

Cross Party Group on Carers

Committee Room 6

Meeting on 27th October 2011

Note of Meeting

In attendance:

MSPs:

Johann Lamont MSP
Bill Kidd MSP
Minister for Public Health, Michael Matheson MSP (Speaking)
Claudia Beamish MSP
Graeme Dey MSP
Dennis Robertson MSP
Alex Fergusson MSP
Fiona McLeod MSP
Margaret McDougall MSP
Humza Yousaf MSP
Neil Bibby MSP
Maureen Watt MSP

External Organisations/Individuals

Julie Gardner, VOCAL Midlothian (Speaker)
Kim Morrison, Carer, Edinburgh
Don Williamson, Shared Care Scotland
Simon Hodgson, Carers Scotland
Fiona Collie, Carers Scotland
Amy Anderson, Carers Scotland
Suzanne Munday, MECOPP
Michelle Lloyd, MECOPP
Wendy Laird, Carer
Ifshan Iqbal, Glasgow South East Carers Centre
Gurnam Kaur, Carer
Rosemary Kennedy – Carer
Kirsten Winch – East Renfrewshire Carers Centre
Linda Allan, Greater Pollok Carers' Centre
Annette Martin, Greater Pollok Carers' Centre
Lynn Williams, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers
Gill Westwood, CAB
Jim Crombie, Kinship Carer
Catriona Tucker – Glasgow West Carers Centre
Sarah Mavor – North West Carers Centre, Edinburgh
Jan Killeen, Alzheimer Scotland
Nick Waugh, SCVO
Kelley Temple, MSYP and NUS Scotland

Erin Townhill, SIAA
Elaine Garrick, Scottish Government
Julie Webster, Scottish Government
Craig Scott – shadowing Graeme Dey MSP
Ann McKenzie, One Parent Families, Scotland
Kathy Hunter, Enable Scotland
Ian Walker, Carers of East Lothian
Jacqui Pollok, HIV Carers and Carers Scotland
Brett Millett, parent carer
Catriona McGregor, Headway Scotland
Fiona Lovett, FSDC/parent carer
Ian Hood, Learning Disability Alliance Scotland
Lynn Williams, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers (Secretariat).

1. Welcome

Bill Kidd MSP Co –Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Carers welcomed everyone to the first main meeting of the group. He introduced Johann Lamont (co-convenor) and MSPs attending.

2. Main agenda

Minister for Public Health, Michael Matheson MSP

Bill welcomed the Minister for Public Health, Michael Matheson MSP to the meeting and thanked him for taking the time to attend.

The Minister thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak to the group and indicated that he would like the session to be informal with the opportunity for people to ask questions.

He highlighted that he was not unfamiliar with the issues impacting on carers' lives; in the past he had worked as an occupational therapist; he also mentioned his links with the Young Carers' project in his constituency. Since his appointment he has also visited Carers Centres e.g. Greater Pollok, and has spoken to members of the National Carer Organisations.

The Minister pointed out that in terms of carers being recognised and supported effectively, he realises that there is still much that can be done, but he outlined some of the initiatives/commitments being taken forward by the Scottish Government including:

- The Carers and Young Carers Strategies, now into their second year. Linked to this is the continuation of Carer Information Strategy funding.
- Work with the Royal College of General Practitioners to ensure GPs are fully aware of the needs of carers. Important role for GPs in identifying unpaid carers.
- Need for better support for short breaks for carers, recognising what difference these can make. 10,000 additional respite weeks target achieved. Investment in this area, which will include, this year, an additional £2 million for families with disabled children. The Minister recognised that this area had always been a challenge.
- Emergency planning for carers – the Minister highlighted the work that Enable Scotland were doing in this area, to ensure that adequate emergency planning in place for all carers and is considered as part of Community Care/Carers Assessment.

- On a visit to Greater Pollok Carers Centre, the Minister said that he had heard clearly from carers how important information, advice and training were for them, mentioned particularly by parents with children who have autistic spectrum disorders. Carer Information Strategy Funding is for this purpose and from this visit, the Minister said that he had seen the positive and substantial impact of this. How do we provide more of this?
- Young carers – the Minister has recognised some of the specific challenges that young carers can face, in particular the difficulties that young carers have in accessing medical information around the person they care for. So the Government will pilot a young carer identification card to help tackle such challenges.
- Young Carers’ Festival – the Minister said that he recognised the real value of the Festival particularly in letting young carers have the opportunity to be children and young people first. He is minded to look positively at the funding for this.
- Change Fund, set up to support the Reshaping Care Agenda, £70 million this year. The Minister confirmed that 20% will go to provision of services to support carers in their role – not up to 20 %, but 20%. Carers are critical as the country’s age profile changes – but this cannot mean an additional burden for carers.
- Self-Directed Support Bill, to ensure more choice and control for citizens, will start to go through parliamentary process in February 2012. Sits alongside the Self Directed Support Strategy.
- Government is exploring the Carers’ Kitemark for Employers, looking at how employers can recognise and support carers.
- Carers Parliament – day in Parliament in Summer 2012 where carers and Parliament can come together. The government will be working with Scotland’s National Carer Organisations to take this forward.

The Minister also said that he recognised the extreme concern around the Welfare Reform agenda. The Scottish Government is work with Westminster colleagues on this, given that decisions made will impact on the Government’s work to support carers.

The Minister then took a range of questions from those attending the meeting. These focussed on:

How we ensure that the 20% commitment to carers within the Change Fund actually effectively gets to carers and potential challenges that exist in achieving this given that many Change Fund partnerships have already forecast spend for the next three years.

Kelley Temple, MSYP, highlighted the campaign by the Scottish Youth Parliament around the lack of access to Carers’ Allowance for young carers in full time, further/higher education. Fiona Collie from Carers Scotland highlighted that Carers Scotland/Carers UK and other carers organisations such as The Princess Royal Trust for Carers have been campaigning long and hard to remove the ‘21 hour rule’ which prevents young carers receiving Carers’ Allowance when they study at college or university. Also that there was potentially an opportunity to influence this within the wider welfare reform agenda as the Westminster Government have not indicated yet what they will do with Carers’ Allowance.

Claudia Beamish MSP highlighted that she was contacting colleges in her region to ask what they are doing around recognition of and support for young carers.

Ian Hood from the Learning Disability Alliance Scotland asked the Minister about the issues some carers were facing in parts of Scotland in terms of personalisation and self-directed support and asked the Minister what the bill would do in relation to rights for unpaid carers.

Wendy Laird pointed out that self-directed support would not work for all service users, and the importance of choice for families.

Sarah Mavor from Edinburgh North West Carers' Project highlighted that they and other projects work hard to get into schools to raise awareness of young carers amongst teachers. She also highlighted the importance of the School Census in identifying young carers and the need for the commitment in the Young Carers Strategy to do this to be taken forward.

Kathy Hunter from Enable mentioned the report from a recent conference on Carers and Emergency Planning which had just been published – called "Picking up the Pieces".

The Minister responded to these questions and concerns.

In relation to Kelley's points, the Minister highlighted that whilst he could not comment on an issue which was reserved to Westminster, there was work going to ensure that young carers were identified and supported in education. In relation to Sarah's point, the Minister highlighted e.g. the Eryc and Trayc campaign. He also highlighted the importance of small, pragmatic changes in how educational institutions work with young carers which can make a huge difference.

He highlighted the importance of using the Young Carers' strategy as a way of driving change in working with young carers and in particular action points around young adult carers. If there are issues that need to be picked up in relation to young carers in tertiary education, he would be happy to look at this. He did acknowledge that more could be done within Higher Education.

In relation to Ian's and Wendy's comments on the Self Directed Support Bill, the Minister outlined that the Bill has a number of options for both service users and carers and that includes keeping current service configurations without going down the route of Self Directed Support. One option to note is that families can opt to have the local authority manage a personal budget, but they get to choose which services they want. The Minister acknowledged that some people will not want to go down the route of managing a budget and they should have that option. There is an opportunity to look at how the Bill is strengthened as it makes its way through Parliament.

From the perspective of unpaid carers, the bill will give the same options on managing support as service users. The bill has the potential to shift the power base around this agenda and should be empowering.

Julie Gardner, VOCAL Midlothian

The Change Fund in Midlothian

Johann Lamont introduced Julie Gardner from VOCAL in Midlothian who attended the Cross Party Group to talk about the Carers' Centre's local involvement in the Reshaping Care agenda and the Change Fund.

Julie delivered a presentation to the meeting which outlined the journey taken by the Centre, what they had been funded to do and how carers had been involved in local Reshaping Care/Change Fund processes.

Prior to the Change Fund, there was a strong infrastructure for carer involvement in policy and planning in Midlothian, and this was the starting point for discussions around Reshaping Care and the Change Fund. There is now a carer representative on the management group for the Change Fund.

The Centre has received funding through the Change Fund for hospital in-reach which will support unpaid carers through the hospital discharge planning process. The fund has also put in place a Carer Support Worker for older people to deal with increased capacity and provide extended support to older people who are carers; this will complement the hospital in reach work. The post will focus on information and training for these carers.

In Midlothian, a third sector innovation fund has been put in place which is generating some interesting ideas to help reshape care and support older people in the community.

In relation to the commitment that 20% of the Change Fund goes to support unpaid carers, Julie highlighted that what needed to be considered was whether this would directly benefit carers or be linked to services which would have an indirect benefit for them. In Midlothian, all strands of work within the Change Fund consider the issue of carer support. Discussions happening already around what this might look like for next year and beyond.

A copy of Julie's slides is available from Lynn Williams – williams@carers.org and Julie is happy to take queries around their work in this area.

Question and Answer session

Lynn Williams chaired the last part of the session which included specific questions for Julie and a discussion around the session delivered by the Minister. The group requested that this latter part of the discussion be relayed to the Minister to ask his views/seek a response.

Jan Killeen, Alzheimer Scotland asked Julie about selecting carers to be representatives on steering/strategy groups. Julie pointed out that this can involve a lot of work and that it can be difficult to get someone who can represent the views of a very diverse group. But there are good infrastructures in place in Midlothian with a history of carer representation on key groups.

Suzanne Munday from MECOPP asked if the government had considered the impact of the Equalities Act on carer support in Scotland and also of potential repeal of the Human Rights Convention for carers in Scotland. She asked that this question be directed to the Minister. Suzanne also asked if the Scottish Government was aware that the local experience in relation to implementation of the Change Fund, was that implementation actually sometimes discouraged joint working across sectors and could actually leave voluntary organisations in competition with each other.

Sarah Mavor from Edinburgh North West Carers Centre asked about plans to ensure that Young Carers are included in the School Census of all pupils. She said that the way the questions in the Census were worded meant that young carers may not be identified. Elaine Garrick from the Scottish Government added that work had been done over the last few months to address this and that next year's School Census would pick up young carers in the main questions.

Ian Walker, Carers of East Lothian asked whether it was possible for, for example, 10% of the Change Fund commitment to carers to be channelled through voluntary sector organisations in a similar way to the additional respite monies which are being managed by Shared Care Scotland for the National Carer Organisations. There are processes in place which could be used to manage

such a set up and this would ensure that the funding does directly benefit unpaid carers and their families.

Rosemary Kennedy from Glasgow South East talked about the work of Carers Centres and how they can be the 'backbone' of carers' lives in helping them in their caring roles. She pointed out that Local Authorities have cut or are seeking to core budgets for such local organisations and asked how the Government might address this.

Kelley Temple MSYP asked if the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Michael Russell MSP would consider looking at the education budget and identifying ways in which better support for young carers could be put in place e.g. grant for carers in tertiary education.

Fiona Collie from Carers Scotland highlighted that Carers' Rights day was taking place on Friday 2nd December and encouraged MSPs/those attending to watch out for details of local events and updates on websites and Facebook.

3. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Cross Party Group on Carers is scheduled to take now place on February, 23rd 2012. Items proposed for the agenda include:

Kinship carers – possible input from The Poverty Truth Commission and CAB
Input from MECOPP on their work with carers in the travelling community.

Please let Lynn Williams know of any other potential agenda items.

27 October 2011
(updated Dec 2011)