

Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment

Minute of the Cross Party Group for Visual Impairment meeting held on Thursday 13 December 2012 in Committee Room 4, Scottish Parliament.

Present:

Stuart McMillan MSP (Chair)
Neil Bibby MSP
Helen Eadie MSP
Iain Fraser, SM's Office Mgr.
Dennis Robertson MSP
Dr Myzoon Ali, GCU
Jill Beaton, Fife Society
Catriona Burness, RNIB Scotland
Marion Butchart, Novartis
Julia Cliszcz, supporting GC
Graeme Colgan, Haggeye
Mo Colvin, RNIB Scotland
Stephen Davidson, Haggeye
David Feeney, VI Scotland
Niall Foley, Guide Dogs
Cindy Godfrey-McKay
Richard Godfrey-McKay, Fife
Society
Mairi Graham, SAVIE
Sheena Guz, ADA (Scotland)
Nigel Harvey, RNIB Scotland
Richard Hellewell, Royal Blind
Jane Horsburgh, Guide Dogs
Caitlin Howie, RNIB Scotland
(minutes)

Colin Howie, SCOVl
Katherine Huntly, UK Vision
Strategy
John Legg, RNIB Scotland
Tom Lowe, SDEP
Rachel Mapson, BSL Interpreter
Aaron McHale, Haggeye
Ben McKendrick, Stroke XPG
Frankie McLean, RNIB Scotland
Jen Murray, Haggeye
Dr Nadia Northway, GCU
Ken Reid, UK Vision Ambassador
Ann Robertson, NESS
Hal Rollason, Optometry Scotland
Fiona Sandford, Visibility
Angus Scott, Eyecare Scotland,
Janis Sugden, SSC
Gill Sutherland, Perth and Kinross
Society For The Blind
Ken Swa
Mhairi Thurston, University of
Abertay
Allen Thurston
William Wykes

+1. Welcome and Introductions

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

+2. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

James Adams, RNIB Scotland
Annie Bell, Site
Elaine Brackenridge, Royal Blind
Julie Fardell, Royal Blind
Laura Gibson, Lothian and Borders
Police
John Gill, Sight Action
Sandra Gollan, Dundee Society
Bob Ironside, Perth Society
John Keenan, Visualise
Sheila Mackenzie

Rachel McKay, BIOS
David McKerral
Anne McLean
Pat Onions
Sally Paterson, SAVIE
Mary Rasmussen
Susan Robinson
Alex Scott
Danny Sweeney, North Ayrshire
Council
Alan Suttie, Fife Society

+3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 19 September 2012

The minutes of the last meeting held on 19 September were approved.

+4. Matters Arising

The following matters were discussed:

4.1. Scottish Government Passported Benefits

A letter has been written to Ian Duncan Smith regarding the proposed changes to passported benefits.

4.2. Assistive Technology in Schools

A letter has been written to the President of COSLA regarding the availability of assistive technology for blind and partially sighted pupils.

+5. Stroke and Sight Loss: what are the problems?

Christine Hazelton thanked the group for the invitation to speak about the link between stroke and sight loss. CH has trained as an optician and as a researcher for the Stroke Association. Stroke can impact on visual impairment, however this is not to do with problems with the eye, but with the connection to the brain. CH gave examples of how someone might feel after a stroke: “reduced independence”, “isolated”, “low confidence”. CH then asked the group to answer some questions:

- Q: Which part of the brain does most of the visual processing? A: The back of the brain. The top of the brain controls movement and the sides help you to identify faces.
- Q: How many nerves control movement of the eyes? A: Three.

- Q: How many people have had a stroke in Scotland in the last year?
A: 13,000. 112,000 are living in Scotland after having a stroke. Stroke is the most common disability.
- Q: What is the percentage of those who have visual problems after having a stroke? A: It can vary between 8% – 75%. A “guesstimate” would be 20%.

When a stroke occurs, it can affect the visual field loss and stop the transfer of information to the brain. If the left side of the brain is damaged, this will affect the right field of vision, and vice versa. People can also have trouble with their eye movement and maintaining a normal eye position. Visual neglect may also occur if people do not use the available space in their eye. CH then gave an example of someone who became visually impaired after two strokes, however after visiting an Ophthalmologist she was told her eye sight was not bad enough to be registered.

+6. Stroke and Sight Loss: Prevalence and Practice

Myzoon Ali has a background in Neuroscience and raised the issue that there are some gaps in vision research. Research is currently being undertaken using Vista and clinical trials. There are currently 11,900 stroke patients and 60% of them have been identified as having a visual impairment. 45% experience recovery whilst 21% have persisting problems after three months. MA undertook a National Project, talking to stroke survivors, carers and health providers asking what was important to them in life after the stroke. She whittled 236 responses down to a “top ten”, finding that many stroke survivors have unmet needs. A survey of current practice also found that there are inconsistent levels of delivery and no standard protocol for treating someone who has a visual impairment after stroke. One fifth of those living in Scotland after stroke have a visual impairment, and as this is an ageing population, there is an increase in those with a visual impairment and a disability.

SM thanked Christina and Myzoon for their input and opened the topic for discussion. It was noted that stroke survivors are put through the rehab process 6 months after stroke. There should be more standardised equipment and Scotland-wide information to prevent this as it can cause people to lose independence. As clinical trials only cover 2% - 10% of the population, affected patient numbers from hospitals are needed so that more accurate conclusions can be drawn. However, it was noted that this is problematic due to a lack of money. At present, 28% of those living with stroke have a concurrent impairment in one or more senses. SM noted that there will be a report produced to highlight

the effectiveness of the current system and an interim report will be released after April 2013.

+7. The Doran Review

Richard Hellewell noted that there is a need for a review of children with complex needs. However, grant funding is not backed by the national strategy. On 15 November, the report “Right Help at the Right Time at the Right Place” was published by the Scottish Government. It was noted that people struggle to get access to services they are entitled to and there is a decline in the number of experienced opticians. There is strong support for national resources, support training and development. The Scottish Government have accepted all recommendations and plan to drive through the changes on the agenda. A five year programme of action is to be drawn up as there are issues that need to be addressed. RH noted that this is an opportunity to ask MSPs to be aware of the Doran Review and the commitments of the Scottish Government.

SM thanked RH for his input and opened the item for discussion. It was noted that as there is less money, there needs to be clearer communication on how things operate. The Doran Review highlights how quality is assured and the need to have a standard and expectation. There are few opportunities for young people leaving school with a visual impairment and complex needs, meaning talent is lost. Time did not allow for discussion of what the Cross Party Group might identify as a key recommendation from the Doran Report but SM said that the issue could be returned to at a later meeting.

+8. AOCB

8.1. Responsible Parking Bill

JH noted that a consultation summary that builds on work undertaken by Ross Finney and Joe Fitzpatrick, and now promoted by Sandra White was published yesterday. Some issues have been highlighted that need to be worked through but JH noted that 90% of the proposals were good and have been brought forward. Representatives of the 20 major charities of the Responsible Parking Alliance, the Transport Minister and MSPs attended the launch.

8.2. Scottish Parliament Official Report

WW highlighted that in 2006 the Optometry contract changed in Scotland. There is a high number of returning patients for new treatments, such as injection therapies that are done monthly, and it was noted that there is a gap between when people should be seen and when they are being seen. A presentation will be given after the report

has been published. Standard procedures and public appointments committees have given input to the report that will be published next year on the following link:

www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness

+9. Close

The Chair thanked everybody for attending the meeting and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.