

**Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Disability –
Minutes 3 December 2014**

Present:

Michael McMahon – MSP
Siobhan McMahon – MSP
Helen Hunter – Quarriers
Lorne Berkley – Quarriers
Susan Walls – Contact a Family
Kevin Hutchens – Contact a Family
Marion Gell – Contact a Family
Donna Tomlin - Contact a Family Scotland
John Miller – Action Duchenne
Jacq Kelly Leonard Cheshire
John Sutherland – Leonard Cheshire
Ross Gilligan – Disability Agenda Scotland
Stan Flett – Aberdeen Action on Disability
Terry Robinson – SATA
Arthur Cowie – Highland Alliance of Panels
Terry Barlow – SATA
Robert Ferguson – SDEF
Stephen Cruickshank – Renfrewshire Access Panel
Jackie Maceiro – West Dunbartonshire Access Panel
Rachel Le Noan – Down’s Syndrome Scotland
John Stirling – Disabilities Fife
Elise Campbell – Capability Scotland
Pauline Nolan – Inclusion Scotland
Mike Harrison – SATA
Fiona Sinclair – Autism Rights

Apologies:

John Ballantyne – SATA
Margaret Hay – CIC
Maureen McAllister - Arthritis Care Scotland

1. Welcome and introductions

Michael informed the group that Annabelle Ewing has been appointed as a Government Minister and is stepping down as Deputy Convenor of the Cross Party Group. Michael would like to extend his thanks to Annabelle Ewing for all the support and commitment to the Cross Party Group on Disability.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the last meeting were approved and seconded.

3. PRESENTATION FROM CONTACT FAMILY – Counting the Cost Report 2014

First Survey was held in 2008 to assess the impact of the financial downturn on families with a disabled child. Questions asked on how families with disabled children are affected by the economic downturn. 320 people responded to the survey. Families were going without basics. Findings highlighted financial situation of families with a disabled child worsening. Just over a third were going without heating, 29% without food and 35% had to get a loan to cover for everyday costs. Costs more to live with a disabled child now than in 2008 and the impact for many is debt, stress, ill health and some marriage breakdown. Contact a Family are calling the welfare system to reflect the extra cost of the challenges those with disabled children face. These include:

- Energy Companies to introduce a fixed monthly discount for households with a disabled child and to include disabled children in the Warm Home Discount scheme
- Increase in the Carer's Allowance earnings limit in line with any future increase in the National Minimum Wage.
- The higher child disability element in Universal Credit to be widened to include children on the middle rate of Disability Living Allowance and those on the higher rate for mobility.

They would welcome a debate to publicise and promote the contents of the report to inform policy. Two new guides are available Money Matters and Help with Fuel Bills. Discussion highlighted concern about the impact of Self Directed Support particularly in rural areas. Some areas charge for transport to hospital.

4. HOUSING AND ACCESSIBILITY – JACQ KELLY, LEONARD CHESHIRE

Jacq reported that housing was a massive issue for disabled people and there is a growing need for disabled friendly housing. Almost 20,000 people with disabilities are waiting for homes on housing waiting lists in Scotland equating to more than 1,600 for every local authority. 71% report they live in a home without an accessible front door. 1 in 6 people in the UK and almost half of all disabled children in Scotland are living in housing not suitable for their needs 35% of Scottish Local Authorities have not analysed the need for disabled-friendly housing in their area. Shelter

established in 2003 significant impact on health with a cost to the NHS estimated to be £100 million a year. The cost of building an accessible or adapted home is around £1000.

Discussion highlighted Scottish School of Architecture are including things like accessibility into their programmes. Students, though, need to be more aware of the need for accessible homes. There is a need for standardisation of approach. Local Authorities are resistant to regulation but there is a significant need for legislation to be passed to make buildings accessible. Deregulation just passed by Westminster has made the situation significantly worse.

5. AUTISM RIGHTS – FIONA SINCLAIR

Autism Rights challenges `mentally disordered` thinking on the mental health system's treatment of people who are on the Autistic spectrum. Fiona highlighted that there is a major review of Mental Health legislation. Currently Learning Disabilities and Autistic Spectrum Disorders can be treated under the provisions of the Mental Health Act, just for `challenging behaviour`. This can result in inappropriate administration of drugs for behaviours which should be treated differently. She advocated that people with Autism can become more violent through use of drugs. She also highlighted 25% of long stay patients are people with learning disability and autism. There are also significant gaps in the statistics kept in this area.

Autism Rights are urging the Scottish Government to amend the Mental Health (Care and treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 to ensure that it is compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. They believe there are serious human rights issues for people on the autistic spectrum in `care` environments,

Fiona said that Autism Rights are campaigning for people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) to be taken out of the provisions of the Mental Health Act, for equality of healthcare for people with autism and for an inquiry into the treatment of all people with ASD within the mental health system. We make the case for these changes within our submission to Scotland's National Action Plan on Human Rights.

6. AOCB

- Pauline Nolan from Inclusion Scotland reported that the Shadow Civil Society report to the UN on the rights of disabled people is on hold at the moment as the UK examination has been delayed by the UN disability committee. In the meantime, IS are planning some round table events to explore some of the difficult issues raised during their consultations on the report which will take place in the new year. For example, there will be one on mental health services and treatment for people with learning disabilities.

- There will be a joint Disability and Learning Disability CPG on Disability Hate Crime at 1.00pm on 4th February, 2015 in Committee Room 3.

Michael thanked those who presented and those in attendance and closed the meeting

Date of Next CPG Disability Meeting:

Wednesday 18th March 2015 Committee Room 3 Time: 17.30pm until 20.00pm