



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Equalities and Human Rights Committee

Human Rights and the Scottish Parliament inquiry

Galashiels Human Rights Focus Group 14 May 2018

Welfare system

- Concern that the most vulnerable people are having benefits taken away from them and that the welfare system is difficult to navigate, having a negative effect on human rights.
- Councillors neglect those on welfare – issues like transport and infrastructure are seen as more relevant.
- People being forced into unsuitable work because they don't fill in a form correctly. Sanctions are unfair and used indiscriminately – missing a bus to your Jobseekers appointment for example.

LGBTi

- HIV services lost in Borders area. Lack of human rights concerns in health services for LGBTi people.

Housing

- Concerns that housing is inadequate for disabled people and those that care for them
- a lack of basic human rights awareness or training among council/public sector employees.

Disabilities

- Poor services for disabled students in Borders.
- Local authorities prepared to use lawyers to defend a lack of services.
- Difficult to challenge human rights cases due to cost and legal system – risk of being liable for a local authority's legal costs.
- Lack of Special Needs Assistants in schools.

- Health service can be hard to navigate for disabled people, which can affect other Human Rights issues. Some rights are given more preference within the health service, it was suggested.

Advocacy

- CAB is stretched and only available in towns in the Borders. There is some outreach service out to villages through CAB. Lack of resources to cover everything – they can often only refer people to other services outside of the area, in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

Transport

- An important issue for disabled people in Borders and other rural areas.
- Bus routes have been taken away which deprives people of other services, (including human rights related services), so problems can be compounded.
- Bus routes cancelled which prevents many young people in the area attending the local college.
- Lack of joined-up infrastructure in thinking about human rights issues. Transport can be seen as an easy service to cut without realising the impact it can have on human rights.

Young People

- young people are disadvantaged in rural areas. Lack of support for young people with mental health issues. Usually only accessed through schools – so if not in school/unemployment they can be very disengaged from potential help.
- Initiatives like Scottish Youth Parliament are good but don't really improve situation for very disadvantaged young people.
- Schools can be sites of human rights challenges – bullying on social media for example.

Participation and Engagement

- community groups should have a direct link to communicate with EHRiC.
- National organisations need to have a greater grassroots presence.

Accountability

- More accountability at a local level around how funds are spent on human rights issues.

Human Rights training

- Basic human rights training should be provided for all those working with the public.