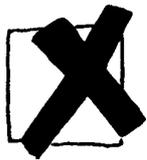


**Minutes of Meeting of the Cross-Party Group for Learning
Disability held in the Scottish Parliament on
Wednesday 2nd November 2011**

1. People who were there



Jackie Baillie MSP (Convenor)
Jim Eadie MSP (Vice-Convenor) (part)
Annabel Goldie MSP
Michael Matheson MSP (Minister for Public Health)
Mike Holmes (ENABLE Scotland)
Andrew Strong (ENABLE Scotland)
Jimmy McIntosh (Partners In Advocacy)
Alison White (Jimmy McIntosh's PA)
Gary Docherty (HMP Greenock)
David (Inspire)
Ian Hood (Learning Disability Alliance Scotland)
Ian Stones (LDG of Aberdeen)
David Tawse (Ark Housing)
Sue Tait (Ark Housing)
Lisa Weylandt (Ark Housing)
Lynnette Linton (ARC Scotland)
Caroline Gray (Quarriers Discovery Group)
James Fletcher (ARC Scotland)
Iain Cuthbertson (Quarriers)
Sandy Cruickshank (Parent)
Dr Catherine Jenkins (NHS Lothian)
Vicki Ferguson (Trellis)
Trish Dunlop (Equal Futures)
Lynn Jolly (Cornerstone)
Sofi Taylor (Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board)
Dr Ros Lyall (Mental Welfare Commission)
James McNab (People First Scotland)
Jane Lewis (People First Scotland)
Pandora Summerfield (Down's Syndrome Scotland)
Chloe Trew (Scottish Consortium For Learning Disability)
Sophie Dow (Mindroom)
Colin Menabney (ENABLE Glasgow)
Heather Muldoon (RNIB Scotland)
Norma Curran (Values Into Action Scotland)
Maureen Martin (Edinburgh Development Group)
Erin Townhill (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance)



2. People who were not there

Faye Keogh (Turning Point Scotland)
Mig Coupe (Mindroom)
Idem Lewis
Kirsten Hogg (Camphill Scotland)
Loretto Lambe (PAMIS)
Morven Campbell (User and Carer Involvement)

3. Minister for Public Health

At our last meeting we agreed to invite the Minister for Public Health, Michael Matheson MSP, to come and speak to the Cross Party Group. We were pleased he accepted and agreed to speak to this meeting. The Minister spoke about SDS, Carers, “The Same As You?” and answered questions.

The Minister told the group that the way care is currently provided has to change and people expect to have more control over this. The Government has developed a Self-Directed Support Bill to help people get more choice over their support.



The Government hopes this Bill will be discussed at the Health and Sport Committee in the Scottish Parliament in February next year. People will be invited to give their views on this. The Minister encouraged members to get involved.

The Minister said that progress has been made for carers but there is still more to be done. Implementation of the Carers Strategy will continue. The Government is developing an identification card system for young carers.

The Minister said that an evaluation of the “Same As You?” evaluation is taking place. This will be complete by the end of the year. The Minister said that there has been some good work as a result of “The Same As You?”. However, there is still more to be done. The Government may produce a follow-up to “The Same As You?”. They will wait until the evaluation is complete to decide.

The Minister was asked about the different care charges people have to pay across Scotland. The Minister said that the

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) is working on this issue and that a greater level of consistency would be better.

Caroline told the Minister that she thought people would get involved in consultations if they felt their views were listened to. Too many people think that decisions have been made before a consultation starts. The Minister agreed and said that consultation can be valuable but these types of experiences can undermine the process.

Ian Hood asked whether recommendations for people with learning disabilities who live in homes for older people would be included if the Government publishes a follow up to the Same As You? The Minister said that any follow up to the Same As You? would be developed in consultation with people and organisations who have an interest in learning disability. This will allow for important issues such as this to be raised.



Colin said that ENABLE Glasgow has received three years funding from the Short Breaks Fund. However, the second and third years are conditional on the Scottish Government continuing this fund. Colin asked if this will happen. The Minister said that the Government has to approve this every year but the funding has been agreed in principal.



The Minister was asked about people who don't get a service but might end up in a crisis. This can end up costing the Government more than giving them some support to stop the crisis. The Minister said that the Government is putting money towards preventing these types of situations.

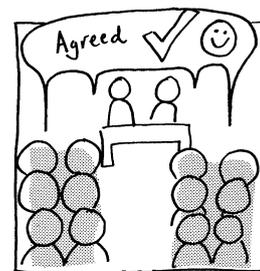
There were a number of other questions which we were unable to ask of the Minister. We will send the Minister a copy of the questions we did not ask and circulate his responses.

Jackie thanked the Minister for coming and suggested that we have a wider discussion about what should be in a follow up to the Same As You? at a future meeting. At this point the Minister left the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

Confirmation of MSP membership

At the last meeting we agreed that Jackie Baillie MSP should continue as Convenor and Jim Eadie MSP should be Vice-Convenor.



Since this meeting four other MSPs have joined the Cross Party Group. They are:

- Alison Johnstone MSP – Green
- Alison McInnes MSP – Lib Dem
- Liam McCarthur MSP – Lib Dem
- Annabel Goldie MSP – Conservative

Jackie asked the group to agree that they are happy for us to register the group like this. The group agreed.

People First's Citizens Grand Jury

James McNab from People First gave the group an update on People First's Citizens Grand Jury. This is a group of people who have met to discuss why things are not working for people with learning disabilities. A group is now looking at how to take recommendations from this meeting forward.



This group has held meetings with the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. They have also written to the Law Society about welfare guardianship.

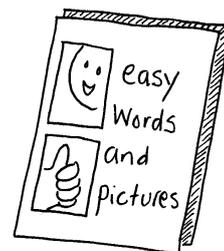
The group will be meeting the Mental Welfare Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission in the near future.

Ian Hood said he was interested in the work on welfare guardianship. A lot of parent carers in Glasgow have taken out welfare guardianship as part of the Self-Directed Support process. It is now easier to do this. Ian asked if this is one of the things People First will speak to the Law Society about? James said that they will be looking at this issue.

Jackie asked James to keep the Cross Party Group up to date on what is happening with the Citizens Grand Jury.

Changes to Disability Living Allowance

At the last meeting we discussed the UK Government's plans to replace the Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Caroline told the group there was no easy read version of the consultation on the new rules for this assessment. This made it very hard for people to understand what was proposed.



The Cross Party Group sent a number of letters and requests for an easy read version of this document to the DWP. This campaign worked and the DWP did produce an easy read paper. Caroline thanked the group for their support. Jackie thanked Caroline for raising such an important matter.

Members raised the issue of benefit payments being made fortnightly rather than weekly. Lynnette said that this made it very difficult for her to manage her money. Ian Stones said that the Job Centre can help you to write to the DWP to get this changed.



A rally about disability benefits was held in Edinburgh on Saturday 22 October. There was an impressive turnout of around 1,000 people.

Jackie said that the Health and Sport Committee in the Scottish Parliament was scrutinising the Welfare Reform Bill, which contains these proposals.

Jackie has asked a number of Parliamentary Questions about what will happen to concessionary travel after the changes to DLA. However, the Government has yet to provide a reasonable response to this.

Addendum: Answers to these questions have now been provided and will be circulated with the minutes.

Parliamentary Questions

Jackie had asked two questions about the number of people who have Down's Syndrome in Scotland.

The Government said that they do not hold this information centrally. Down's Syndrome Scotland has discussed this with the Government's statisticians who realised the importance of this



issue and said they didn't know why this information was not already collected. The link between Down's Syndrome and dementia make it even more important to ensure that these statistics are collected so that we can better plan these services.

Jackie suggested that we should do some more Parliamentary Questions on this issue. We should also write to the Government to tell them why they should collect these statistics.

5. People who have learning disabilities in prison

Jackie introduced Gary Docherty who is a Nurse working in Greenock Prison. Gary has been working with prisoners who have learning disabilities for almost 10 years.



Gary is concerned about the treatment of people with learning disabilities in prisons. There are 8,000 prisoners in Scotland's prisons. The Prison Reform Trust estimates that around 7% of all UK prisoners have an IQ of less than 70 (the official definition of a learning disability). 25% of all UK prisoners have an IQ of less than 80. Gary estimates that around 1,000 prisoners in Scotland have a learning disability.

Prisoners who have learning disabilities are five times more likely to be restrained and three times more likely to be placed in a segregated unit. All prisoners involved in the research reported that they had been bullied by staff and other prisoners.

There are 14 learning disability nurses employed by the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) in 17 prisons across Scotland. Only three prisons have a specialist learning disability service (Polmont, Greenock and Kilmarnock).



Six prisons in Scotland are using the Blueprint model – a screening tool to identify prisoners who have a learning disability. Prisoners then receive additional input and are linked with social work and voluntary organisations.

This work has seen a 20% reduction in reoffending. It is predicted that if this measure was fully implemented it could save around £5.8m per year.

Cornerstone is starting a project that works with offenders who have learning disabilities when they leave prison. The project will

support them as soon as they leave prison to help them settle and overcome new challenges they face. The first 2 weeks after leaving prison are very important to whether they re-offend again.

The Equality Act and disability discrimination legislation were recently used to sue the English Prison Service for their failure to address the needs of someone who has a learning disability. The case was successful. It is believed that a number of other prisoners are also planning to sue.

Gary said that he thinks four things should change in the future:

- Information about medical histories being more openly available to the Prison Service. The recent transfer of SPS staff to the NHS will help this.
- Specialist learning disability nurses should be employed and given time and resources to provide support
- More easy read information should be made available. Some examples, such as shopping lists, are particularly inaccessible.
- All SPS staff should have learning disability awareness training

Gary told the group that it is easy for people to slip through the system without their learning disability being identified. Recently, a young man with Down's Syndrome was admitted to the main population of HMP Greenock. He was not identified as having a learning disability until Gary returned from 2 days leave – at which point specialist support was arranged.

Jackie Baillie and Annabel Goldie agreed that they would table some Parliamentary Questions on this issue. They also said that they would write to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill MSP, and the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, highlighting this issue.

6. Anything else?

University cuts

Caroline Gray told the group that the Scottish Social Services Council says the annual funding universities get to support service users and carers to be involved in social work training is to be withdrawn.

Many people with learning disabilities and carers are involved in this. They can make presentations, take part in selecting students and do some teaching. This can be of huge benefit to students.

The group agreed to ask Jackie to ask some Parliamentary Questions on this issue.

7. Date of next meeting

Members will be informed of the date of the next meeting as soon as it is confirmed. The meeting agreed we should focus on cuts to college courses for people who have learning disabilities at the next meeting.

