



COMMISSION ON STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Local People. Local Power. Local Purpose.

WE'VE GOT SOME QUESTIONS...

HELP US UNDERSTAND WHAT STRONG LOCAL DEMOCRACY MEANS TO YOU

We are an independent Commission that has been set up to look at what democracy in Scotland might look like, whatever the result of the referendum in 2014. The Commission is chaired by Councillor David O'Neill, President of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and we have set out its main tasks at the end of this document.

Our starting point is that we believe that local services and local accountability matter. That is why we want to begin our work by hearing your views and suggestions about what happens now, and what the future might be.

This is only our first step in listening to you. Any information that you give us now will help start the debate, but we also want this to be an ongoing conversation. Over the next few months we will be setting up different ways in which you can meet us or tell us what you think. A good way to find out about these is by signing up to our newsletter at www.localdemocracy.info and by following @localcommission on Twitter.

How to Respond

We will use the information that you give us to develop our work and explore new ideas, and so what you tell us now is really important. For that reason, we want to hear from you as quickly as possible. We are keen to hear your views by **29 November 2013, or sooner if you can**. However, please let us know if you need more time.

You can complete and return this form electronically to:

commission@localdemocracy.info

You can also respond online via our website:

<http://www.localdemocracy.info/call-for-evidence/>

Alternatively you can post a copy of this form to:

The Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy
Verity House
19 Haymarket Yards
Edinburgh, EH12 5BH

If you are responding as an individual we would be grateful if you could also provide some other information when you give us your views. This will help us develop an overall picture of the information we have. This is optional and any information that you provide will be used anonymously and will remain strictly confidential.

If you have any queries please contact us using the above details or call us on 0131 474 9200

Respondent Information

To help us make the most of your response, please tell us about yourself and how you want us to use the information you provide. There are some questions marked * and these must be answered by all respondents, unless you are directed past this question.

Name of Organisation (if appropriate)	<i>Scottish Council on Deafness</i>		
Forename	<i>Mandy</i>		
Surname	<i>Reid</i>		
Address	<i>Central Chambers Suite 62 93 Hope Street Glasgow</i>		
Postcode	<i>G2 6LD</i>		
Telephone/Textphone	<i>0141 248 1854</i>		
Email	<i>mandy@scod.org.uk</i>		
Twitter name if applicable			
* I am responding as:	<input type="checkbox"/> An individual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An organisation/group		
Do you consider yourself or your organisation as from or representing?	<input type="checkbox"/> a rural area <input type="checkbox"/> an urban area <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> an area with both urban and rural parts <input type="checkbox"/> don't know / not applicable		
Would you be happy to be approached by the Commission for further discussion about your submission?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If you are responding as an individual:			
* Do you agree to your response being made available to the public on the Commission's web site?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
* If you have agreed to your response being made available to the public, please tell us if we may also make your name and address available. (Please select one option only)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, make my response, name and address all available <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address			
<i>If you are responding as an individual we would be grateful if you could also provide some additional information. This is absolutely optional but it will help us get an overall picture of the information we receive. You can download this sheet here and send it to us at the same time as you return this form.</i>			
If you are responding as a group or organisation:			
* The name and address of your organisation will be made public on the Commission's web site. Are you content for your response to also be made available?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Which of the following best describes your organisation? (Please select one option only)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Group <input type="checkbox"/> A business <input type="checkbox"/> Local Authority <input type="checkbox"/> A government department or agency <input type="checkbox"/> Other public sector organisation <input type="checkbox"/> A social enterprise <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Third Sector organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Professional body			
Short description of the main purpose of your organisation:			
<p>The Scottish Council on Deafness is the lead organisation for deaf issues in Scotland. We represent organisations working with and on behalf of Deaf Sign Language users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people. Our membership provides an effective working partnership between the Voluntary Sector, Social Work and Education Departments, NHS Trusts, Health Boards and the Government.</p>			

Tell us what you think

We have not provided a long list of questions to answer, but we do want to hear what you have to say about some themes. Please respond to as few or as many as you wish. However, it would be helpful to keep your overall response to eight pages or less.

Please provide evidence or examples in support of what you say. This will help us understand and explore your ideas further.

1. LOCAL DECISION MAKING: Do you think that decisions about local issues and services are made locally enough in Scotland at the moment? If not, what does deciding 'locally' mean to you? Please illustrate your answer with any examples from your own experience.

SCoD does think that decisions are made "locally" enough but the main problem is the "postcode lottery" when it comes to accessibility of process.

The National Standards of Community Engagement were launched in 2005, and yet in 2013, many local planning groups are still not fully accessible to all in their communities of interest.

For example, in 2007 we carried out a piece of research into the involvement of deaf people in the NHS Community Health Partnerships http://www.scod.org.uk/pdf/otherpublications/SCoD_Health_Planning_Fol_Report_Dec_2007.pdf and in 2008, we carried out a piece of research into the accessibility of local plans for deaf people. http://www.scod.org.uk/pdf/otherpublications/SCoD_Local_Planning_Fol_Report_Marc_h2008.pdf

The situation then showed that while some health boards and some councils were involving deaf people as members of their communities of interest, the majority were not aware of the needs of the people involved and whether or not any were deaf. Since the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 and the need to make reasonable adjustment, SCoD has been contacted by deaf organizations and deaf people themselves asking if the Equality Act 2010 applies to local decision making processes as deaf people have been unable to take part due to a lack of awareness of their language/communication support needs and of their access to information.

In some areas, for example, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde there has been a lot of work done with their local deaf organizations and with SCoD into making their decision making processes much more accessible to the deaf people in their area. West Dunbartonshire Community Health and Care Partnership have also made progress in accessibility for deaf people.

2. LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY: How important do you think it is for locally elected people to be responsible for decisions about local issues and services? Do you have any examples of why this is the case?

People elected at a local level should be responsible for decisions about local services and issues. They are the people who have the devolved responsibility for the way local money is spent so need to take full responsibility to do what they are elected to do.

But they need to take more responsibility when it comes to equality and equality of opportunity for people in their communities of interest.

SCoD put together information for elected people – MEPs, MPs, MSPs and Councillors in Scotland - http://www.scod.org.uk/SCoD_publications-i-127.html. These information sheets give examples of good practice when working with their deaf constituents and we sent them to all the elected members after the last elections. And yet still we receive information from our members and from deaf people themselves that tells us that the equality of access message is still not being heeded at a local level. Language/communication support is not being provided so that deaf people can raise the issues that matter to them with their locally elected members.

SCoD has an “Access to Democracy” project from 2008 to 2010 that was to make sure that deaf people knew about how to vote and how the democratic institutions work in the UK, including at a local level. It also gave Deaf Sign Language users and Deafblind people the opportunity to express their views to local politicians. Since then, a lot of the lessons learned have been forgotten by the local elected people and so although the expectations of deaf people were raised, their access to the democratic process and to the decision-making processes at a local level has been reduced. http://www.scod.org.uk/Access_to_democracy-i-150.html

3. LOCAL PRIORITIES: How well do you think that communities' local priorities are accounted for in the way that national and local government works at the moment? What is effective, and if there is room for improvement, how should things change?

The expectations of local people have been raised due to the devolution process, but local priorities are not necessarily accounted for at a national and/or local governmental level. There needs to be more partnership working and an actual commitment to co-production with local people rather than paying lip service to this.

For example, the Scottish Government consulted on a Joint Sensory Impairment Strategy earlier in 2013. This was not put together using a co-production model and is not person-centred and did not appear to take into account the priorities of the communities of interest at a local level – deaf people, deaf organizations, sensory impairment services. Since then, the feedback has been that the money attached to the strategy will be allocated to local government and it will be decided at a local level what the money will be used for. We are still unaware of what local arrangements will be made to ensure that deaf people are involved in the decision making processes as to what will be done with the money.

How things should change for work on the Sensory Impairment Strategy: Many local authority areas have local deaf organizations and there are some that have Deaf Forums. The Deaf Forums have been constituted by local deaf people to campaign for local services that are fully accessible for them and their families. They should be involved in the local planning groups. This good practice could then be applied to all local planning groups throughout all local government as deaf people are concerned about the same issues as their hearing peers.

The Scottish Parliament goes on tour in Scotland each summer. There was an issue this past year when the tour went to the Western Isles for a Parliamentary Day and a meeting of the Public Petitions Committee in Stornoway that was open to the public to “drop in” and take part or to find out more about the Public Petitions process. SCoD contacted the Scottish Parliament to ask if the meeting would be accessible to deaf people in the Western Isles and was told that the event would not be accessible – although it did have wheelchair access, but that for future meetings like this they would make it clear that deaf people with a language/communication support need could contact them and they would book the most appropriate support. When asked if everyone would have to do this, SCoD was told, no, only deaf people. The Depute Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Deafness raised the issue on behalf of all deaf people in Scotland and the Events Team in the Parliament have changed their organizational practice to ensure that the access needs of other people will be catered for, not just wheelchair users.

4. STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY: What do you think should be done to strengthen local democratic decision making in Scotland? Do you have any ideas or examples about how this could improve people's lives?

If local decision making processes are planned using a rights-based, co-production approach, then the people who live and work in the communities of interest will become involved as the processes will be accessible to them.

For example, in Eastbourne there is a campaign called "Let's Loop Eastbourne" which is about making sure all public spaces have a fully functioning induction loop for hearing aid wearers so that they can fully participate in public life and use the same public spaces as their hearing peers. This campaign is supported by local politicians as well as businesses, public sector bodies and voluntary sector organizations. The lead organization is Hearing Link – a member of SCoD. This campaign has been so successful, it is moving along the south coast of England to Brighton. This is something that could be done in Scotland which would raise awareness of the needs of people who are Hard of Hearing and use aids, but it would also allow access for people who are too often excluded. A small start but a start to involving people with a hearing loss in the democratic decision making process.

5. SCOTLAND'S FUTURE: Has there been enough discussion about local democracy in the debate about Scotland's future? If not, what should be addressed and how might this be achieved?

SCoD does not have a specific view on this. But we do have an issue about the lack of accessibility of the information that is being produced in the debate.

Both sides of the debate on Scottish Independence should be aware of the need to include all of Scottish citizens in the debate and for them all to have all the necessary information to make their choice next September.

The information being produced is not fully accessible. There has been no information produced in Easy Read, British Sign Language, Makaton or Braille. Much of the debate that has been televised does not have accurate captions or BSL interpretation. SCoD has asked if public debate will be fully accessible and has yet to receive an answer.

If the national debate is not accessible, what chance is there that deaf people will be involved in any discussion at a local level on local issues and local democracy?

SCoD can advise on accessibility issues as well as signposting people to local resources.

6. OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES: Do you have any concerns about strengthening local democratic decision making in Scotland?

Yes. If a rights-based co-production model is not used, then the harder to reach people and those with language/communication support needs will be left out of the local democratic decision making process.

This needs to change. There is legislation in place that says there is a duty to make the changes but without an attitudinal change at a strategic level this will not happen. Deaf people want to be involved, but are disillusioned by the fact that the processes are not accessible and their language/communication support needs are seen in some local areas as being too difficult to accommodate.

SCoD and our members can support public bodies to make the necessary changes so that the democratic decision making processes are fully accessible for local deaf people.

7. We would like to keep the conversation going with you. Can you tell us about any events, networks or other ways in which we could help achieve this? Is there anything that we can do to support you?

The BSL and Linguistic Access Working Group - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Equality/remit/Access-Working-Group> - received money for a consortium bid for a project – Equality and Access for Deaf People. This project is working with public bodies to improve the access for Deaf and Deafblind people in Scotland so that they can be active citizens and increase their involvement in their own communities.

We can provide links with local and national deaf organizations and forums as well as provide advice to local and national bodies.

Thank you for your submission. If you have any queries about the Call for Evidence please contact us at:

Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy
Verity House
19 Haymarket Yards
Edinburgh EH12 5BH
0131 474 9200
email: commission@localdemocracy.info
twitter: @localcommission

Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy Terms of Reference

Context

Scottish local government has adopted a vision that focuses on improving local democracy as the route to better outcomes, and is putting this at the heart of all of its work. The COSLA Convention has agreed to establish Scotland's first Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy to pursue that vision. It will bring people together with a common resolve to consider how local democracy and accountability in Scotland might be improved and empowered, and provide advice on what is needed for that to happen.

Remit

The overall purpose of the Commission is to:

"Identify a route map to deliver the full benefits of a shift in power towards local democracy for people in Scotland"

It will work to address three objectives:

- 1) Investigate a local approach to services and accountability that will improve outcomes in Scotland's communities
- 2) Consider the current landscape of democracy in Scotland and how this could be strengthened and enriched to benefit local people most
- 3) Make recommendations that set a course for putting stronger local democracy at the heart of Scotland's constitutional future

Outputs

The Commission will carry out its remit in two phases.

Phase 1: Why local democracy is important and what it can achieve

Key output: A clear statement of the benefit to communities of local delivery and democracy

Key questions to consider:

- Why should we do things locally in Scotland, and what benefit does this deliver?
- What can Scotland learn from other countries about their approach to local democracy?
- What do people in Scotland have to say about local democracy?
- What would better protected, empowered and supported local democracy look like in Scotland?

Phase 2: A route map to delivering stronger local democracy in Scotland

Key output: An assessment of the key building blocks for change

Key questions to consider:

- What are the building blocks we should focus on as part of Scotland's constitutional future?
- Who needs to take action to deliver positive change after the Referendum and what should they do?

Reporting

The Commission is expected to make interim reports throughout these phases and deliver a report to the COSLA Convention in Spring 2014. It is expected that the conclusions will include:

1. setting out why local approaches should be pursued and the benefits they derive
2. identifying the long term characteristics that should underpin better local democracy
3. establishing the building blocks or barriers to address, including:
 - i. improving the constitutional / statutory position of Scottish local government
 - ii. a funding process that improves democratic control and accountability locally

- iii. ways of ensuring that there is a joint approach to policy making in Scotland

Guiding Principles

It is expected that all members of the Commission will be:

- Ambitious: take a long term view and not be restricted by the current landscape of democracy in Scotland
- Open: enable all views to be heard through evidence gathering and interaction, public reporting, and political debate
- Inclusive: reflect a broad range of interests and views from across communities, local and national government, and wider civic Scotland
- Questioning: provide a forum for debate but with a common purpose of improving local democracy and accountability in Scotland
- Practical: positively respond to challenges and shape action in pursuit of local government's vision for stronger local democracy
- Evidence based: support their findings, including by looking at relevant evidence from home and abroad and commissioning research where appropriate

Access in other formats and community languages

This document is available, on request, in easy to read, audio and large print formats, and in community languages. Please contact:

Aby otrzymać niniejszy dokument w innej wersji językowej, na kasecie lub w wersji z powiększonym drukiem, prosimy o kontakt:

اس دستاویز کی مزید کاپیاں آڈیو کیسیٹ پر اور بڑے حروف کی چھپائی میں اور کیوٹی کی زبانوں میں طلب کیے جانے پر دستیاب ہیں، برائے مہربانی اس پتے پر رابطہ کریں:

এই ডকুমেন্ট-এর (দলিত) অভিন্নতা কপি, অডিও এবং বড় ছাপার অক্ষর আকার এবং সম্প্রদায়ের ভাষায় অনুরোধের মাধ্যমে পাওয়া যাবে, অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন:

Gheibhear lethbhreac an bharrachd ann an cruth ris an èistear, ann an clò mòr agus ann an cànan coimhearsnachd. Cuir fios gu:

इस दस्तावेज़/कागज़ात की और प्रतियाँ, माँग जाने पर, ऑडियो टेप पर और बड़े अक्षरों में तथा कम्युनिटी भाषाओं में मिल सकती हैं, कृपया संपर्क करें:

ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼/ਕਾਗਜ਼ਾਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਰ ਕਾਪੀਆਂ, ਮੰਗੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ, ਆਡਿਓ ਟੇਪ ਉੱਪਰ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਕੰਮਿਊਨਿਟੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

此文件有更多備份，如果需要，語音版本和大字體版本及少數種族語言版本也可提供，請聯絡：

يمكن أن تطلب النسخ الأخرى من هذا المستند كالتسجيل الصوتي والخط الكبير ونسخ بلغات أخرى، يرجى الإتصال على:

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