

## **Scottish Trades Union Congress**

### **Response to Scottish Executive Consultation on the Establishment of a Disability Forum**

The STUC is delighted to respond to the Scottish Executive's consultation on the establishment of a Disability Forum for Scotland. This Response is based on the views of STUC affiliates and the STUC's own Disability Forum.

The role of the STUC's Disability Forum is to take forward the General Council's policy in relation to disability and raise awareness amongst affiliates on the key issue barriers facing workers with disabilities, as well as the resources available for addressing those barriers.

The STUC strongly supports the idea of developing a Scottish Executive Disability Forum. We believe that allowing a representative forum of people with disabilities and key organisations working in the disability field to come together, to feed their experiences into the Executive's policy development process, will be beneficial and informative to the implementation of the Executive's strategy for mainstreaming equality into all of its departmental areas.

We would support the suggestions laid out within the consultation document for taking forward the development of the Scottish Executive's Disability Forum, including its suggested role and aims. We would also fully support the principle that the majority of people sitting on the Forum should self identify as having a disability, so that the group can always credibly claim to be representative.

In particular the STUC would wish to highlight the following points:

- The group should strive to be as inclusive as possible and involve a wide range of key individuals and organisations active in the disability rights field.
- There should be a mechanism for equalising representation on the group from the various different stakeholders.
- There should be a three-year trial period for the Forum, followed by a review of its impact.
- The Forum, whilst seeking to represent all stakeholders, should not be unwieldy. It is suggested that the Executive aims for a maximum of around 20 members.

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- The Forum should meet on a quarterly basis.
- The Forum should have a mandate to consult on a frequent basis with all disability groups showing an interest.
- It is our view that employment issues do not seem to be a high priority in the disability rights field, yet it is an area fraught with issues for those with disabilities. It is therefore important that there is space on the Forum for those with disabilities who represent Trade Unions and have experience, both in supported employment fields (now Work Step) and of pursuing adaptations in mainstream employment areas.