



The Public Service Reform (Scotland) Bill Stage Three Amendment

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations Briefing

There is an amendment to the Public Services Reform Bill in the name of Derek Brownlee MSP. The Stage 3 debate is this Thursday, the 25th March. SCVO welcomes this amendment, and we would be grateful for your support.

The amendment seeks to ensure that local and national government take notice of the “Joint Statement on the Relationship between the Voluntary Sector and Government at Local Level” in its decision making where appropriate.

The Joint Statement was signed by SCVO, CoSLA, SOLACE Scotland and the Scottish Government in September 2009. The main principles of the Joint Statement are outlined below.

We believe that recognition of the principles of the Joint Statement will help voluntary and community groups survive these difficult times.

What does it mean?

The Joint Statement covers a number of areas that are important to third sector organisations at this time. It sets a minimum standard for a relationship between local and national government on:

- **Membership of and relationship with Community Planning Partnerships**

There should be third sector representation at the top table of all 32 Community Planning Partnerships

- **Reserves and claw back**

A recommendation to end the claw back of surpluses, and protect voluntary organisations' reserves when delivering public services

- **Inflationary Uplifts**

Consideration should be given to inflationary uplifts for voluntary sector workers where possible

- **Commissioning processes**

Tendering should be part of a broader commissioning process, rather than an end in itself

- **Maintaining grant funding for third sector organisations**

An end to the move away from grant funding for discrete projects and small organisations

- **3 year funding**

Funding should normally be given for 3 years or longer



Why is it necessary?

Following a request from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth in December 2009, SCVO and Voluntary Action Scotland conducted a piece of research into the relations between Government and the third sector at a local level. This research is attached for your information.

The research shows that whilst some local authorities are taking heed of the Joint Statement and demonstrating good practice, there are several areas where the principles of the Joint Statement are simply not being taken into consideration.

For example, whilst the majority of local authorities do include third sector representation at the top table of the local community planning partnership, Glasgow, Highland, North Ayrshire and Stirling do not.

Similarly, one third of local authorities continue to claw back surpluses from voluntary organisations delivering public services. Interestingly, none of these local authorities award 3 year funding as standard.

Please support this amendment

We would very much welcome your support and we would be happy to discuss any of the issues laid out above.

SCVO and the wider voluntary sector continually strive to develop and maintain positive working relations with local and national government. However, despite agreeing the Joint Statement with CoSLA, SOLACE and the Scottish Government, we are concerned that the principles of the Statement are still not being recognised in practice across all 32 local authority areas.

Creating a legal duty for all the partners to take the Joint Statement into consideration where appropriate in their decision making simply cements the principles already agreed to.

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