

Session 5 Inaugural Meeting of the Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on Disability

Tuesday 20th September 2016, 10am-12pm, Scottish Parliament – Chamber Conference Room P1.02

Minutes

MSPs and their representatives: Jeremy Balfour MSP, Anas Sarwar MSP, George Adam MSP, Alexander Stewart MSP, Katie Mackie – Office of Jeremy Balfour MSP

Individuals and organisations:

Margaret Ellis – (Phonability / EKTG),
Campbell Chalmers, James Adams, Cate Vallis – RNIB Scotland
Delia Henry, Alan Dalziel – Action on Hearing Loss Scotland
Maureen McAllister, Hazel Muir – Arthritis Care Scotland
Robert McBean – Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)
Rebecca Scarlett – Lead Scotland
John Miller - Action Duchenne
Bill Scott - Inclusion Scotland
Stanley Flett - Aberdeen Action on Disability / Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA)
Mike Harrison – Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA)
John Wallace – NLRP12 Advocacy Group
Caitlin Isbister – Quarriers
Peter Carruthers – South Edinburgh Amenities Group, Community Transport
Angela MacLeod – Stroke Association
Layla Theiner, Jo Waddell - Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS)

1. Welcome and introductions

Jeremy Balfour MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP, John Mason MSP, Colin Smyth MSP, Pauline McNeill MSP, and Jackie Baillie MSP sent their apologies.

3. Establishment of new Cross Party Group and Election of Office Bearers (Convener, Vice-Convener and Secretary and Treasurer)

Jeremy Balfour was nominated as Convenor by George Adam and seconded by Alexander Stewart. Stuart McMillan was nominated as Vice Convener by Jeremy Balfour and James Adam from RNIB Scotland seconded. Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS) were nominated as secretary by Inclusion Scotland and seconded by Alan Dalziel from Action on Hearing Loss Scotland. Mike Harrison volunteered to take on the role of treasurer and this was supported by Jeremy Balfour, DAS and others.

Following some discussion, it was agreed that all members non-MSP should agree would pay an annual fee of twenty pounds to finance the provision of refreshments at the group meetings. There would be flexibility if individuals were unable to pay this amount but there would also be updates at future meetings on the income and expenditure of the CPG (which would mainly be refreshments), for transparency.

The newly elected Convenor thanked DAS for agreeing to take on the role of secretary and for organising the inaugural meeting.

With the formal proceedings completed, Jeremy Balfour will re-register the group by submitting an application form to the Standards clerks. He proposed that the group be as inclusive as possible increasing its effectiveness through a wide and diverse membership.

It was agreed that the group will meet quarterly and following a brief discussion settled on Tuesdays at 11am as being the most suitable time to accommodate travel and other parliamentary commitments. DAS will aim to put meetings as much as possible at this time, although it may depend on speakers' diaries too, and also arrange the next meeting in December.

4. Priorities for this term were then discussed with members invited to submit suggestions.

There was a discussion about key themes for future meetings of the group.

Employability

It was noted that this is important with new powers coming to Scotland for employment programmes, for instance, and the disability employment gap.

Social Security

With the new devolved powers and consultation period ongoing this will also be an important issue for the group. The consultation closes at the end of October.

There was a discussion about approaching the Minister for Employment, Jamie Hepburn, and/or the Minister for Social Security, Jeane Freeman to a future meeting. There was a lot of support for this. James Adams from RNIB Scotland suggested working with other CPGs on related topics to approach both Ministers to a joint meeting, given that they are likely to be approached by quite a few CPGs and this would demonstrate a joined up approach and also be an opportunity for the CPG on Disability to take a lead and work with other CPGs.

Named Person

Noted that consultation on this mainly involved children's charities and few disability organisations were involved but there was some interest.

Implications of the EU Referendum

The UK's expected withdrawal from the European Union will have huge implications on many aspects of disabled peoples lives. Specific examples include research and development funding, access to European funding support.

Implementation of Standards

Identifying where standards exist and ensuring these are implemented e.g. physical access, inclusive communications.

Education

Focus on the Scottish Government's 'Opportunities for All' commitment which is not working for many disabled people. Issues also occur where support is confused e.g. further education between social work and college budgets.

Transport

It was noted that the imminent launch of the Accessible Transport Framework provides the group with an opportunity to monitor and evaluate the action plan which will follow. It was agreed that transport would be a good topic for a future meeting and a senior representative from Transport Scotland would probably be keen to come and outline the Accessible Transport Framework and give an update on implementation.

Two attendees mentioned concerns about the Blue Badge scheme.

Paralympics and sport

With the recent Paralympics, Jeremy Balfour MSP suggested that the group could discuss the impact this might have on disabled peoples' uptake of sport or physical activity. It was suggested the sports minister could attend and there be a discussion about long term impact of the paralympics.

Self Directed Support

How people are supported to look after their mental and physical health and their right to advocacy. This might also include a discussion on Self Directed Support.

Primary Care

The group could review the new GP contract once available and discuss the impact on disabled people. It was noted that the contracts will be discussed in the Chamber the following week. Included in this topic are the issues of rural access to services, the expansion of GP practices to include wider services, access to personal medical records (especially on line access which raises security concerns, procurement costs and challenges). Bill Scott from Inclusion Scotland said that the CPG on Health is likely to also be discussing these issues, and this might be something the CPG on Disability leaves to them at least for the time being.

Health and Social Care Integration

The impact that integration has on disabled people and the opportunity to ensure representation on the Integrated Boards. It will be important to identify core principles that must be considered

in the design and delivery of services for disabled people within the new framework.

Access to Drugs for Rare Diseases

300,000 people are affected by rare diseases in Scotland, many have difficulty accessing suitable drugs for their condition. The process for licensing new drugs is currently being reviewed and there are some concerns that the present system does not deliver the best outcomes for patients. Financial considerations were highlighted as was the impact of Brexit on future research programmes.

Programme of Meetings

The group succeeded in producing a comprehensive list of topics for the term. The first meetings will look to focus on social security and employability with others to follow as agreed by members at a future meeting.

Action: It was noted that the group should monitor the activities of relevant committees and other cross party groups in order not to duplicate work or when advantageous to co-ordinate meetings. The group agreed that there will be opportunities to invite the relevant Ministers to attend meetings on portfolio items, there is potential for cross party groups to combine on some of these items and work together.

Action: DAS to arrange future meetings on the topics of most interest to the group.

5. Updates from members/attendees

Inclusion Scotland updated the group on their role as report writer for the review of the UK's implementation of the UNCRPD. Feedback is being gathered with ongoing focus groups. The Inclusion Scotland AGM and conference takes place on Friday the 30th September.

It was suggested that in December, there be activity in the Parliament to highlight the Day of Disability.

DAS said it would be publishing a report on 22nd November, following findings from focus groups on issues affecting disabled people.

Delia Henry thanked the members of the Cross Party Group for supporting DAS as it takes up the group secretariat.

South Edinburgh Amenities Group reported that Edinburgh services are currently being reviewed and that progress will be reported to members.

6. Any other business

Layla Theiner said cards were available for people to sign to thank the previous convenor, Michael McMahon, and secretary, Quarriers, of the CPG. It was noted that the Group was very grateful for their support and hard work.

Maggie Ellis was keen the group share information on events etc.
Action: DAS will look at and provide a simple tool, such as a shared file / Google doc online that people could add to, but DAS would not have capacity to keep it updated – members would need to do this.

Action: After a short discussion it was agreed that members be asked if they wish for their email addresses to be shared within the group. It was noted that some members with personal addresses may prefer not to do so.

Jeremy Balfour proposed he would be holding a meeting in January to encourage wider participation of disabled people (which not be under the auspices of the cross party group), to encourage disabled people to engage with the Parliament.

7. Close and a chance to meet informally

Jeremy Balfour closed the meeting noting that the group had arrived at a positive and structured plan for the immediate future with a range of topics already tabled for the term.