

## SUBMISSION FROM LONG TERM CONDITIONS ALLIANCE SCOTLAND

The Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland (LTCAS) strongly welcomes the establishment of a Welfare Reform Committee within the Scottish Parliament and the introduction of the Welfare Reform (Further Provision) (Scotland) Bill.

While the simplification of social security benefits into a Universal Credit is broadly welcome, the drive from the Department for Work and Pensions to reduce spending on disability benefits by 20% from 2013-14 is creating significant concern among many people who are disabled and/or living with long term conditions.

It is essential that the Scottish Government acts to mitigate the negative impacts so that we avoid a legacy of inequality and complex social problems that will be very difficult to reverse.

### **1. What are the biggest concerns/priorities for your organisation in relation to welfare reform?**

People who are disabled and/or living with long term conditions are already far more likely than others to be living in poverty, experiencing debt and be unemployed or in low paid, less secure employment<sup>123</sup>. There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating the higher cost of living associated with being disabled<sup>4</sup>.

The welfare reforms are resulting in a significant drop in income for many people who are disabled/living with long term conditions, accompanied by greater compulsion to enter work. This is compounded by the current context in which cost of living generally is rising, the labour market is becoming more competitive and much of the support and services upon which people rely are being cut (or eligibility criteria and charges raised<sup>5</sup>).

The UK's Joint Committee on Human Rights recently highlighted the threat to independent living as a result of the welfare reform programme. It warned that; *"restrictions in local authority eligibility criteria for social care support, the replacement of the Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payment, the closure of the Independent Living Fund and changes to housing benefit risk interacting in a particularly harmful way for disabled people"*. The report further suggested that people may be forced out of their homes and communities and into residential care.

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy Loretto and Matt Taylor, Characteristics of adults in Scotland with long- term health conditions, University of Edinburgh and Scottish Executive Social Research (2007)

<sup>2</sup> Clare Lardner, Paying the Price: The real costs of illness and disability for CAB clients, Citizens Advice Scotland (July 2006)

<sup>3</sup> A Working Life for All Disabled People The Supported Employment Framework for Scotland – Summary Report, The Scottish Government (2010)

(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/303629/0095168.pdf>)

<sup>4</sup> Counting the Cost, DEMOS (2010)

<sup>5</sup> *Commissioning Social Care*, Audit Scotland (March 2012)

There is a severe risk that the impact of welfare reform will undermine Scottish policy on public service reform, independent living, preventative spending and reshaping care for older people.

## **2. What would your organisation want the Committee's focus to be on?**

- The Welfare Reform (Further Provision) (Scotland) Bill – LTCAS supports legislation to give powers to Scottish Ministers in relation to certain aspects of welfare reform. We would urge them to focus on protecting incomes and support for disabled people who may be put at risk of poverty and exclusion as a result of the change from current benefits to the new Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments, devolution of the Social Fund and Council Tax Benefit, and potential changes to eligibility criteria for passported benefits.
- LTCAS would urge the Welfare Reform Committee to undertake robust scrutiny of (1) the impact of welfare reform on particular groups, including people who are disabled and/or live with long term conditions, (2) the interplay between welfare reform and the broader economic climate, including reductions in support and services and (3) the effectiveness of Scottish Government action (working with local government) to mitigate the negative impacts.

## **3. If you could question the Government about their implementation of the UK Bill what would you be asking?**

LTCAS would ask the Scottish Government how it will ensure the welfare reforms do not undermine the key policy agendas in Scotland and how it will work in partnership with local government to achieve this.

If the vision of a Scotland in which people – including older people – enjoy their right to citizenship and independent living, have access to preventative support and services and remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible is to be realised, the trends we are already seeing must be urgently addressed.

### **About LTCAS**

*LTCAS' vision is for a Scotland where people with long term conditions enjoy, not endure, full and positive lives, free from discrimination and supported by access to high quality services, information and support.*

LTCAS is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. LTCAS has over 220 members including large, national support providers as well as small, local volunteer-led groups.

### **Additional Evidence**

#### **Poverty, Debt and Cost of Living**

- DEMOS offers analysis of the higher cost of living for disabled people and the

disproportionate impact of public expenditure reductions on them<sup>6</sup>.

- In Scotland, someone in a deprived area is more than twice as likely as someone in an affluent area to have a long term condition<sup>7</sup>
- Disabled people experience additional costs in most areas of life and those who rely on benefits or work part time are likely to have a significant gap between how much they have and how much they require for an 'acceptable, equitable quality of life'<sup>8</sup>.
- On average, someone with a long term condition is:<sup>9</sup>
  - less likely to be employed, have savings or own their own home
  - more likely to have fewer educational qualifications and a lower household income
  - more likely to live in areas associated with deprivation
  - more likely to experience financial difficulty including debt and inability to meet health related costs<sup>10</sup>

### **Barriers to the labour market (worse as competition for jobs increases)**

- Just under half of disabled people in Scotland are in paid employment, compared to around 75% of the general population<sup>11</sup>
- A third of employers say they deliberately exclude people with a history of long term sickness or incapacity when recruiting staff<sup>12</sup> and, even in employment, there is an inability to access higher level, desk-based jobs that may offer greater flexibility and support.<sup>13</sup>
- The economic activity rates of people who live with long term conditions have improved little in recent years. They are amongst those furthest from the labour market and particularly vulnerable to the economic downturn and contracting economy<sup>14</sup>
- Disabled people are more than twice as likely as non-disabled people to have no

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<sup>6</sup> Counting the Cost, DEMOS (2010)

<sup>7</sup> Building a Health Service Fit for the Future, A National Framework for Service Change in the NHS in Scotland, Scottish Government (2005)

<sup>8</sup> Disabled People's Cost of Living, JRF (2004) <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/disabled-peoples-costs-living>

<sup>9</sup> Wendy Loretto and Matt Taylor, Characteristics of adults in Scotland with long- term health conditions, University of Edinburgh and Scottish Executive Social Research (2007)

<sup>10</sup> Clare Lardner, Paying the Price: The real costs of illness and disability for CAB clients, Citizens Advice Scotland (July 2006)

<sup>11</sup> A Working Life for All Disabled People The Supported Employment Framework for Scotland – Summary Report, The Scottish Government (2010) (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/303629/0095168.pdf>)

<sup>12</sup> Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development via Citizens Advice Bureau

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Long Term Ill Health, Poverty and Ethnicity* (2007) (<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/long-term-ill-health-poverty-and-ethnicity>)

<sup>14</sup> The equality impacts of the current recession, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) ([http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/research/47\\_the\\_equality\\_impacts\\_of\\_the\\_current\\_recession.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/47_the_equality_impacts_of_the_current_recession.pdf))

qualifications<sup>15</sup>

- Young disabled people aged 16 are twice as likely not to be in any form of education, employment or training as their non-disabled peers, increasing to 3 times as likely by the age of 19<sup>16</sup>
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation recently said: *...the issue is the lack of jobs, not an unwillingness to look for work. Policies that focus solely on changing incentives to find work via benefit reform cannot solve this problem.*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Disabled People, The Scottish Government (2011)  
(<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/disability>)

<sup>16</sup> Disabled People and Employability, DGVoice (<http://new.dgvoice.co.uk/employability.html>)

<sup>17</sup> Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2011 (<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-2011>)