

SCOTTISH DISABILITY EQUALITY FORUM

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

About us

The Scottish Disability Equality Forum (SDEF) works for social inclusion in Scotland through the removal of barriers to equality and the promotion of independent living for people affected by disability.

We are a membership organisation, representing individuals affected by disability, and organisations and groups who share our values. Our aim is to ensure that the voices of people affected by disability are heard and heeded within their own communities and at a national and political level.

Our views on the Bill

SDEF is supportive of the principles and aims of the Bill. We would like to give our specific backing to three provisions:

1. Part 2: Social Housing - Allocation of social housing **S3 Reasonable preference in allocation of social housing**

We welcome the retention of 'reasonable preference' in the allocation of social housing for those who are 'living under unsatisfactory housing conditions, and have unmet housing needs'.

The Scottish Government's research in 2011 highlighted that those with a housing need linked to a longstanding illness or disability are widely regarded as falling within unsatisfactory housing conditions.

One in five disabled people who require housing adaptations live in a home that is not very, or not at all, suitable for them according to the 2012 Scottish House Condition Survey. The Scottish Household Survey 2012 highlights that more than half of households in the social rented sector contain someone with a long standing limiting illness, health problem or disability.

It is vital that this change to housing legislation is included to ensure disabled people's needs remain a priority for social housing providers. In addition, we ask that the Committee to consider a recommendation that a more direct statement of the need to meet disabled people's needs should be made in any related Scottish Government guidance.

2. Part 2: Social Housing - Scottish secure tenancy **S16 Recovery of possession of properties designed for special needs**

We welcome the clarification of the law regarding the right to recover an accessible property from a tenant not requiring such a home. Research

published by Horizon Housing and the Chartered Institute for Housing in 2012 highlighted a shortfall of 17,000 wheelchair accessible homes.

Building more accessible homes is the only way to resolve this significant issue. However, making it easier to re-allocate those that are available to those in real need is a logical move that could be a real help to many disabled people.

3. Part 3: Private Rented Housing - Transfer of sheriff's jurisdiction to First-tier Tribunal **S19 Right to adapt rented houses**

We welcome the proposal to allow appeals to be made to the First-tier Tribunal against a landlord's decision to refuse permission for an adaptation to suit a disabled person. Scottish Government research¹ highlights that disabled people are more likely to experience civil legal problems than non-disabled people (31% as opposed to 26% in 2010/2011). Providing a tribunal route should prove simpler and less intimidating for those affected.

Scottish Disability Equality Forum
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¹ Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2010-11