

Cross Party Group on Carers

Thursday 6 October, Committee Room 6, 12:45pm

MSPs and their representatives: Claudia Beamish, Graeme Dey, Monica Lennon, Claire Haughey, Jeane Freeman, Claire Adamson

Individuals and organisations: Ailsa Tweedie; Alexis Hay, Standard Life; Alison Leighton, Scottish Government; Amanda McDonald; Angela Lombardi; Arvind Salwan, Care Inspectorate; Ashleigh de Vertueil, Leonard Cheshire Disability; Carolynne Hunter; Cath Logan, Big Lottery Fund; Cath Purdie, PASDA; Christine Farquhar, Upward Mobility Project; Christopher Doyle, Health and Social Care ALLIANCE; Clare Crossan, Central Carers; Dawn Abell, Scottish Government; Elaine McLean, Care Inspectorate; Fiona Fisher; Harry Robertson, North Lanarkshire Carers Together/Enable; Ian Kirkman, Central Carers; Jade Lochhead, Janet Marsh, MECOPP; Karen McGuire, Skills Development Scotland; Kelly Munro, Enable; Layla Theiner, DAS; Lorne Berkeley, SCLD; Lorraine Allan; Lynn Williams; Michelle Morrison, PAMIS; Mitchell Young, Marie Curie; Paul Edie, Care Inspectorate; Roseanna Macdonald, Scottish Youth Parliament; Paul O’Kane, Enable; Salena Begley, Family Fund; Gill Westwood, CAS Kinship Care project; Tom Wightman, PASDA; Claire Cairns, Coalition of Carers in Scotland; Angela McLeod, Stroke Association; Dinah Aitken, Mindroom; Susan Lowe, Marie Curie.

Apologies: Michael Grieve, Johann Lamont MSP; Adam Tomkins MSP

1. Introductions

Claudia Beamish welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Jeane Freeman MSP, Minister for Social Security. It was acknowledged that the meeting attendees, particularly carers, represented a great deal of expertise in social security and it would be interesting to hear their stories. The Minister referenced the ongoing consultation on Scottish social security and reiterated the Scottish Government’s commitment to increasing the amount of Carers Allowance.

2. Experiences of social security in Scotland

Lynn Williams, from Renfrewshire, spoke about caring for her husband who has a physical disability. When they were assessed for Personal Independence Payment, there was an initial reluctance to carry out a home visit, and when one was finally granted, the assessor did not understand the complications of the disability and the issues it caused.

Fiona Fisher, from Fife, spoke about caring for her son, who has received Disability Living Allowance since he was a baby. Her son has been repeatedly requested by the DWP to seek work, even though the nature and extent of his condition means this will never be possible. Caring roles of this nature should be seen as equivalent to paid employment, and Fiona welcomes the increase to Carers Allowance.

Jade Lochhead, from Renfrewshire, spoke about caring for her father and managing this alongside school and college. It can be difficult for young carers to receive the

Education Maintenance Allowance that they are entitled to because they can often miss school because of their caring role. Jade also spoke about the stigma associated with caring for someone with mental health issues.

Angela Lombardi, from Glasgow, spoke about caring for her parents throughout their move into residential care and the difficulties caused by Carers Allowance coming to an end (there is an 8 week run on when caring ends) but not being able to seek work due to the necessary administration and continued substantial caring requirements in her situation.

Carolynne Hunter, from Clackmannanshire, had to give up work to care for her daughter who has serious complex disabilities. Nursing care is expensive and not being able to work has affected her own health and wellbeing as well as causing loss of skills.

Ailsa Tweedie, from North Lanarkshire, spoke about the lack of support for young adult carers and how it could be difficult to manage the transition from being a young carer to being a young adult carer.

Kelly Munro stated that the forthcoming Social Security legislation had potential to make things fairer, building on needs-based changes such as the rule for children in hospital continuing to receive DLA, and urged the Scottish Government to consider this rule for adults in hospital.

Lorraine Allen spoke about the difficulties of having a life outside of caring on a limited income, and having to give up studying because of financial issues.

Salena Begley mentioned the cost of specialist items for certain disabilities and conditions, noting that the Family Fund received lots of applications for funding for equipment. Upfront funding of specialist items, which could potentially be paid back in instalments, would be a better approach for many families.

3. Response from Jeane Freeman, Minister for Social Security

The Minister thanked everyone for their contributions and reiterated that the Scottish Government was committed to listening to people's inputs, and that even after the close of the consultation this would continue to be a collaborative exercise. The complexity of devolving some benefits and not others is why it will take quite a long time to put things into place.

There is a commitment to support throughout transition points and there being no 'cliff-edge' of support. The principles of fairness and dignity should be clear in all interactions with the new social security system.

The Minister confirmed that the new social security system would work on the premise of need, and that barriers to accessing social security should be removed. Specifically regarding the Personal Independence Payment, there is a need to make the process easier by sharing information, providing long-term and lifetime awards where the condition indicates this to be necessary,

For carers, there is a need to look beyond Carers Allowance and make sure that packages of support for carers are available. It is important for carers to feed in to the consultation process to ensure the range of need is understood.

Claudia Beamish and Graeme Dey thanked the Minister for attending and listening to the carers who contributed.

4. AOCB

Topics for the next meeting were discussed.

The next meeting of the CPG on Carers will take place on **Wednesday February 22 at 1:00pm.**