

CPG on Carers 20th May 2014 - Note of meeting

MSPs and their representatives: Claudia Beamish, Joan McAlpine, Graeme Dey, George Adam, Margaret McDougall, Eva Kestner (Office of Rhoda Grant), Hannah Tavling (Office of Joan McAlpine)

Individuals and organisations: John McFarlane, Renfrewshire Carers Centre; Pauline Kelly, Renfrewshire Carers Centre, Lindsay Webster, Renfrewshire Carers Centre; Samantha Webster, Renfrewshire Carers Centre; David McElhinney, Renfrewshire Carers Centre; Lynne Stevenson; Margaret Ralph, Glasgow South West Carers Centre; Wilma Forsyth, Glasgow South West Carers Centre; Rebecca Marek, Scottish Youth Parliament; Lauren King, Scottish Youth Parliament; Sarah Kidd, PKAVS Young Adult Carers

Claudia Beamish thanked everyone for coming and invited the group to introduce themselves. The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted, proposed by John McFarlane and seconded by Rebecca Marek. It was noted that the electronic vote on potential subscription charges for the CPG had not yet been administered because of difficulties in contacting some listed member organisations. Claudia asked that the vote take place as soon as possible despite these difficulties. This will be actioned before the group meets again. Correspondence received from Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, in support of the Scottish Youth Parliament's *Care. Fair. Share* campaign was acknowledged.

Lauren King gave a short presentation on the Scottish Youth Parliament's campaign, highlighting that the campaign had already succeeded in strengthening the guidance on education maintenance allowance (EMA) and was moving towards the second and third phases of the campaign that would look at additional bursaries for young carers and also at concessionary travel. Claudia and Joan reiterated their support for the campaign, referencing the number of MSPs who attended the launch event in January 2014.

Graeme Dey thanked the SYP for their presentation and stated that the problems with young carers receiving EMA seemed to begin with not being able to identify young carers in the first place. He asked if the campaign asks had been costed and if a compensatory saving had been identified, as the Scottish Government would have to meet the costs of supporting young carers and young adult carers. Rebecca Marek explained that due to difficulties in identifying young carers it was difficult to get accurate figures, but modelling had taken place based on known numbers of young carers from the Carer's Strategy and other sources, and it was approximated that EMA would cost around £300,000. Additional bursaries, modelled on the lone parents grant and dependants' grant, could cost between £3m and £5m, but Rebecca and Lauren stressed that the benefits outweighed the costs, as this needs to be viewed as meeting young people's educational aspirations and contributing to alleviation of poverty, so the long-term benefits need to be recognised. Graeme reiterated that he was supportive of the campaign but £3-5m is a lot of money and it is not clear where the money can be found. Rebecca said that funds could be distributed differently, such as opening up travel concessions designated for full time volunteers to young carers.

Claudia agreed that this was important to think about and that the campaign would be stronger if potential funding options were explored. As the Scottish Government recognises the value of preventative spending for carers, this could be an available funding stream as well. Graeme Dey agreed, and Joan McAlpine asked if the Scottish Government had indicated anything about potential

funding during meetings with the campaigners. Rebecca said that phase 1 of the campaign had primarily been about raising awareness, so this issue hadn't come up, but she was hopeful that future meetings would discuss this. Lauren said that Angela Constance, the Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment, had been supportive of the advised changes to EMA guidance. Claudia suggested that the CPG could write to Scottish Ministers in support of the campaign.

Margaret McDougall asked if there was consistency in identifying young carers in schools, and if not, should this be another aim of the campaign? Rebecca said that at the beginning of the campaign, a Freedom of Information request was carried out in all local authority areas seeking information about this, and the data received was inconsistent. Lauren agreed that identifying young carers did vary from area to area, and this caused problems which were exacerbated by young carers being unwilling or unable to identify themselves as carers. It was recognised that areas where third sector or independent organisations ran young carer projects could be better than areas where the young carer project was run by the local authority, and that the catalyst for this campaign was from an enquiry from the North Lanarkshire Young Carers Service (a third sector organisation) about EMA for young carers. However, many young carers will still have been missed as there is no way to ensure all young carers are visible and engaged. It is hoped that this campaign will help with increasing identification. Rebecca added that the grassroots nature of the campaign was being kept to by asking MSYPs to write to or meet with local councillors and asking them to table motions in support of the campaign.

John McFarlane highlighted the benefits of the Record of Needs system for children with specific or additional needs – this meant that the local authority had a legal obligation to meet the identified needs of the child – and wondered if such a system would help to support young carers in schools. He also referred to a conference he had attended in Glasgow about young adult carers and further education, and expressed surprise that young adult carers in further education are not entitled to receive Carer's Allowance. Lauren said that the Carer's Allowance discrepancy is another reason why young carers and young adult carers need greater financial support and access to bursaries and EMA. However, it is difficult for some young carers who do not want to be labelled as carers or identified through a Child's Plan. Pauline Kelly mentioned that Reid Kerr College in Renfrewshire (now part of West College Scotland) asks about caring responsibilities at enrolment stage and has a dedicated support worker based in the college to help identify and support carers. This was recognised as a benefit for young adult carers and highlighted the need for specific community-based support to be in place earlier – schools should be doing this.

Lindsay, a young adult carer who looks after her mum, said that she had struggled to get EMA when she was in 5th and 6th year at school, as she was not able to meet the minimum required hours and number of subjects due to her caring role. Her carer support worker spoke to the school but she still lost her EMA & was told by teachers that she was being lazy. She did attend college but was not able to complete an HND due to her caring role, but is now on a placement with Community Jobs Scotland.

David, another young carer who looks after his mum, said that some education courses are a better fit with a caring role than others, and some staff members are more understanding than others. His

current course does not require completion of coursework but he expects that a different course will require more home-based learning which may be more difficult to sustain alongside a caring role.

Samantha cares for her mother and for a sibling. She has recently left school but her EMA payments were affected by her caring role and although her mum was able to fight for her to get access to EMA, it was still delayed and the family were under a lot of pressure.

Joan McAlpine said that if local authorities were being inconsistent when it comes to identifying and supporting young carers, could there a role for the CPG in looking at policies and guidance to try and make improvements. Lauren said that it was difficult to do this for the revised EMA guidance as there are not strict rules, but it would be good if attention was drawn to the updated guidance. It was also mentioned that as not all young carer projects were run by local authorities, different projects had different relationships with schools in their area, but it would still be useful for the CPG to draw attention to the achievements of the campaign and the change to EMA guidance. It was agreed that the CPG would work with the SYP to send a letter to local authority education departments. Claudia said that over the summer, it may be possible for MSPs to raise awareness in their own constituencies and work with local authority politicians to draw attention to the campaign.

Joan returned to the topic of identification of young carers, noting that there were provisions in the proposed carers' legislation to support the identification of carers and asking the group for their thoughts. Lauren and Rebecca said that the SYP consultation event on the carers' legislation gathered a lot of evidence about this, showing that identification of young carers needed to be done by multiple outlets such as schools, colleges, GPs, youth projects, and all services that worked with young people needed to be more proactive in identifying young carers. Margaret Ralph added that in her experience, very few young carers would self-identify as a carer but would recognise that they looked after someone if asked; schools should ask 'Do you look after someone at home?' rather than 'Are you a young carer?' as this would reach a wider group of young people. The significance of the caring role was also discussed at this point – Lauren said that it wasn't the amount of care that someone provides but the impact it has on them and their life that was important.

Graeme Dey spoke about the film produced by Angus Young Carers and recommended that the group should watch it. Lorna Goodwin thanked the SYP for their presentation and hoped that it would reach many more young carers when the SYP attended the Scottish Young Carers Festival in July, and reminded MSPs that they had been invited to attend the festival on 31 July to meet young carers.

Lauren King thanked the conveners for offering to support the campaign and it was agreed that further discussions would take place at a later stage of the campaign. The group was also informed that there would be a photographic exhibition about young carers in the Scottish Parliament in August (details will be circulated to group members nearer the time).

Topics and dates for the next meeting of the CPG were discussed. Due to restrictions caused by the referendum, the group will meet next in late September or early October and dates will be circulated as soon as possible. Topics for discussion were invited. Graeme Dey suggested that the group looked at issues with conflict of interest between older parent carers and their adult children, and future planning for older carers in general.