

PE1452/B

Scottish Parliament Public Petition PE1452 on the People's Charter

SCVO response 3rd Jan 2013

Summary

- We support the sentiments expressed by the People's Charter, but do not take a corporate view on behalf of the third sector on the specific measures proposed.
- We support the introduction of viable legislation that would underpin a Scottish Living Wage, including its extension to the voluntary sector.

Our response

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1452](#)

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to bring forward measures in all areas it has competency to fulfil the aspirations of the People's Charter. <http://scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/peoplescharter>

SCVO welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and would like to contribute to the following questions:

Q. What is your view on what the petition seeks and the issues raised in the Committee's discussion, in particular around pay and conditions in the voluntary sector?

General points

As an organisation set up to represent the interests of the voluntary sector in Scotland, we would broadly agree with the sentiments expressed by the petitioners.

We would also share the priorities expressed by the six themes of the People's Charter which we believe are priorities shared by many of our members.

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- A fair economy for a fairer Britain
- More and better jobs
- Decent homes for all
- Protect and improve our public services
- Fairness and justice
- Build a secure and sustainable future for all.

In terms of the specific steps proposed by the People's Charter, we note that there are some very detailed and specific measures sought by the petitioners. While many measures will be welcomed by large parts of the voluntary sector, SCVO is not prepared to give a corporate view on each of these measures. When it comes to this level of detail, SCVO members will hold a spectrum of views as to the best way forward.

Specific response to “Pay and conditions in the voluntary sector”

Scottish Living Wage – SCVO shares the view that a Living Wage should become standard practice in all sectors, including the voluntary sector. We would support viable legislation in this area.

We have noted in previous submissions to parliament, that the Living Wage is an important step to ensuring that pay for staff, particularly those that deliver public services through our sector on the frontline, is not subject to a ‘race to the bottom’ within the competitive tendering environment which currently infests our public service procurement culture.

However, we have also highlighted that the voluntary sector often subsidises its costs of delivering public services for the State from its own reserves and voluntary income, as the full costs of delivery are often not met by public authorities. This needs to stop, if a move to Living Wage is to be sustainable, particularly in the voluntary sector.

Conclusion

We support the sentiments expressed by the People's Charter, and agree with the six broad themes it lays out, but do not take a corporate view on each of the specific measures proposed.

We support the introduction of viable legislation that would underpin a Scottish Living Wage, including its extension the voluntary sector. We would also want Government to ensure that public procurement authorities would properly finance the costs associated with delivering services at Living Wage levels.

We also note the discussion by the Committee around the petitioners proposals to reduce hours, not pay, to increase jobs. Recent research carried out by SCVO in 2012 shows that while the number of employees has increased from 137,000 to 138,000 since 2010, the number of full-time equivalents has decreased. This means that part-time working in the third sector has increased over the previous two years. While this means more people may be working in the third sector, it would be of concern to us if our sector's employees can no longer meet their living costs because they have to work much reduced hours to keep or get their jobs. It is not enough for us for more people to be working in our sector, we would want their jobs to be able to sustain them adequately as well.

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About us

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the national body representing the third sector. There are over 45,000 voluntary organisations in Scotland involving around 138,000 paid staff and approximately 1.2 million volunteers. The sector manages an income of £4.5 billion.

SCVO works in partnership with the third sector in Scotland to advance our shared values and interests. We have over 1300 members who range from individuals and grassroots groups, to Scotland-wide organisations and intermediary bodies.

As the only inclusive representative umbrella organisation for the sector SCVO:

- has the largest Scotland-wide membership from the sector – our 1300 members include charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes
- our governance and membership structures are democratic and accountable - with an elected board and policy committee from the sector, we are managed by the sector, for the sector
- brings together organisations and networks connecting across the whole of Scotland

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SCVO works to support people to take voluntary action to help themselves and others, and to bring about social change. Our policy is determined by a policy committee elected by our members.¹

Further details about SCVO can be found at www.scvo.org.uk.

References

Scottish Third Sector Statistics 2012, SCVO
<http://www.scvo.org.uk/about-the-sector/sector-stats/>

¹ SCVO's Policy Committee has 24 members elected by SCVO's member organisations who then co-opt up to eight more members primarily to reflect fields of interest which are not otherwise represented. It also includes two ex officio members, the SCVO Convener and Vice Convener.