

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Mental Health, held on Wednesday 12 December 2018 at 6.00pm in Conference Room 5, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh

1. Introduction from James Dornan MSP, Co-Convener

James Dornan welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced himself as the new Co-Convener. James introduced David Ferguson, who had recently joined the Royal College of Psychiatrists and had taken over from Elena Slodecki as CPG Secretary. On behalf of the CPG, James expressed his thanks to Elena for all her diligence and hard work. James commented that the meeting room was at full capacity tonight, and the very strong turnout demonstrated the importance and high profile of mental health issues in Scotland.

2. Present and apologies

Present:

MSPs

James Dornan MSP (Co-Convener)
Oliver Mundell MSP

Non-MSP attendees

Kirsten Bamford, University of Edinburgh
Aymie Black, Blogger/guest presenter
Alison Cairns, Bipolar Scotland
Martin Canavan, Aberlour
Gabriela Cangas, Miricyl/guest presenter
Siyi Chen
John Crichton, Royal College of Psychiatrists
Gillian Eunson, Big Lottery Fund
David Ferguson, Royal College of Psychiatrists (Secretary)
Andrew Fraser, Royal College of Psychiatrists
Margo Fyfe, Mental Welfare Commission
Victoria Galloway, Befriending Networks
Brenda Holliday, stenographer
Calum Irving, See Me Scotland/guest presenter
Tom Jennings
Gordon Johnston, Bipolar Scotland
James Jopling, Samaritans
Lauraine Macdonald, British Psychological Society
Willie Macfadyen, Deaf Scotland/Hayfield Support Services
Katy Macfarlane, University of Edinburgh
Ross McIntosh
Claire Muir
Alan Mulholland, Police Scotland
Emma Nelson, UKCP
Kelly Niven
Oluwatoyin Opeloyeru
Simon Porter, Royal Edinburgh Hospital Patients Council/Advocard
Paula Pratt
Alison Rankin, Royal Edinburgh Hospital Patients Council/Advocard

Jane Robbins
Julie Robertson, Police Scotland
Patricia Rodger, Advocard
Justas Seferis
Laura Sharpe, See Me Scotland/guest presenter
Frances Simpson, Support in Mind Scotland
Adam Smith, Miricyl/guest presenter
Stacey Webster, LGBT Health and Wellbeing
Tom Wightman, Autism Rights.

Apologies:

James said apologies for absence had been received from Emma Harper MSP (CPG Co-Convener), Annie Wells MSP (CPG Deputy Convener), Tom Arthur MSP, Maurice Corry MSP, and from a total of 12 non-MSP members and attendees.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the CPG on Mental Health held on 4 September 2018 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

James said the secretariat had received a request from Patricia Rodger, from Advocard, to amend the 20 June meeting minutes to correct a typographical error: references to "Lois MacDonald" should have read "Rose MacDonald". Patricia also asked for a new paragraph to be added at page 6 as follows: "Rose MacDonald also stated that she was seeking support for a grass-roots movement to ensure greater representation of service user and patients views and experience. She cited the work of Patricia Rodger preventing the closure of the Outlook Project (Adult Education for mental health service users) as her inspiration for this."

James said the 20 June minutes had already been agreed as a true record and published on the Parliament website. The secretariat had consulted the Standards Committee and established that a CPG convener can decide, with members' agreement, to reopen previously agreed minutes and to replace the agreed version with a revised document. James proposed that the 20 June minutes be amended as suggested, and CPG attendees agreed to this.

4. A Proposal for a Multi-University Centre of Excellence for Mental Health Research for Children and Young People

James invited Gabriella Cangas and Adam Smith from Miricyl to deliver a presentation. Gabriela was a children's psychologist, with experience of working with children affected by mental illness and was now a volunteer at Miricyl. Adam Smith had worked with various charities and businesses, and was a trustee and board member at Miricyl. Gabriella and Adam explained that mental illness was the most expensive type of illness in terms of the cost to the UK economy. Yet in Scotland only around 5% of medical research funding currently went into mental health research. This translated into a Scottish medical research funding "gap" of around £16 million per annum. It was Miricyl's view that an urgent review of medical research funding was therefore necessary. Miricyl was bringing together experts in children's mental health in Scotland, challenging them to work together to solve the most pressing questions

regarding how to prevent, treat and support children and young people with mental illnesses. The team were already working on several research proposals which were sensitive to Scottish needs, and were campaigning to increase awareness among decision makers of the pressing need for more mental health research and to address the funding gap academics are currently facing.

In follow-up discussion, Willie Macfadyen noted that many deaf children – approximately 4 times that of the hearing population - have mental health problems. He was not aware of research being carried out into deaf children's mental health issues. Miricyl said they would take this into account. Patricia Rodger flagged good work being done by Patricia Santelices at the City of Edinburgh Council looking at young people's mental health. Tom Wightman noted the importance of considering the needs of autistic children. Miricyl said this was a very important issue which was being considered as part of their work.

James Dornan asked if Miricyl's aim was to find new money for research, or to try to divert money from existing research funding streams. Miricyl said it was a bit of both – they would look for new sources of funding and would also try to ensure existing funding was diverted appropriately. James asked about Miricyl's start-up costs. Miricyl couldn't quantify these at the meeting, but noted that it was important to scale up as quickly as possible so that their voice was heard and they could maximise their chances of securing financial support.

James thanked Miricyl for a helpful presentation and discussion.

5. Always Connected: Social Media and Children and Young People's Mental Health

James invited Calum Irving and Laura Sharpe from See Me Scotland to speak.

Calum was grateful See Me Scotland had been invited to present to the CPG. Over time See Me Scotland had shifted from an awareness raising campaign to a behaviour change programme. They now had developmental or improvement-based work taking place in three major settings: workplaces, schools and health and social care. It was a mixed-method approach driven by lived experience, and involving campaigning and communications, policy development, practice and social contact. Changing attitudes through lived experience contact was often the most effective way to change someone's mind. The most rapid growth was amongst young people – all of whom want to use their lived experience to change minds and end the stigma and discrimination they faced.

Laura went on to explain See Me Scotland is Scotland's programme to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination, and enable people who experience mental health problems to live fulfilled lives. Their Education and Young People programme aims to help young people (defined as people aged 25 and below), their parents/carers and those who work with them to understand the importance of good mental health and build their confidence to talk openly about mental health. Laura said our young people today have lower levels of emotional intelligence than previous generations. Laura set out the key challenges and barriers to young people's mental health. These were a lack of trusted adults, confidentiality, not knowing how to access help or support, fear, and

embarrassment. She spoke about the huge pace of technological change in recent years and the impact smartphones, internet use and social media were having on young people. Young people were having poorer, more interrupted sleep, and were more prone to anxiety and depression. Platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram leveraged the same neural circuitry used by slot machines and drugs and kept people using their products as much as possible.

Young people may not feel able to speak about their own mental health but were more likely to speak to a peer they were concerned for. This showed that while we may be more open to talking about mental health, the stigma and fear of discrimination still exists, stopping young people from speaking about how they feel. [FeelsFM](#), the online emoji powered jukebox, had been designed to help young people express their feelings, to use music as a positive coping strategy, and to find new ways to talk about mental health stigma.

James welcomed Aymie Black to present to the meeting. Aymie introduced herself as a writer and blogger about mental health, a Glasgow School of Art design graduate, and someone who happened to have a bipolar disorder. After receiving her diagnosis Aymie started writing an online mood diary to help others understand what she was going through, and to raise awareness of mental illness in young people. Aymie's [blog](#), 100 Days of Mimi, became hugely popular very quickly and led to a dramatic rise in her social media following. Aymie had recently asked her social media followers a series of questions about the impact, positive and negative, of social media on their mental health. Positive aspects included the ability to keep in touch more easily with friends and relatives, to make new connections, and to take away feelings of isolation. The negatives included being exposed to harmful online communities, hateful content and cyber bullying. The most common negative effect was that people can be drawn into comparing themselves unfavourably to the unrealistic, overly curated lives they see on social media which can lead to insecurity and low moods.

People who took part in Aymie's online surveys were asked about hope – how social media can act as a tool to improve mental health. Solutions suggested included educating people to be active in the offline world outside social media; setting up timed reminders of how long people had spent online so that they could be alerted to take a break; improved policing of negative comments and holding people to account for these; and introducing better safeguarding tools for children. The most common response was that this is a social issue which can't be changed overnight, and that the change must start with each of us adjusting our own attitudes and approaches towards social media.

In discussion, Claire Muir expressed concerns about prescribing of drugs to children and young people by psychiatrists and asked for human rights issues to be added to the agenda for a future CPG meeting. Carolyn Lochhead referred to recent announcements regarding provision of counselling services in schools, and asked what more of this nature could be done which would assist young people. Aymie Black pointed out that it was hard to get young people to reach out for help with mental health issues. At schools there was a stigma about being seen to approach the PSE (personal and social education) teachers for help. Laura Sharpe commended the work done by Dr Dame Denise Coia's Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Force and spoke of the important role for teacher training in ensuring teachers were properly equipped

to support young people. Youth workers also played an important role, not least as they were generally highly trusted by young people. James Dornan said he had been involved in production of a recent parliamentary committee report on PSE teaching and had visited various schools in the process. He agreed that youth workers are important and were doing a very good job. Laura was concerned that PSE was not a specialism – any teacher could be asked to deliver PSE – and felt that PSE was less effective where the teacher lacked experience and empathy.

Jane Robins mentioned the need to foster emotional intelligence and to ensure young people were given guidance, love and attention in order to enhance their emotional health. Oluwatoyin Opeyoye said she had seen no sign of investment in measures to improve emotional health and wellbeing of BME. Laura Sharpe said See Me Scotland took a very inclusive approach. Calum Irving said See Me Scotland had worked closely with Deaf Scotland to address multiple stigma, and a project focussing on LGBT issues was in hand. Specific work considering the needs of BAME young people was a possibility.

Liam Kerr said it was the nature of teenagers not to want to correspond with adults, and that this represented classic “teenage angst”. He asked whether See Me Scotland’s work addressed conditional and unconditional love. Laura said this was being addressed in primary schools but was not necessarily carrying forward into secondary schools. Frances Simpson sought Aymie’s advice on the best ways of engaging meaningfully with young people. Aymie said the consensus from her social media polling was that young people are influenced by lived experience. Podcasts featuring real people telling their stories really resonated with young people.

Gillian Eunson from the Big Lottery Fund Scotland said the BLF were keen to receive applications for funding for projects, particularly those with a focus on improving the physical and mental health of young people. Their Young Start programme offered funding to help children and young people across Scotland become more confident. Applications were warmly welcomed.

John Crichton thanked the speakers for their excellent presentations. He mentioned how much he had enjoyed a recent trip to Barra, in a location with no Wi-Fi or 4G connection which offered a rare and very enjoyable chance to unplug from the online world. He asked Aymie if her social media followers had expressed different views about the positive and negative effects of the various social networks. Aymie said generally Twitter was found to have the most positive effect regarding mental wellbeing, while Instagram had the most negative effects mainly because it was inherently visual and encouraged people to present a false, overly curated image of themselves.

Finally, Tom Whiteman said social media was in some respects positive for those with autism, as it allowed for a significant degree of communication with others without the need for face-to-face contact. But equally it could be counterproductive to encourage people to disengage from society and to remain confined to a bedroom and a laptop or smartphone.

6. Date and time of next meeting

James announced that, due to severe pressure of work, the Royal College of Psychiatrists was regrettably unable to continue as CPG Secretariat, with immediate effect. A new Secretariat would need to be appointed. James suggested CPG members who are interested should put themselves forward to David Ferguson, who agreed to collate a list and pass to the Convener's office. The Royal College would continue to play an active, strategic role in the work of the CPG.

The next meeting was scheduled for 5 February 2019 at 6pm in the James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4). James said it may, however, be sensible to consider this date as provisional subject to being able to find a new secretariat in time. The subsequent meeting was scheduled for 21 May 2019 at 6pm in the James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4).

James closed the meeting by thanking all present for their attendance and contributions, and offered special thanks to the presenters for their interesting and thought-provoking sessions.

Meeting closed at 7.30pm