

**Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Disability
Minutes 5 June 2013**

Present:

Michael McMahon MSP
Siobhan McMahon MSP
Annabelle Ewing MSP
Jackie Baillie MSP

Neil Wallworth Independent
Emma Whitelock Lead Scotland
Mike Harrison SATA
Nadeem Ashad
Margaret Hay Community Integrated Care (CIC)
Robert Allan DG Voice
Stan Flett SATA
John Ballantine SATA
Shumail Javed Jackie Baillie's Office
Lynne Davidson Quarriers
John Miller Action Duchenne
John Sutherland Independent Member
Richard Meade Barnardos
Helen Hunter Quarriers

Apologies:

Patricia Osborne, Brittle Bones Society; John Stirling, Disabilities Fife; Marianne Scobie, Glasgow Disability Alliance; Bill Scott, Inclusion Scotland; Pauline Nolan, Inclusion Scotland; Patrick Harvie, Green; Alan Rees, SATA; Faye Keogh, Turning Point Scotland; Valerie Breck, Visibility; Sheena Guz, Audio Description Scotland; Ahmed Yousaf, Remploy

1. Welcome and Introductions

Michael McMahon welcomed everyone to this AGM including MSP colleagues Annabelle Ewing, Jackie Baillie and Siobhan McMahon.

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were approved by Annabelle Ewing and seconded by Emma Whitelock.

Election of Office Bearers

Michael McMahon was re-nominated as chair person by Annabelle Ewing and seconded by Jackie Baillie. Vice Convener was nominated by Annabelle Ewing and John Miller seconded, Quarriers were nominated as secretary and treasurer by Michael McMahon and seconded by Susan Archibald.

Income and Expenditure

Brief summary of income and expenditure was presented to the meeting by Quarriers. Subscriptions are due on an annual basis and Marie Redden will chase outstanding subscriptions for this session. If you have any queries please contact Marie Redden – Quarriers.

Membership

It was agreed that membership would continue at £20 for organisations.

Welfare Reform

Susan Archibald presented the WOW petition campaign calling for accumulative impact assessment of Welfare Reform and a new deal for sick and disabled people based on their needs, abilities and ambitions. Susan made an appeal for organisations to sign up to the petition so far there are over 40,000 signatures; she very eloquently described how challenging welfare reforms were for disabled people:

- Many are suffering stress as a result of this and of benefit cuts no consideration has been given to the effect on disabled people and their families
- Receiving letters from families about benefit cuts
- Councils appear to be putting pressure on people to cut down on their spending on very basic items
- Citizens advice bureaus are struggling to take hearings and appeals
- CAB's appear to be stopping representation at tribunals as they don't have the capacity.

Susan appealed for advocates for people with a disability. Susan has also seen this linked to people being abused in the media. The media and press representation of disability is extremely negative, people are living in fear, she called for disabled charities to support people. Throughout Susan's presentation she told a variety of stories illustrating how people had been affected.

Questions & Issues

- Difficulties in accessing technology in order to fill in applications.
- Many libraries that do have computers are closing.
- Lead Scotland and Quarriers highlighted support for disabled people in terms of using technology.
- Calls need to be made on the government to appeal and address the welfare reform format.
- There are issues of work capability assessment there has not been a debate in parliament around the issue.
- Application forms are generally falling to carers.
- People are already living in poverty and some have never ever had the internet or access to it.
- The Welfare Reform committee have met local authorities and are speaking to people in relation to some of these issues.

- Numbers engaging with technology are higher than expected, some councils are actively trying to get technology to people and the engagement is higher. Scottish government is trying to work with local authorities in this respect.
- Rural exclusion is an issue, level of exclusion through access to IT and technology is significant.
- Direct action and petitions are an important way of influencing.
- People need help to understand why the welfare state was created in the first place.
- Issues raised around GP's not providing medical information without payment.
- There is an issue around there being no option other than going on line.
- Choice is important.
- Questions are being asked as to whether people have or haven't got a disability.
- Many people have hidden disabilities.
- It was highlighted that some members of society have not lost a sense of decency.
- A call was made for members to respond to negativity in the media via the letters page.
- Welfare reform committee met with ATOS 50% of forms sent out to GP's were not returned, therefore they will make an assessment based on information from the person themselves only, so assessments are made on the basis of incomplete information.
- GP's are contractually obliged to provide information under the GP contract, if GP's are not complying with the contract this needs to be addressed it was pointed out that if any doctor believes that something is detrimental to a persons condition they have to intervene. The Health Committee are holding an enquiry.
- The black triangle campaign established that GP's requiring to point out if something is detrimental to a person's condition a standard letter was drawn up.

Disability Hate Crime

Helen updated the meeting on actions, we are looking at how data is collected and also awareness raising and prevention and third party reporting. We hope to put a motion before parliament if not this term at the beginning of the next. Helen is also exploring the possibility of linking to the Learning Disability Party Working Group on this issue.

Next meeting

Wednesday 4th September 2013 – 5.30pm

Please contact Marie Redden at Quarriers with topics for the next meeting.