. And we need better response to those with additional needs and we can do more with the additional powers we have.

**Michael Shanks:** Joe's point yes there will be employers that discriminate against disabled people and those employers that have no intention whatsoever to have people in the workforce with disabilities and other side of that are there are some very willing but don't know how to or don't have mechanisms to do it. One thing at autism hustings we did was about version of the Charter Mark for shops, cafes etc that were disabled friendly and ways to think about rather than having a punitive way we actually support people and good examples where employers have taken someone on in a work experience role and realise they contribute a massive amount and kept them on. Sadly this does not

happen enough. Benefits generally - we get to a situation where aim is to provide a service that helps people as opposed to penalising people. When I was on job seekers allowance I went to a work meeting where they told me how to write a CV but I told them I had a CV and it's about personalising things.

Arts funding - I know you are involved in south side arts and it goes back to the point that a lot of the organisations are small organisations like Sunny Govan that need funding to keep them going to support people and without that funding it can be catastrophic. The charity I support is respite for the carers and report out last year about wider family of those with disabilities and in particular siblings and respite helps everyone in the family and siblings that are forgotten about and don't get the support they need.

**Robert Brown:** Respite - there is a crisis in respite and it's an issue we should show more focus to and provide more funding and Local Authorities have to deliver it in one form or another. Unemployment is a crucial point raised by people and two sides to the things and no magic bullet if you don't know the answer I won't. Two sides to it - supporting and educating employers particularly larger ones that have facility to organise things better and figures are not as high as they ought to be in terms of employing people with disability. RNIB, WISE group etc identify suitable employers and engage with people and support them into employment so people are settled and able to move forward and it settles down and people are able to understand need and deal with things appropriately.

Deafness was a good example of that and no detriment in you obtaining a job but maybe employers did not understand or an issue of comprehension but sort of things we should be able to get over. Disabled people will have more challenges than average population for various reasons. Mechanisms and systems have to be in place to make things work properly.

Performing arts and arts involved has been hugely therapeutic and it's a smallish thing that does not need a huge amount of support but that element of support to do that business for you.

**Graeme Brooks:** 8.1% of population have disability and only 0.4% find employment. For those in employment and have disability is to show businesses and employment value of that. Good statistics out there that someone that has a disability works that bit harder and puts shoulders to the wheel a bit more as job is hard to get so value in employing people

with disability. Parking on pavements and Scottish Government is bringing something in but it's a moral issue. Why do drivers think they have the right to put their car on the pavement with all the money spent on the roads. I would love to name and shame. We have social media so let's get these people named and shamed yes we have Scottish Government bringing in penalties but you and I should name and shame them as it's socially unacceptable.

**Zara Kitson:** Public transport is not working well enough so people rely on their cars. If we have better investment in public transport people won't be over reliant on their cars and no parking on pavements. In terms of employability again if we look at money Scottish Government and Local Authorities spend we often issue work contracts to businesses or run public services and if we ran our own buses that is huge employment opportunities and when issuing contracts we have clauses in them to include people and greater representation disabled people and include partially sighted or blind people or deaf people included within this. Ensure employers have support and right training and resources to do this. Work programme it's important that it's not for profit and often it's delivered to make profit and service is not about the person and about profit margin and we want those services to be delivered by public and Third Sector organisations.

**Billy Watson:** We gave that a run through. Questions were super. Panel attempted everything with admirable honesty and I think you have a great sense of where they are. A lot of common ground and tends not to divide by party politics. Level of respect and consensus around is reassuring. Campaigns carry on. Two of the five manifestos we have seen for this election and look forward to the parties to the right doing that this week and more detail for us to engage with. Thanks to the panel and thanks for your attendance. SENSE a thanks to you for hosting a great venue and accessible for everyone. Thanks to the Disability Agenda Scotland policy team the individual members that come together and put these events together and thanks to all 6 organisations. Thanks to Leila our new DAS resource. Plenty to keep going on. Stay and have refreshments if you have time. Safe home.

Ends...