

## **Commission on Parliamentary Reform**

### **ACOSVO Workshop - Tuesday 22 March 2017**

#### **Some of the points discussed during the workshop included:**

- Cross party groups are a good way for organisations to build up relationships and contacts with MSPs.
- Also being able to host and attend events held at the Scottish Parliament is an effective way for organisations to engage and discuss policy decisions with MSPs.
- The effectiveness of organisations engaging with the Parliament and MSPs can differ depending on the knowledge and expertise of engaging with Parliament within their organisation. Having the right contacts is vital. This can lead to the situation where Parliament is only hearing from the groups who are able to engage meaning a lack of representation on policy issues.
- Due to the number of cross party groups it can be difficult for smaller organisations to keep on top of the work of the groups. This means organisations have to be selective and focus on the cross party groups they wish to support.
- When asked to give their views on inquiries and consultations there was a general agreement they are often not given enough time to respond. There was also a feeling there can be too much consultation, especially when you are being asked to give your views for the second or third time on a piece of legislation.
- The accessibility of the consultation documents was discussed with a feeling that the language and layout of the documents can prove to be a barrier to groups engaging.
- When they do submit evidence to committees they have to proactively look to see how they have influenced decisions. This can be difficult for smaller organisations that do not have the resources or knowledge to be able to do so. The Parliament therefore should do more to provide feedback to organisations and groups explaining how their views have impacted policy decisions.
- When giving evidence to Committees groups find roundtables to be a more beneficial experience with greater detailed discussion taking place. They also allow MSPs to bring in their own expertise on the topics being discussed.
- There was discussion regarding the geographical barriers that can impact individuals and groups abilities to engage with Parliament. The Parliament should do more to get out into communities, for example Committees should travel more around Scotland allowing more people to engage and have their say.

- The workload of MSPs was discussed with concern being raised that the current work/life balance does not ensure the right people are attracted to the roles.