

Cross Party Group on Visual Impairment in the Scottish Parliament

Minutes of the Cross Party Group on Visual Impairment meeting held on Tuesday 6 December in Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament

Members present:

Stuart McMillan MSP; Neil Bibby MSP; Colin Smyth MSP; James Adams, RNIB Scotland; Jayne Armour, RNIB Scotland; Paul Bartley, Optelec; Elaine Brackenridge, Royal Blind School; Catriona Burness, RNIB Scotland; Matthew Clark, Haggeye; Dominic Everett, Royal Blind School; Anne Marie Fleming, RNIB Scotland; Colin Gallagher, Guide Dogs; Mairi Graham; Clair Henderson, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland; Jane Horsburgh, Guide Dogs; Caitlin Howie, RNIB Scotland; Bob Ironside, Vision PK; Sheila MacKenzie, Scottish Sensory Centre; Gillian Mitchell, Sight Action; Sally Paterson, SAVIE; John Paterson, SCovi; John Ravenscroft, University of Edinburgh; Ken Reid, RNIB Scotland; Ann Robertson, North East Sensory Services; Janelle Scotland, ASTN; Ken Swa, RNIB Scotland; Mary Travers; Cate Vallis, RNIB Scotland.

Attendees present:

Helen Court, Sight Action/NHS Education for Scotland; Davina Shiell, Royal Blind.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Miles Briggs MSP; Valerie Breck, Visibility; Ian Brown, RNIB Scotland; Campbell Chalmers, RNIB Scotland; Tracy Christie; Mo Colvin, Haggeye; Jane Donnelly; Sheila Hands, Angus Council; Fiona Finlayson, Dundee Blind and Partially Sighted Society; Mercy Jeyasingham, Vision 2020 UK; Debbie McGill, Optometry Scotland; Rod Murchison; Mary Rasmussen; Allan Russell RNIB Connect Radio; Angus Scott, NHS Forth Valley; Mhairi Thurston, Abertay University; Kate Wallace, Visualise; Sandra Wilson, RNIB Scotland.

3. 125th Anniversary of the Scottish Braille Press

Davina Shiell introduced herself and spoke of the 125th anniversary of the Scottish Braille Press. The organisation has achieved much throughout the

years and has raised their profile significantly as they are now the main provider of Braille in the UK with clients around the world. An increasing number of books are now being produced in Braille at the same time as print versions and around fifty per cent of the staff employed have also been recruited through the Work Choice scheme.

The Chair thanked Davina for her input and opened the item for discussion. Ken Reid commended the organisation on their work and emphasised the importance of Braille materials for children and young people in education.

Accessible programmes at football clubs were also discussed. It was agreed that the group would write to SPFL in the first instance before making contact with specific clubs.

Actions

- Stuart to write to SPFL re football club programmes.

4. Mapping of Low Vision Services in Scotland, initial findings

Dr Helen Court and Gillian Mitchell updated the group on the findings following the mapping of low vision services in Scotland.

- In current legislation the definition of those entitled to low vision services includes but is not limited to those who are registered as blind or partially sighted.
- In Scotland, the majority of low vision is age related.
- It is estimated that over forty three per cent of those entitled to the service have clinical depression.
- A total of 45 low vision providers were identified across Scotland, with ninety six per cent of them responding to the research.
- The capacity of some of the services is inadequate.
- It was reported that current waiting times are two weeks (community optometrist) and two weeks to six months (hospital).
- Access to low vision assessments (LVAs) are varied with a third of services charging for the assessments.

Four potential changes have been suggested in the report which will be finalised and made public before the end of 2016:

1. Provide more services.
2. Increase capacity of hospital clinics.
3. Use community optometrists more. There is evidence of this working through a national model.

4. Centralising administration. There is evidence of this working in Wales, and with Scotland receiving thirteen thousand appointments a year this could be beneficial.

The Chair thanked Helen and Gillian for their presentation and invited questions and comments from the group. John Paterson noted that the registration review, See Hear, also gathered LVA information.

In order for administration to be centralised, John Ravenscroft suggested to map the patients records to The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

Those delivering the service will follow up referrals with a review after one to two weeks to ensure standards are met.

It was agreed to invite Carrie MacEwan to the next meeting.

Actions

- Invite Carrie to next meeting.

5. Closing the attainment gap for children and young people with visual impairment – the vital role of Qualified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (QTVI)

This item was withdrawn prior to the meeting commencing. There followed some discussion around QTVI provision, accessible technology in schools and habilitation services. John Ravenscroft highlighted that a report on the attainment gap has been drafted for Cabinet Secretary approval by the University of Edinburgh and the Scottish Government. The Scottish Sensory Centre are also carrying out a survey regarding QTVI status in Scotland, the findings of which will be brought to a future meeting.

Actions

- Discuss at future meeting.

6. AOCB

6.1. Access Vehicle Exclusion at Waverley Station: As Miles Briggs MSP has submitted his apologies this item will be discussed at the next meeting.

6.2. Social Media for CPG: It was agreed to establish a hashtag to promote the group's work. #CPGVI

6.3. Scottish Sensory Awards: The Scottish Sensory Awards ceremony will take place on 15 February. Nomination details can be found on SCOVl and SCOD's websites.

Actions

- Hashtag #CPGVI to be created.
- Add Edinburgh Waverley vehicle access to next agenda.

7. Future meetings

- TBC