

# **Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment**

## **Minutes of the Cross Party Group for Visual Impairment meeting held on Wednesday 8 October 2014 in Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament.**

### **Present:**

Stuart McMillan MSP

Neil Bibby MSP

Dennis Robertson MSP (item 1-6)

James Adams, RNIB Scotland

Pamela Chater

Caroline Macleod, Haggeye

Jamie Cuthbertson, Macular Society

Jane Donnelly, Insight Radio

Gary Evans, British and Irish Orthoptic Society

Dominic Everett, RNIB Scotland

Richard Godfrey-McKay, Fife Society for the Blind

Nigel Harvey, RNIB Scotland

Richard Hellewell, Royal Blind

Jane Horsburgh, Guide Dogs

Caitlin Howie, RNIB Scotland

Colin Howie, SCOVl

Sarah Hughes, Royal Blind

Bob Ironside, Perth and Kinross Society for the Blind

Mercy Jeyasingham, Vision 2020UK

John Legg, RNIB Scotland

Monica McGeever, Education Scotland

Ann Porter, Fife Society for the Blind

Mary Rasmussen

Ken Reid, RNIB Scotland

Ann Robertson, North East Sensory Services

Hal Rollason, Optometry Scotland

Alan Russell, Insight Radio

Janelle Scotland, ASTN

Brenda Smart, Sight Action

Kim Smith, SCOVl

Colin Spivey, Scottish Government

Mhairi Thurston, VISION2020UK

Counselling and Emotional Support

Jackie Thompson, Alcon

Emma Whitelock, Lead Scotland

Helen Wilkinson, RNIB Scotland

Sandra Wilson

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

Elaine Brackenridge, Royal Blind  
Sam Brown  
John Donaldson, Royal Blind  
Kay Eadie, Allergan  
Graham Findlay, North East Sensory  
Services  
Linda Gregson, Scottish Government  
Clair Henderson, RNIB Scotland  
Liam Kearney, Scottish Government  
Tom Lowe, SDEP

David McKerral  
Sally Paterson, SAVIE  
Wendy Rankin, Guide Dogs  
Susan Robinson  
Terry Robinson, Describe Online  
Angus Scott, Eyecare Scotland  
Danny Sweeney, North Ayrshire  
Council  
Kate Wallace, Visualise

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 28 May 2014 were approved.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

### **5. Educational attainment of VI children**

Monica McGeever, HM Inspector at Education Scotland, presented to the CPG on the educational attainment figures of VI children. There are 3,370 children with VI in Scotland's schools, 95% of which are educated in mainstream schools. The attainment gap between VI children and their sighted peers is narrowing, but still present. 83.1% of VI children moved to a "positive destination" and the number entering HE has increased from 8.7% in 2009/11 to 22.3% in 2011/12. These statistics, and many more, are available in "The Implementation of The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) Report to Parliament 2013" at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/04/3050/downloads#res448013>

Additional evidence is gathered through the inspection process and good practice can be identified in many mainstream schools, including early identification and continued assessment, individual plans with appropriate targets. Another strength is the role of teachers and support staff. Education Scotland are working with a range of professionals, for example those involved in complex needs, and are involved in sharing best practice. VINCYP are looking at a set of minimum standards.

There followed detailed discussion on a range of subjects. It was confirmed that Education Scotland look at the provision of emotional support as part of the inspection process as part of the "health and wellbeing" of all children. It was acknowledged habilitation provision is patchy and it is hoped the VINCYP

standards will lead to improvements in this area. Habilitation assessments should occur within 4 weeks, allowing flexibility for school holidays. It was noted the 4 weeks was a minimum standard and it was hoped to see better practice than this. The teaching of Braille should be encourage and VI CYP should be receiving support from a QTVI (Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired). Concerns were raised about ongoing provision of QTVI as some posts are being reduced to P/T or being filled on a temporary basis. The role of the QTVI should be reviewed in light of developments over the last decade. The Convenor thanked Monica for her presentation and invited her to give an update at a future meeting.

### **Action**

- Monica McGeever to be invited back in a year to give an update.

## **6. Transitions**

Kate Storrow, Employment and Learning Services Manager RNIB Scotland, was welcomed by the Convenor and invited to give her presentation. It was reported that the issues affecting transitions into employment remain unchanged: lack of accessibility; low aspirations; lack of individual's travel and mobility; attitude of employers etc. 96% of employers believe it would be impossible or very difficult to employ a blind or partially sighted person and 66% of blind and partially sighted people of working age are unemployed. Skills Development Scotland data shows that blind and partially sighted people are less likely to be in employment, be at university and be seeking employment. RNIB Scotland has recently been awarded lottery funding to provide transition support in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeenshire to support 140 people over 3 years.

There followed discussion on the new RNIB service. Access to volunteering can be an important step to employment but that there can be negative impacts on benefits. It was noted that educational attainment does not appear to be the issue rather preparing for employment and future life. A key barrier continues to be the attitude of employers and political intervention should be sought on this matter. The need to tackle the low aspiration of some blind and partially sighted people was also discussed and the importance of positive role models. It was agreed it would be helpful to focus on transitions at a future meeting including positive and negative case study input from young people and parents. The work of the Scottish Transitions Forum was highlighted as they have undertaken a lot of work in this area and developed a number of toolkits.

## **Action**

- Transitions to be considered at future meeting including update from Kate Storrow, input from SDS and other relevant speakers.

## **7. Doran Review update**

Colin Spivey, Scottish Government, updated the Group on delivery of the Doran Review, 2 years into the 5 year delivery period for the Review's recommendations. The Review made 21 recommendations and the Scottish Government published a response accepting the majority of these at the same time. A collaborative look is being taken at funding of national services including Enquire, CALL and SSC. Work streams have been established including: national strategic commissioning; local commissioning; support for national grant recipients; needs analysis; communications. A Doran Review newsletter is available on the Scottish Government website providing further information. There followed some discussion on commissioning processes.

## **8. Haggeye bus campaign update**

Caroline Macleod updated the Group on Haggeye's campaign which has tackled lack of accessibility for bus services, including inaccessible timetables and drivers passing those waiting to board the bus. Haggeye members were invited to travel by bus and report on their experiences and a very successful "swap with me" event was held with First Bus where drivers experienced what it is like to be a blind or partially sighted passenger. Experiences have improved in the last 2 years, but there is still a lot to be done. There followed discussion on the need for Visual Awareness training for drivers and the use of apps to access timetables. The Convenor offered to liaise with Haggeye with the aim of tabling a motion in support of their campaign.

## **Action**

- Convenor, James Adams and Haggeye to liaise on bus campaign.

## **9. Scottish Vision Strategy (SVS) update**

Ken Reid, Scottish Vision Ambassador, paid tribute to Alan Suttie, former CE of Fife Society for the Blind, who recently passed away. Alan played a hugely important role in the area of rehabilitation.

Ken then gave an update on recent activity including:

- SVS annual conference in March which looked at implementing the refreshed Scottish Vision Strategy. Work is ongoing to develop a monitoring process, led by Clair Henderson, RNIB Scotland.

- UK Vision Strategy has issued a guide along with the Royal College of GPs on “Sight Loss in older people”. Copies are available on the UK Vision strategy website or from Helen Wilkinson, RNIB Scotland.

## **10. AOCB**

10.1. Registration: it was agreed it would be helpful to look at registration of both adults and children and young people at a future meeting.

### **Actions**

- Registration to be reviewed as a major item at a future meeting.

## **11. Date of next meeting**

5-6pm, Thursday 4 December, joint meeting with CPG on Deafness. Followed by Christmas reception in the Garden Lobby.