

Advisory Group on Economic Recovery

Call for views

Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities



(SCLD)

Response

SCLD is an independent charitable organisation and partner to the Scottish Government in the delivery of Scotland's learning disability strategy, *The keys to life* (2013)¹ and *The keys to life* Implementation Framework (2019-2021)². The implementation framework defines a learning disability as follows:

"A learning disability is significant and lifelong. It starts before adulthood and affects a person's development. This means that a person with a learning disability will be likely to need help to understand information, learn skills and live a fulfilling life. Some people with learning disabilities will also have healthcare needs and require support to communicate." (*The Keys to life*, 2019-2021, p.9)

SCLD is committed to creating an environment in Scotland in which systems and culture are changed to ensure people with learning disabilities have opportunities and are empowered to live the life they want in line with existing human rights conventions. SCLD believes that the discrimination and barriers faced by people with learning disabilities and other disabled people are not inevitable. These barriers stop people with learning disabilities and other disabled people being included in society and participating on an equal basis.

SCLD is focused on sharing innovation and good practice so that those providing services and interventions can learn from each other. SCLD is a knowledge hub - building an evidence base, sharing how policy is being implemented and developing a shared understanding of what really works.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery call for views.

What will the implications of the recovery be for different groups, unemployment and on the nature of work? How is the recovery likely to impact on socio-economic inequality as a whole?

The Covid-19 epidemic has necessitated change to how we all live our lives, and this has had consequences for mental health, provision of services, employment and the economy. However, rather than being the ‘great equalizer’ the Covid-19 crisis has further highlighted the damaging effects of structural inequality on marginalised groups.

It is becoming clear that the measures taken to respond to the emergency are having a disproportionate impact on those groups who already face significant inequality and disadvantage. Over the long-term, those likely to be hit hardest by the crisis will include people with learning/intellectual disabilities and other disabilities; black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, women, families living in poverty, carers, those with poor mental and physical health, and older people. In planning for an economic recovery, it is imperative that the cross-sectional aspect of this inequality is considered by decision makers.

Furthermore, as Scotland starts to plan for an economic recovery, it is important to remember that many of the difficulties people with learning/intellectual disabilities are facing were not created by the emergency, but rather exacerbated by it. Therefore, as we begin to transition and embark upon the process of renewal and recovery, SCLD believes the ambition must not be a return to ‘normal’. For people with learning disabilities ‘normal’ is one in which they experience discrimination, experience exclusion both as active citizens¹ and rights holders and face barriers to education² and employment³. We believe there is now an opportunity for transformational change which reshapes the economy in Scotland to build a more sustainable, fairer and inclusive society.

The Framework for Decision Making recognises that *“As we move forward we want not simply to return to where we were, but to build on the innovative responses seen throughout the crisis to build a Fairer Scotland. We will use the lessons learned during the pandemic to help us make progress towards our long-term outcomes of*

¹ By active citizenship SCLD refers to the self-determination, participation and contribution of people with learning disabilities as it relates to T.H Marshalls (1950) concepts of civil, political and social citizenship.

² ENABLE (2016) #IncludED in the Main?! 22 steps on the journey to inclusion for every pupil who has a learning disability

³ McTeir et al (2016) Mapping the Employability Landscape for People with Learning Disabilities in Scotland

lower, poverty levels, greater equality, inclusive communities and respected and enhanced realisation of human rights.”⁴

We welcome the focus in the Framework for Decision Making on inclusion; equalities; human rights; kindness; compassion and a wellbeing economy. We are encouraged that Scotland will collaborate with and learn from the group of Wellbeing Economy Governments as we move toward our economic recovery. This is in-keeping with recent innovations towards a more holistic measurement of economic success seen in the National Performance Framework (NPF).

However, if people with learning/intellectual disabilities are to benefit from the improved outcomes aimed for in the NPF, it is imperative that the individual indicators of success can be measured in such a way that people with learning/intellectual disabilities can be disaggregated from the pan-disability population and their experiences understood in isolation. This will require:

- A redesign of the Scottish Core Survey Questions, utilising the ‘conditions’ question in the 2021 Census, to allow for learning/intellectual disability to be identified and to ensure consistency and comparability over time.
- This question to be included in all other appropriate individual level surveys going forward.
- Consideration given to whether other indicators should be developed utilising new or existing data to best capture outcomes that are important to people with learning/intellectual disabilities.

The recovery is likely to require sustained action to mitigate the effects of inequality, poverty and unemployment and it is imperative that every effort is made to ensure people with learning/intellectual disabilities are not overlooked or left further behind.

In this process it will be important to pay close attention to Scotland’s commitment to respect, protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights, in line with the

⁴ Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making - Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis (2020)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁵ and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD)⁶.

People with learning/intellectual disabilities already face significant barriers and challenges in the labour market. Learning Disability Statistics Scotland 2019 indicates that only 4.1% of people with learning disabilities and autism known to local authorities are in employment. This compares to an overall employment rate in Scotland of around 74% and a pan-disability employment rate of nearly 46%. The Scottish Government Fairer Scotland Disability Delivery Plan for the UNCRPD has set targets to halve the disability employment gap through increasing opportunities for fair and sustainable work.

We believe it is critical that this focus is maintained, and that Scottish Government and relevant stakeholders should seek to:

- Develop the employability skills of people with learning/intellectual disabilities with a focus on outcomes
- Challenge prevailing negative attitudes towards the potential of disabled people in the community and workplace.
- Provide practical supports and solutions for businesses wishing to be more socially responsible and achieve an inclusive workforce e.g. in-work support, job coaches, support and supervision, and counselling services
- Work with community groups and businesses to identify opportunities for the inclusion of disabled people in developing local business solutions.
- Promote the voice of carers in challenging poverty of aspiration and economic opportunity for their disabled family member and themselves.
- Support organisations in their Disability Confident journey.
- Collect more reliable and fully disaggregated equality data to measure progress and feed into continuous improvement as described above.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we have begun to see a shift in attitudes around how society values certain jobs and roles. Within this, there may be an opportunity to reduce existing barriers and attitudes towards employment of people with learning/intellectual disabilities. To realise this, requires a shift towards genuinely

⁵ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976)

⁶ The United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities (2006)

inclusive recruitment practices supported by sustained long-term funding for specialist employability organisations.

The Covid-19: A Framework for Decision Making states *“When things come apart, there is always the opportunity to put them back together differently. We can work together to design the Scotland we want to emerge from this crisis.”*⁷

In our view, the vision must be for fair and inclusive Scotland in which the economy supports human rights, equality, and the wellbeing of all. To genuinely achieve this, it is critical that people with learning/intellectual disabilities' views are listened to and that there is a genuinely inclusive recovery in which they have opportunities to contribute and are not further disadvantaged.

SCLD thanks the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery for the opportunity to submit to this call for views.

⁷ Covid-19 Decision Making Framework



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