

**Minutes of Meeting of the Cross-Party Group for Learning
Disability held in the Scottish Parliament on
Wednesday 7th March 2012**

1. People who were there



Jackie Baillie MSP (Convenor)
Jim Eadie MSP (Vice-Convenor)
Annabel Goldie MSP
Joan McAlpine MSP
Mike Holmes (ENABLE Scotland)
Andrew Strong (ENABLE Scotland)
Andy Miller (SCLD)
Michael McEwan (SCLD)
Jamie Rutherford (ENABLE Scotland)
Sofi Taylor (NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Mental Health Services)
James McNab (People First (Scotland))
Kenny McKay (People First (Scotland))
Ian Cairns (Mental Welfare Commission)
Erin Townhill (Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance)
Lynnette Linton (ARC Scotland)
James Fletcher (ARC Scotland)
Colin Menabney (ENABLE Glasgow)
Sally Anne Elfverson (ENABLE Glasgow)
Idem Lewis
Sandy Cruikshank
Ian Hood (LDAS)
Florence McQuilter (Quarriers)
Iain Cuthbertson (Quarriers)
Ann-Marie Boyd (RNIB)
Faye Keogh (Turning Point Scotland)
Maureen Martin (Edinburgh Development Group)
Loretto Lambe (PAMIS)
Dr Catherine Jenkins (NHS Lothian)
David Tawse (Ark Housing)
Lisa-Kristin Weylandt (Ark Housing)
Norma Curran (Values Into Action Scotland)
Nancy Loucks (Families Outside)
Tracey Sim (Cornerstone)
Christine Riddock (Garvald West Linton)



2. People who were not there

Kirsten Hogg (Camphill Scotland)
Dr Ros Lyall (Mental Welfare Commission)
Morven Campbell (User and Carer Involvement)
Caroline Gray (Quarriers)
Heather Muldoon (RNIB)
Charlene Tait (Scottish Autism)
Sheena McAra (Threshold Edinburgh)

3. Matters Arising

People who have learning disability in prison

Gary Docherty from HMP Greenock came to the last meeting to tell us about the experiences of people who have learning disabilities in prisons across Scotland.

He told us that there are nearly 1,000 people who have learning disabilities in Scotland's prisons.

The group wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy, Nicola Sturgeon, about this. We also sent a copy to the Justice Secretary, Kenny MacAskill. He told us that the Scottish Prison Service will continue to work with the NHS to support prisoners with learning disabilities.

We also asked a number of Parliamentary Questions about this. The Minister asked John Ewing, of the Scottish Prison Service to respond.

The group decided that we should invite John Ewing to either meet with us separately or come along to a future Cross Party Group to hear our concerns.

Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Bill has now been passed by the UK Parliament. The House of Lords made sure that some changes were made to the bill. This will slow down the introduction of some of these changes.

The Scottish Parliament have set up a committee on welfare reform. The Committee wants to hear from people who are



affected. You can let them know your views by email at:
welfarereform-yoursay@scottish.parliament.uk

The group agreed to write to the Welfare Reform Committee about these changes. Our letter will say what they could mean for people who have learning disabilities. Andrew will ask everyone on the group to send us anything they would like to be in the letter.

4. Further Education

Andy Miller from the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) gave a presentation on how changes in colleges are affecting people who have learning disabilities.

Further education can help people who have learning disabilities into work. It can also help them to get independent living skills. But many people don't get the choices they would like.

Michael McEwan from SCLD said that when he went to college he didn't know about the different choices that were available. Even though he lived in Barrhead, he moved from his school in Glasgow to Motherwell College. This meant he had to travel a long way every day.

Last year, SCLD did some research on this issue. They spoke to 17 of the 42 colleges in Scotland. In these colleges there had been a 34% cut in part time places for people who have learning disabilities and 3% increase in full time places.

People who have learning disabilities find it hard to get jobs. Losing the opportunity to learn may mean that this becomes even less likely. If people have to stay at home it may mean that Social Work Departments and parents and carers will be under more pressure.

The Scottish Government has said every 16 to 19 year old will be able to go to college if they like. Many people are worried that this might mean older people who have learning disabilities will lose their courses because they are not recognised.

SCLD would like to see the young adults having more targeted education opportunities that help them progress with links to employability. An increased emphasis on employability and



progression should also benefit people who have learning disabilities.

Jamie Rutherford from ENABLE Scotland talked about a project that has been successful at helping people move from college to employment or training. Transitions Co-ordinators are based in 5 colleges across Scotland. They get to know the person and make sure they can progress. Since 2009, they have worked with 300 people and found jobs for 60 people and vocational training for another 100 people.

Norma and Andy said that Project Search was another good example of a project that helps people from colleges into employment.

Joan McAlpine said that she had raised some of these concerns with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell MSP. He said that they were committed to protecting non-recognised qualifications that help people progress into higher learning and employment. Joan said she would send the Cabinet Secretary's letter on for distribution to the group.



Jamie said that there were many people waiting until very late to find out what was happening to their course last year. This might happen again because the Scottish Funding Council has yet to make a clear decision on how funding for courses will be made available for next year.

Sofi said there may be an age discrimination case for people who have learning disabilities who are over 25. Loretto said that very few people with profound and multiple disabilities go to college. Physical access to colleges can be a barrier. The University of Dundee is developing some materials that show how more people can learn and achieve.

Jackie thanked everyone for their input into the discussion. Jackie Baillie and Jim Eadie will be meeting the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell MSP, at the end of March. They hope to directly raise these issues then.

5. Visual Impairment and Learning Disability

Ann-Marie Boyd of RNIB told the group about research that they have been doing about people who have learning disabilities and sight problems.



They have found that people with learning disabilities are 10 times more likely to have serious sight problems than other people. People with severe or profound learning disabilities are most likely to have sight problems.

People who have learning disabilities may not know they have a sight problem and may not be able to tell people. Parents and carers might think the person with a learning disability can see perfectly well.

There are lots of things that can be done to help people if they have sight problems. It is very important that regular eye tests are carried out. You can also have changes made to your house.

Faye asked how people could benefit from this service. Ann-Marie said that people could contact her by email at: Ann-Marie.Boyd@rnib.org.uk

The group agreed to write to both the Scottish Government and Optometry Scotland about the findings of the research. We will share their responses with the group.

David said that he and Sally Ann had been at a recent meeting of the All Party Group on Learning Disability in London. They had also discussed this issue.

6. Festival of Politics

The Scottish Parliament are looking for ideas for the Festival of Politics in August 2012.

We have held successful events at the Festival before. In 2008 we talked about older carers. In 2009 we talked about the journey of social care. In 2010 we talked about transitions.



The theme for this year is “creativity”. We have been asked to put an idea forward. There is no guarantee that the event will happen.

The group suggested that we might want to do something about benefit changes, self-directed support and using budgets in a creative way.

We agreed to suggest an event about financial support and how you can be creative.

Ian and Sofi agreed to be part of a group that would think about the idea in more detail. Andrew will email out and see if anyone else wants to be involved in this group.

7. Anything Else?

Powers of Attorney

Ian Cairns from the Mental Welfare Commission told the group about a new report they had written. The report is about Mr and Mrs D, who have learning disabilities. They faced years of mistreatment because their local authority failed to intervene to protect them from a family member.



Mr D's brother had control over their welfare and finances. Although there was evidence that they were being treated badly, the council did not act.

Lots of local authorities are encouraging people to take out financial guardianship for Self-Directed Support.

The Mental Welfare Commission investigated and suggested that changes should be made. They will be checking whether these changes are being made.

Jackie has asked a number of Parliamentary Questions about this issue. Jackie invited Ian to come back to a future meeting of the group to let us know how things are going.

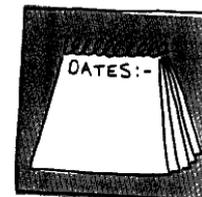
Forced Marriage

Sofi said that a new piece of legislation about forced marriages had become law. The Forced Marriage (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011 mentions people who have learning disabilities.



8. Date of next meeting

Members will be informed of the date of the next meeting as soon as it is confirmed. We should try and meet again in May.



The group said that at the next meeting we should talk about Self-Directed Support. We will invite the Minister or someone from the Scottish Government to speak to us about the new Self-Directed Support Bill.

We agreed that we should also talk about care charging.