

**Minutes of the meeting of the Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament
on Disability
Held on 7 September 2011**

Present:

George Adam MSP
Robert Allan, D & G Voice
Susan Archibald, Archibald Foundation
John Ballantine, SATA
Gary Clark STUC DW Committee (CWU)
Gary Dow, PCS Disability Network
Keith Dryburgh, CAS
Annabelle Ewing MSP
Barbra Farmer, STUC DW Committee (PCS)
Stanley Flett, SATA
Yvonne Grant, Brittle Bone Society
Susan Grasekamp, SDEF
Nicki James, fSDC
Faye Keogh, Turning Point Scotland
Robert MacBean, National Autistic Society Scotland
Hannah McCulloch, Capability
Catriona MacGregor, Headway UK
Michael McMahon MSP
Siobhan McMahon MSP
Eilidh MacPherson, Action Duchenne
Jill Murdoch, Brittle Bone Society
David Nicholson, National Autistic Society Scotland
Pauline Nolan, Inclusion Scotland
Alan Rees, SATA
Kate Sanford, Quarriers
Bill Scott, Inclusion Scotland
Rachel Stewart, SAMH
John Sutherland, Leonard Cheshire Disability
Erin Townhill, SIAA
Ann Wardlaw, STUC DW Committee (Unison)

1. Welcome and introductions

Michael welcomed all members to the meeting and confirmed that the Group was now formally registered.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3. Welfare Reform or Plain Old Fashioned Cuts?

Bill Scott, Inclusion Scotland, gave a presentation on the extent of the impact of proposed and adopted welfare reforms on disabled people in Scotland (copy attached). This was followed by a discussion, during which the following issues were raised:

- Some of these measures are already in place, some have still to be introduced. The Welfare Reform Bill will be debated in the Lords again at the end of this year.
- LibDem Youth have lodged a motion at their Scottish conference opposing ESA. There could also be a motion at SNP conference.
- A significant number of decisions are being reversed on appeal. However, legal aid is no longer available, which prevents many test cases being brought. 70% of those with representatives are successful at appeal.
- There is now a huge backlog of appeals waiting to be heard and a significant overload on advice services, particularly as the number of welfare rights officers has been reduced.
- There is potentially a significant loss of income to the Scottish economy, eg £16m from ILF.
- Legislators need to apply Equality Impact Assessments. Cumulative changes to benefits may have a disproportionate impact on women.
- People with learning disabilities and mental health issues currently on the Lower Rate Care component of DLA are unlikely to qualify for PIP at all.
- Scottish Coalition on Welfare Reform has written to committees requesting consideration of the Legislative Consent Motion and also that an ad hoc committee on welfare reform be established. Other Scottish Parliament Committees can be asked to consider the Legislative Consent Motion. Discussions have taken place at the Equal Opportunities Committee.
- Over 300 passported benefits will be affected by changes to benefits.
- Disability Alliance and Disability Benefits Consortium have lodged an intention to take some cases to Judicial Review.
- Worklessness due to ill-health and disability is higher in Scotland than elsewhere and therefore welfare reform will impact on more people. Advisors from disability organisations working on the new Work Choice programme reported that their recommendations had been ignored.
- There are fewer people on Access to Work.
- Disabled people are often unfairly selected for redundancy or ill-health retirement.
- The removal of mobility component from people in residential care may result in local authorities or Scottish Government having to make alternative arrangements to ensure people are not trapped at home.
- The Citizens Advice Bureau report 200,000 benefits issues in 2010. ESA is now the biggest issue with more enquiries than credit card debt. However, CAB relies on volunteers to do this work.

Forthcoming protests:

1 October 2011, Glasgow, <http://www.thereisabetterway.org/october-1st-people-first>

2 October 2011, Conservative party conference - Manchester, http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/events/index.cfm/id/54458CB3-E026-4A02-BF964E21F17CC4E0

22 October 2011, Edinburgh, www.hardesthit.org.uk

Various events <http://www.campaignforafairsociety.org/>

The group agreed that these cuts, which are on a previously unimaginable scale, constitute an attack on disabled people, who are often portrayed in the media as less than full members of society.

It was agreed that we will arrange a one-off briefing for Westminster politicians of all parties.

Action Michael McMahon/Kate Sanford

4. Any other business

The EHRC is due to publish its report on Disability Related Harassment on Monday 12 September 2011 - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/inquiries-and-assessments/inquiry-into-disability-related-harassment/>

The next meeting will take place on **Wednesday 7 December 2011 at 1pm**. This will be a joint meeting with the CPG Human Rights & Civil Liberties and will feature the launch of a new toolkit for disabled people.

Further meetings are scheduled for:

Wednesday 7th March 2012, 5.30pm until 7.30pm, Committee Room 4

Wednesday 6th June 2012, 1.00pm until 2.00pm, Committee Room 2