

**CROSS-PARTY GROUP ON ARTHRITIS AND
MUSCULOSKELETAL CONDITIONS - MINUTES OF MEETING
ON WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE 2015**

1. Margaret McDougall, in the chair in Margaret McCulloch's absence, welcomed all present to the meeting and thanked Arthritis Care Joint Working Project for sponsoring refreshments.

Meeting on 4 March 2015: Minutes and Matters Arising

2. The minutes of the meeting on 4 March 2015 were approved; NHS Lothian was currently reviewing its hydrotherapy services and for the present NASS members continued to have access to the pools. The CPG would be kept in touch with this matter.

Outline Forward Programme

3. Members welcomed the Forward Programme, already issued.

'Arthur's Place': First Online Magazine and Social Network Specifically for Young People with Arthritis

4. Andrea McBride gave an inspiring account of this innovative resource designed (by her) to meet the needs of young people with arthritis by encouraging them to take the lead in managing their condition in their own way rather than feeling alienated by the health system. Digital delivery allowed for an accessible and high-quality service offered much more economically than via conventional means. Multi-award-winner, acclaimed by professionals and users, Arthur's Place had become a runaway success. Sustainability for the future was the issue; Arthur's Place was almost 'running on empty'.

5. Members expressed enthusiasm for the initiative and wished it well. The following points were made in discussion –

- Of its nature Arthur's Place was accessible to young people with arthritis all across the country and could be signposted by rheumatology teams anywhere. The idea was to have it as the 'mother ship' with a network of microsites relating to local situations.
- Avoiding duplication of content would be a priority

- Collaboration with other agencies providing advice and information would be very important
- Further initiatives on the same model but directed more to an older target group would be most welcome. Arthur's Place itself, of course, was potentially a resource for the whole RA community.
- The Group would like to be kept up to date with progress.

Rheumatoid and Inflammatory Arthritis and Employment: Helping People Retain/Return to Work

Occupational Therapy and Work

6. Katie McAlarey made an excellent presentation on the well-researched benefits of work, both for the individual and society, the evidence which lies behind work disability and the means by which Occupational Therapy (OT) offers help and support. A recent Scottish Society of Rheumatology audit had emphasised the importance of screening patients, asking the 'work' question, using tools like the RA Work Instability Survey and systematically referring to specialist OT services. Maximising the benefit of links with the third sector was essential. Varying staffing levels and the lack of a recommended minimum number of Allied Health Professionals per consultant were a problem.

Arthritis Care Joint Working Project

7. Maureen McAllister helpfully outlined the scale of the impact of RA and IA on working life, the barriers people encounter in remaining in work and factors which might make a positive difference. She described the Joint Working Project and the wide range of strategies it might make available to people who wished to sustain and secure working life.

8. In a wide-ranging discussion on arthritis and work the following points were made –

- The work issue was enormously important
- Referral to OT was relatively quick – 4-5 weeks
- Referral to Joint Working might take as little as a few days
- An identified problem was the lack of funds available to allow people in physically demanding work to retrain within their

own industry in preparation for the expected time when their condition would make such a change necessary. Funds could be accessed only once the job had been lost.

- Joint Working was delivered at present in Greater Glasgow and Aberdeen. Resources would not allow expansion; perhaps Skype and other digital methods could be used to widen scope and availability without increasing costs? The use of volunteer advisers would not be appropriate.
- Pooling and rationalising provision across the third sector would be valuable, although difficult, given that existing structures, priorities and ways of operating had been in place for some time. At the least, we should be constantly mindful of the need for good, open communication and collaboration wherever possible.
- Scottish Network for Arthritis in Children was currently involved in a good example of just such co-operation, in creating an education project for schools.
- The long-term sustainability of new projects like Arthur's Place was worryingly fragile; possible avenues of action were discussed.
- Working 'from the base' to empower the young and establish life-long promotion of good health and self management practices was a real priority.

9. Margaret McDougall closed the meeting with warm thanks to all concerned. The next meeting would be on Wednesday, 30th September at 5.30pm.

CPG Secretariat
June 2015

CPG on Arthritis Meeting – 3rd June 2015

Attendees

Margaret McDougall MSP
Jim Hume MSP
Sheila MacLeod
John Paton
Iain MacDonald
Murray Brown
Angela Donaldson Bruce
Steve McBride
Sharon Douglas
Liz Murphy
Ewan McRorie
C. Jenkins
Katie McAlarey
Maureen McAllister
Greg Stevenson

Apologies

Jim Walker
Joan Kerr
Lorna Forrester
Alan MacDonald
Stuart Ralston
Ann Murray
Hoda El-mahrouki
Irene Logan
Joanne Shedden
Janet McComiskey
Stefan Siebert
Margaret-Mary Gordon
Coreen Kelday
Catherine Less
Zoe Horwich
Jackie Baillie MSP
Margaret McCulloch MSP
Nanette Milne MSP