

# **Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment**

## **Minutes of the Cross Party Group for Visual Impairment meeting held on Thursday 12 September 2013 in Committee Room 1, Scottish Parliament.**

### **Present:**

Stuart McMillan MSP (Convenor)  
Neil Bibby MSP (item 4 onward)  
Rhoda Grant MSP  
Dennis Robertson MSP

Catriona Burness, RNIB Scotland  
Murray Cochrane, Sight Action  
Mo Colvin, RNIB Scotland  
Richard Copland, Scottish Government  
Margaret Duncan, Scottish Government  
Jacquie Dougall, Scottish Government  
Gary Evans, Optometry Scotland  
Dominic Everett, RNIB Scotland  
Graham Findlay, NESS  
Gillian Forrester, Police Scotland  
Mairi Graham, SAVIE  
Jane Horsburgh, Guide Dogs  
Caitlin Howie, RNIB Scotland  
Colin Howie, SCOV  
Bob Ironside, Perth and Kinross Society for the Blind

Gozie Joe Adigwe, RNIB Scotland  
Paul Kremers, HELICON  
John Legg, RNIB Scotland  
Sheila Mackenzie, University of Edinburgh  
Paul McCloskey, City of Edinburgh Council  
Rosie McLaughlin, Royal Blind  
Ian Mathers, Novartis  
Robert Mooney, Community  
Ken Reid, UK Vision Ambassador  
Hal Rollason, Optometry Scotland  
Fiona Sandford, Visibility  
Janelle Scotland, ASTN  
Angus Scott, Eyecare Scotland  
Alex Scott  
Nathan Sparling, Scottish Parliament  
Janis Sugden, SSC  
Alan Suttie, Fife Society for the Blind  
Ken Swa, SVS  
Mhairi Thurston, University of Abertay  
Helen Wilkinson, RNIB Scotland

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

James Adams, RNIB Scotland  
Elaine Brackenridge, Royal Blind  
Sam Brown,  
Marion Butchart, Novartis  
Colin Gallagher, Guide Dogs  
Sheena Guz, ADA (Scotland)  
Richard Hellewell, Royal Blind  
David McKerral  
Jimmy O'Rourke

Margaret O'Rourke  
Sally Paterson, SAVIE  
Wendy Rankin, Guide Dogs  
Mary Rasmussen  
Danny Sweeney, North Ayrshire  
Council  
Allen Thurston  
William Wykes, Optometry Scotland

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 23 May 2013**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 23 May 2013 were approved with one correction under item 5 – the Scottish Government has not been given £5m to deal with the changes in Welfare Reform, but rather has provided it. It was noted that a number of letters were issued on behalf of the Group following the last meeting and are available from the Secretary on request.

### **4. Update on Demand & Capacity Working Group**

Richard Copland thanked the Group for the opportunity to report on the work of the Demand and Capacity Working Group. The draft report had been previously circulated to the Group. The final report will be completed shortly. Comments on the draft report are welcomed and should be submitted to Jacquie Dougall. The working group has explored a number of areas to identify areas of good practice and ensure the timely flow of patients and care. Recommendations will be made around the redesign of services and up-skilling of staff. A further report can be provided to the Cross Party Group following the final report and implementation.

The meeting welcomed the report on this important issue. There followed detailed discussion around the key issue of return patients. Timely return appointments are essential to avoid preventable sight loss. The need for return visits is a clinical decision, but the working group aims to ensure the capacity is available in order to allow these appointments to be scheduled. The role of the electronic referral system, currently being rolled out, was also raised. Up-skilling of staff is necessary to increase capacity.

#### **Action**

- Any comments on the draft report to be sent to Jacqui Dougall.
- Further report to the Cross Party Group to be made when the report is finalised and in 1 year to review implementation.

## **5. Ethnicity, Eye Health & Engagement**

Gozie Joe Adigwe updated the Group on work to prevent avoidable sight loss in Ethnic Minority communities and the issue of increasing health inequalities. It is known that ethnicity is a risk factor in relation to certain eye conditions and the age profile is also often younger than within the wider community. There is also an issue of late presentation leading to increased sight loss. Statistics are difficult to obtain due to the lack of data collection. The small evidence base currently available is due to a few targeted interventions across the UK. There is some evidence of higher levels of non-attendance and despite the number of eye examinations increasing across the country the health inequality gap is increasing. This is a complex and concerning situation.

There followed discussion around issues with data sets and the register of blind and partially sighted people. This is a baseline for work on this public health issue. It was also noted that the BME population is increasing and this is expected to be confirmed in the 2011 census figures. It was noted that there could be an opportunity in relation to the integration of Health and Social Care data to identify evidence of need on a locality basis, however unfortunately Optometrists do not, at present, collect data on ethnicity although it is understood that it will be collected as part of the new electronic referral scheme. A number of Health and Social Care data sets do however contain an ethnicity field. There may be an issue of workforce training about why this information should be collected.

### **Action**

- Write to Cabinet Secretary about the opportunity presented by the integration of Health and Social Care for data collection on this matter at the appropriate time.

## **6. Availability of awareness training for frontline staff in the NHS**

Graham Findlay spoke about the availability of Visual Awareness (VA) training for frontline NHS staff and the needs for minimum standards. North East Sensory Services (NESS) previously delivered training to trainee nurses covering basic guiding, meeting and greeting etc. but this has stopped in NE Scotland. Anecdotal evidence includes a case where a blind terminally ill patient missed meals as nobody told the patient they were there. The family member of a patient affected by this issue is now campaigning for more training in hospitals, but organisations also need to play a role in promoting VA training. There are recognised issues around cost of delivery and freeing up

staff time and there is a need to formally establish if it is an issue across Scotland and if minimum standards can be introduced.

There followed discussion on this key issue which has previously been raised as part of the 2010 report “Accessibility of health information for blind and partially sighted people”. Any work should involve NES (NHS Education for Scotland). The issue does not relate just to eye clinics but across the whole NHS. Although electronic training has a place, it was felt hands on training in relation to guiding is important. Front line clinicians must undertake training as part of their appraisal process but currently VA training is part of general diversity training. Training is referenced in the new “See Hear” strategy and once this is published a training framework could be built round this – modules are available and are not difficult to deliver. It was agreed that it was essential this matter is not overlooked and implementation of “See Hear” will be a key factor. The Convenor agreed to write to the Minister for Public Health on this matter.

### **Action**

- Convenor to write to the Minister for Public Health.

## **8. AOCB**

8.1. SVS Refresh: the final draft is being finalised and will be published in early October followed by a detailed implementation plan in March 2014.

8.2. Edinburgh Trams: Ken Reid raised an issue about whether blind and partially sighted people not resident in Edinburgh would be granted free travel on the new tram system under the National Entitlement Card. Jane Horsburgh reported Guide Dogs had received confirmation that free travel would be available but would involve some sort of ticket validation process.

8.3. Developments in Rehab: Alan Suttie asked for an update on this item which was discussed at the March meeting of the Group. It was noted that progress had been made and details would be communicated to Alan Suttie

8.4. Registration: The importance of registration data to support informed decision making for the sector was noted, however this information is no longer collated. John Legg reported a positive meeting has been held with civil servants on this matter but it may be helpful to revisit at a future meeting.

8.5. Haggazine: Haggaye will publish the first issue of their new magazine at the end of the month and hope give an update on activities at the next meeting.

8.6. Talking Newspapers: Janelle Scotland raised the issue of increasing costs for Talking Newspapers. Postage is currently free under “Articles for the Blind” and the potential impact on this service in the case of independence was queried. Safeguards for “Articles for the Blind” have been built into the wider privatisation process of the Royal Mail which is a reserved issue. Any change to this would require primary legislation.

**Action**

- Update on Rehab issue to be forwarded to Alan Suttie
- Registration to be raised at future meeting
- Haggeye to give update at December meeting

**+9. Date of next meeting**

5-6pm, Thursday 5 December.