



THE DAS 2016 ELECTION PLEDGE

Ahead of the Scottish elections, Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS) is asking all candidates to pledge to work with DAS to deliver a fairer Scotland for the 1 million Scots disabled voters.

Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS) is an alliance of Scotland's six major disability organisations. The 2016 elections and a new mandate and Government provide an opportunity to make changes to key priority areas identified by our members and the people we support across Scotland to ensure disabled people in Scotland have better access to employment and/or social security and are less likely to face stigma and discrimination. In January 2016, DAS commissioned a qualitative research report, holding focus groups with people who have a range of different impairments, to talk about issues they face and what is important to them. Some insightful quotes from the early findings of the report are below and have helped to inform the policy calls.¹ We look forward to launching the full report and sharing its findings in the new Scottish Parliament.

In the meantime, we ask you to pledge to work with us in the 2016-2021 Scottish Parliament on:

- **Employment: Support necessary action and the opportunity provided by enhanced devolution to reshape and improve the way employment services work in Scotland.**
- **Social security: Seize the opportunity presented by the devolution of parts of the social security system to design and deliver a system that empowers disabled people and recognises everyone's contribution and value to society.**
- **Stigma and discrimination: Support our calls for the Scottish Government to fund a national campaign to raise awareness of disability and reduce stigma.**

Pledge your support for DAS in the 2016-21 Scottish Parliament to improve the lives of disabled people in Scotland by tweeting your support: I support @DAScotland and #DASpledge #Elections2016, posting on your website, or emailing Layla.theiner@enable.org.uk.

In return, DAS pledges to bring the policy and other expertise from across our member organisations together to work with politicians of all parties and the Scottish Government to develop practical solutions that will further our shared goal of improving the lives of disabled people in Scotland. We will also promote your support for our pledge through twitter feed @DAScotland, local press activity and the DAS website www.disabilityagendascotland.org.uk (which is being relaunched on 14th April).

We look forward to working with you to make these aspirations a reality. Scotland's 1 million disabled voters will be watching.

¹ Focus groups undertaken by Red Circle Communications in January 2016 for a DAS report to be published later this year.

- **Employment: Support necessary action and the opportunity provided by enhanced devolution to reshape and improve the way employment services work in Scotland.**

Disabled people being in work, where possible, can have economic and social benefits for individuals, the people around them and beyond². DAS believes that government at all levels have a responsibility to ensure employment opportunities for disabled people through training, education work placement programmes and reserved contracts.

For everyone work is more than just a job. It is also a route to social inclusion, contributing to society and maximising independent living. Yet, despite the employment rate improving and the advent of the Disability Discrimination and Equality Acts, there is still a significant difference in the number of disabled people in employment compared to those who are not disabled.³ Employment rates have actually fallen in recent years among some disabled groups, such as those living with sight loss.⁴

“I’ve always thought my work is the important thing, it’s how I was brought up, get out and work” (SAMH Focus Group)

“I do want to work. I don’t want to be on sick benefit, I want to contribute” (Capability Scotland Focus group)

- **Social security: Seize the opportunity presented by the devolution of parts of the social security system to design and deliver a system that empowers disabled people and recognises everyone’s contribution and value to society.**

Not all disabled people are on benefits, but people affected by disability have been disproportionately affected by many of the changes to welfare in recent years.⁵ Further devolution of an array of disability benefits and employment programmes as well as taxation powers brings both challenges and opportunities.

Disabled people often face extra financial costs such as heating, laundry, transport, care and therapy charges which, taken together, can average as much as £550 per month.⁶ Benefits should support all citizens, when required, including ensuring those who are disabled, due to a physical, learning, sensory or mental health issue can live as independently as practically possible and fulfil their true potential. DAS believes there is an opportunity for positive welfare reform to bring about a genuine system of social security which is enabling and underpinned by a commitment to human rights, dignity and respect. A ‘cut price’ welfare system is a false economy in the form of social exclusion, lost talent and

² [Report for DWP \(2006\)](#): Economic and social costs and benefits to employers of retaining, recruiting and employing disabled people and/or people with health conditions or an injury: A review of the evidence

³ Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) briefing on employment support, September 2015.

⁴ RNIB, My Voice, 2015

⁵ Financial Impact of Welfare Reforms on People in Scotland, Scottish Government, Aug 2014.

⁶ ‘Priced Out: ending the financial penalty of disability by 2020’, Scope, April 2014.

added pressure on other public services, especially health and social care, as well as other costs of inequality.

“Life is hard enough without putting obstacles in our way” (RNIB Focus Group)

“They think because we are disabled we shouldn’t be entitled to benefits. It feels like they want to get rid of disabled people. The government should be supporting people with learning disabilities” (Enable Focus group)

- **Stigma and discrimination: We are calling for the Scottish Government to fund a national campaign to raise awareness of disability and reduce stigma.**

Most disabled people have experienced some form of stigma and discrimination. This ranges from very minor incidents to more serious cases of harassment and bullying. This is a key challenge.⁷ The number of disability hate crimes reported continues to increase. In 2014-15, 177 charges were reported with an aggravation of prejudice relating to disability, 20% more than in 2013-14. As the report from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) noted, ‘there is a broad consensus however that this type of crime continues to be under reported compared to other forms of hate crime’.⁸ DAS is keen to work with Police Scotland, COPFS and others to ensure all disability hate crime is reported but to reduce such incidents over all and the stigma and discrimination faced by disabled people.

Awareness campaigns on other types of hate crime have been shown to be effective⁹. We are calling on the Scottish Government and others to support us in this – to fund a national campaign to raise awareness of disability and reduce stigma. To get the most value from this campaign, there should be an associated training programme for people to better understand the range of needs of disabled people, and evaluation of the campaign to highlight what was particularly effective.

Sense Scotland’s user group (‘Our Voice’) have noted the issue of drivers being abusive when parking obstructions are pointed out to them.

“It is education and training so that people dealing with the public know about these things” (Action on Hearing Loss Scotland focus group)

For more information, please contact Layla Theiner (Layla.theiner@enable.org.uk; 07876 865342).



⁷ Focus groups undertaken by Red Circle Communications in January 2016

⁸ [Hate crime in Scotland \(2014-2015\), Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service](#)

⁹ [Scottish Government hate crime statistics and press release \(2013-14\)](#)