

Cross-Party Group on Mental Health

Wednesday 20th June 2023 at 12:00pm

Minutes

Present

MSPs

- Beatrice Wishart MSP (Co-convener)
- Oliver Mundell MSP (Co-convener)

Non MSP Group Members

- Abdulai Jawo Bah, FJSS Group
- Agnieszka Morrisons, Feniks
- Andrew Muir, Psychiatric Rights Scotland
- Barry Gale, Mental Health Rights Scotland
- Brian Magee, COSCA
- Carla Cebula, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Catriona Melville, Age Scotland
- Charlotte Mitchell
- Chloe Campbell, SAMH
- Lauraine Macdonald, BPS
- Ellis Kokko
- Erin Lux, Equality Network
- Erin Slaven, Office of Paul Sweeney MSP
- Eva Thomas-Tudo, Audit Scotland
- Hannah Burley, SAMH
- Harriette Campbell
- Helen Forrest, Children's Health Scotland
- Ian McCall, Paths for All
- James Banner-Rall, See Me
- Jeremy Bacon, BACP
- Jim Dorman, St Andrew's First Aid
- June Deasy, The British Psychological Society
- Kira McDiarmid, Change Mental Health
- Lauraine Macdonald, The British Psychological Society
- Lewis Macleod, VOX Scotland
- Magda Czarnecka, Feniks
- Mairi Campbell-Jack, SAMH
- Meg Moss, NCPS
- Molly Newhouse, CAPS Independent Advocacy
- Steve Mulligan, BACP
- Susan Hunter, Befriending Networks

Apologies

- Alison Keir, Royal College of Occupational Therapists
- Audrey Nicoll MSP
- Carol Murray, Herriot-Watt University
- Hunter Watson
- Joanne Docherty, Psychologists for Change
- John Crichton, Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Katie Gilbert, NUS Think Positive
- Laura Hudson, Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Linda Findlay, Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Lynsey McPhail, Cruse Scotland Bereavement Care
- Matthew James, Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Michelle Howieson, Bipolar Edinburgh
- Paul Sweeney MSP
- Paula Fraser, VOX Scotland

1. Welcome and apologies

- Beatrice Wishart MSP welcomed attendees, clarified housekeeping to ensure smooth running of the Zoom meetings, introduced the agenda, and read out the meeting apologise.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

- Regarding the CPG's group agreement, Oliver had written to the CPG Clerks to get some advice on some group members continued concern. The Clerks have responded, stating that it is the decision of members of the CPG on how they wish to conduct their business and to deal with any issues that do not directly relate to the Code of Conduct. Both Oliver's letter and the Clerks response had been circulated with the group before this meeting. The Conveners believe that a vote by Members on whether proposed amendments should be adopted into the group agreement is the best way forward with this. This vote will be circulated to the group by email in the coming days and will be binding.
- Mairi Campbell Jack fed back the responses received meeting accessibility survey that was circulated to members after the last meeting. There were a variety of different access needs highlighted by members including a desire for hybrid meetings, adjustments for those who are hard of hearing or who have dyslexia, break out rooms, reimbursement of travel expenses to in-person meetings, and more in-depth agenda. As such, SAMH will explore the use of breakout rooms (where applicable), transcripts, and fuller agendas for future meetings. Further to this, the first meeting after summer recess will be a hybrid meeting to bring more networking opportunities. Mairi stated that there is no budget for CPGs so no way

to reimburse travel expenses but that SAMH hope that meeting online and hybrid meetings will allow as many people as possible to attend future meetings.

ACTION

- SAMH to circulate vote on the CPG's group agreement
- SAMH to explore the implementation of suggestions from the accessibility survey

3. Mental health, poverty, and the cost-of-living crisis with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)

- Carla Cebula from JRF spoke to the impact of the cost of living crisis on people who have reported a mental health condition and people's mental health in general. They also spoke to the wider impact of the cost of living crisis on NHS services. Analysis in their presentation was taken from two representative surveys of over 4,000 adults in Scotland in autumn 2022 and spring 2023. Information on the autumn 2022 survey can be found on the [UK Data Service website](#), whilst information on the spring 2023 is to be published on the same website in due course.
- On the link between mental ill-health and poverty, Carla stated that people in the most deprived areas in Scotland are at a greater risk of experiencing mental ill-health, resulting from a combination of – amongst other things - stigma, lack of power and choice, disconnection, insecurity, access to services, housing, ill-health and unemployment.
- Carla also made clear that people with a mental health condition are in a more precarious position in the context of the cost-of-living crisis, with 2 in 5 feeling very financially insecure in spring 2023.
- On the relationship between cutting back and reporting a negative mental health impact, Carla stated that people who have had to cut back and get support to make ends meet are more likely to report a somewhat or very negative impact on their mental health. This includes nearly 2 in 3 people who have cut back on an essential and 8 in 10 people who have used a foodbank.
- Carla highlighted that internalised feelings of financial insecurity will remain after an individual is no longer financially insecure as a way to showcase the long-term mental health impact of the cost-of-living crisis.
- Speaking to NHS mental health services, Carla stated that nearly 9 in 10 people who said that the cost of living crisis has had a somewhat or very negative impact on their mental health have accessed NHS services for their mental health. 10% had been unable to access a service or put off by long waiting times.
- Concluding, Carla set out some key asks from JRF to the Scottish and UK Governments. JRF ask that the Scottish Government prioritise mental health services where they are most needed (in areas with high poverty risks and low

SIMD) and tackling the roots of poverty. For the UK Government, the ask is to reduce financial precarity.

- Laurine Macdonald asked whether Carla thought that politicians are fully aware of the impact of wider policies on mental health. Carla stated that they did not think so, largely because politicians do not have a full overview of the impact that policies will have in general, not just specifically poverty or mental health.
- Mairi Campbell-Jack asked what JRF's work will focus on in the next few years. Carla stated that JRF will continue to look at disability in general. They will also focus on participation, particularly that of lived experience of poverty.

4. The mental health needs of the Ukrainian refugees in Scotland with Feniks

- Agnieszka Morrison from Feniks presented the findings of their 2023 community research report, ['The Mental Health Needs of the Ukrainian Refugees in Scotland'](#). Through questionnaire responses from 85 people, this research explores the mental health and integration needs of the newly arrived Ukrainians settling in Edinburgh in an effort to address experiences of extreme distress and risks of trauma, suicide and depression, and to explore the need for formal and community-based interventions.
- The research found that over 55% of respondent were in the range of clinically significant psychological distress with 9% requiring medical intervention at the time of the survey. To tackle this, respondents identified the need for both formal and community-based interventions.
- Agnieszka detailed the six significant challenges and needs identified by respondents since arriving in Scotland: access to healthcare, poor knowledge of English, temporary accommodation, finances, help in navigating the system, help with children and children's mental health.
- Agnieszka detailed the situation on MS Victoria in Edinburgh where over 500 refugees are due to be disembarked on the 1st of July and will be displaced around the country, with some being relocated into hotels and remote locations. Many local authorities do not have the same third sector capacity and multi-agency support in place to support the mental health of refugees and some families have gone back to Ukraine rather than stay because of the unreadiness of support in Scotland.
- Concluding, Agnieszka stated there is a need for the development of development of the long-term mental health and integration support interventions for Ukrainian refugees which utilises the expertise of Ukrainian professionals. This has been an ongoing challenge as Ukrainian professionals continue to struggle to have their qualifications recognised in the UK.
- June Deasy asked if, when respondents were asked about what would help their mental health, they were provided with definitions or examples of formal support options available, or if they raised ideas for support themselves. Magda Czarnecka

from Feniks confirmed that a research participants were provided with a list, in Ukrainian, of various interventions that could be provided from community support to NHS interventions.

- Steve Mulligan thanked Agnieszka for the informative presentation, stating that the need to provide culturally sensitive support for refugees in an area of growing interest for BACP. They asked for further information on the difficult experience of getting Ukrainian qualifications recognised in the UK and queried whether BACP could offer support. Magda stated that Feniks took on 10 volunteers who had mental health backgrounds but only 2 had formal qualifications, which highlights a cultural differences on who is able to provide counselling and therapy in different countries. Magda stated that Feniks want to empower people to practice in their communities so would welcome any support or guidance that BACP could provide.
- In closing this agenda item, Beatrice Wishart MSP stated that SAMH are making further links with the CPG on Migration to further explore the diversity of experiences of refugees, asylum seekers, and New Scot communities.

5. Voice of lived experience

- Beatrice Wishart MSP opened up this space for discussion. There were no contributions to this agenda item on this occasion.

6. Any other business and next steps

- Beatrice Wishart MSP thanked the group for their attendance and contributions, informed members that comments and queries can be directed to publicaffairs@samh.org.uk, and closed the meeting.