

Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment

Minutes of the Cross Party Group for Visual Impairment meeting held on Wednesday 11 March 2015 in Committee Room 3, Scottish Parliament.

Present:

Stuart McMillan MSP [item 1-7]; Jenny Marra MSP [item 4 onward] ; Dennis Robertson MSP [item 4 onward]; Dr Richard Simpson MSP [item 4 onward]; James Adams, RNIB Scotland; Lesley-Anne Alexander, RNIB Group; Ian Brown, RNIB Scotland; Sam Brown; Pamela Chater; Matthew Clark, Haggeye; Mo Colvin, Haggeye; Robbie Crow; Jamie Cuthbertson, Macular Society; Jane Donnelly, Insight Radio; Jane Douglas, CEC Libraries; Dominic Everett, RNIB Scotland; Mairi Graham; Sheena Guz, ADA Scotland; Cllr Sheila Hands, Angus Council; Jane Horsburgh, Guide Dogs; Caitlin Howie, RNIB Scotland; Bob Ironside, VisionPK; John Legg, RNIB Scotland; Sheila Mackenzie, SSC; Mary Macrae; Maureen McAllister, SITE; Paul McCloskey, CEC Libraries; Hazel McFarlane, RNIB Scotland; Jim McKenzie, CEC Libraries; Gillian Mitchell, Sight Action; James Mowat; Jimmy O'Rourke; Margaret O'Rourke; Sally Paterson, Royal Blind; Mary Rasmussen; Ken Reid, Vision Strategy; Terry Robinson; Hal Rollason, Optometry Scotland; Allan Russell, Insight Radio; Kim Smith, Scottish Council on Visual Impairment; Ken Swa; John Turley, SITE; Helen Wilkinson, RNIB Scotland (minutes).

1. Welcome and Introductions

Stuart McMillan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. It was noted that the meeting was currently not quorate, as the Convenor was the only MSP present but further MSPs were expected.

[Note: Jenny Marra MSP; Dennis Robertson MSP; Dr Richard Simpson MSP joined the meeting during item 4]

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Elaine Brackenridge, Royal Blind; Penny Brodie, Lead Scotland; Amanda Burt; Catriona Burness, RNIB Scotland; Marion Butchart, Novartis; John Donaldson, Scottish Braille Press; Graham Findlay, NESS; Colin Gallagher, Guide Dogs; Richard Hellewell, Royal Blind; Clair Henderson, RNIB Scotland; Colin Howie, SCOV; David McKerral; Hussein Patwa; Wendy Rankin, Guide Dogs; Fiona

Sandford, Visibility; Janelle Scotland, ASTN; Mhairi Thurston, UK Vision Group on Counselling; Sandra Wilson; William Wykes, Eyecare Scotland.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 11 March 2015

The minutes of the AGM and meeting held on 11 March 2015 were proposed by Ken Reid, seconded by John Legg and formally approved.

4. Matters Arising

4.1. Accessible Health Information - bowel screening: A response has been received from the Minister. It was noted that it was disappointing that one inaccessible system has been replaced by another. The accessibility of the new screening programme should be assessed by RNIB. Verbal feedback indicated an accessible system is available. Anyone interested in volunteering to assess the system should contact RNIB.

5. Eyecare Integration Project

Hal Rollason, Optometry Scotland provided an update on the Eyecare Integration Programme.

- eReferral: Previously the sharing of information has happened on an ad-hoc basis. The introduction of formal information sharing will allow Ophthalmologists to write qualitative information on patient notes for the Optometrist to access. This will benefit Optometrists treating future referrals. This development ties in with recent SIGN Guidelines on Glaucoma.
- ePayment: Testing for the system is ongoing. ePayment brings benefits from a business process perspective but will also lead to more robust data collection. It is hoped that now there is a system available this will highlight the advantages and increase engagement.
- Decisions are now required concerning what happens following implementation as the eReferral implementation is nearing completion ePayment is midway through the process. There have been challenges in integrating systems but it is an improving picture.

Richard Simpson MSP enquired if patients are still required to attend hospital or if they can now be monitored by High Street Optometrists. It was noted that Dry AMD can be monitored within general practice but those with Wet AMD still have to attend hospital. Work is ongoing to pilot treatment of low risk glaucoma patients by Optometrists and it is hoped which will build trust and develop further, for example with Wet AMD patients. It was noted that treatment of Wet AMD would only be possible in practices with OCT scanners. The removal of low risk Glaucoma patients from the hospital system will ease

the pressure. There was further discussion on the effective future auditing of the system and the production of accurate statistical data. It was agreed that the Convenor should write to ISD seeking clarification on what statistics will be collated and produced.

Action

- Write to ISD regarding statistical data – James Adams.

6. Report from the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee: New Powers for Scotland: An Interim Report on the Smith Commission and the UK Government's Proposals

The Convenor updated the Group on the Report from the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee of which he was a member. Following the Referendum and the Smith Commission, the then UK Government published a set of draft clauses based on Smith in January. The Devolution (Further Powers) Committee, a cross party committee at the Scottish Parliament published their report 2 weeks previously and it was debated in the Parliament last week. The report has unanimous support from the 5 parties. It is clear that additional powers will be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. It is essential to ensure that these additional powers are thoroughly scrutinised and audited. There are additional responsibilities and challenges for the politicians and Scottish Government. The CPG should note that these powers will impact on the areas the Group seek to influence, including major areas such as employment and welfare benefits.

There followed discussion on the anticipated timescale of implementation. Key areas of concern in the sector which may be affected were raised including: impact of registration and passporting of benefits; Access to Work provision; access to technology. The key guiding principle is that there must be no detriment to those living with disabilities and the CPG should focus on these matters, ensuring there is indeed no detriment and also taking advantage of any opportunities that arise. This issue of Sandra White MSP's Parking Bill was noted as there have been complex issues relating to whether the necessary powers to enact the Bill are devolved.

Action

- It was agreed to revisit at future meeting of the group - Convenor.

7. Education Attainment update

Sally Paterson, Chair of SAVIE and Dominic Everett, Education and Family Services Manager at RNIB Scotland updated the meeting on recent reports made to the Committee on Educational Attainment. A number of organisations

responded to the consultation including National Blind Children UK, RNIB Scotland, Royal Blind, SAVIE, Scottish Sensory Centre, SCOVl and VINCYP. There is a clear attainment gap between blind and partially sighted children and their sighted peers and it is widening. A number of key issues were discussed including:

- The lack of key statistical data, including an accurate number VI pupils. In recent years both SSC and VINCYP have tried to obtain data from local authorities on the number of VI pupils but a number have never responded
- Lack of early intervention support. What is provided is too little too late and is only delivered at the point of crisis
- Early learning gap is never filled
- Blocking of IT access for handheld devices such as Braille note
- Provision of habilitation support is patchy
- Staffing levels and provision of qualified teachers is patchy. Many staff have temporary contracts and no formal training. This skills gap leads to associated issues with quality of transcription. Provision of suitably trained Additional Support Needs Assistants is also an issue.
- Service Managers are being replaced by unqualified staff with no VI training and no requirement to obtain training. Skilled staff are not being appointed to these posts as they do not have the opportunity to obtain the relevant management training. There is no succession planning - staff are either a class teacher or a service manager.
- There are additional issues of QTVI's being used as supply teachers. There is a general lack of understanding of the role and poor perception by managers.
- Facilities are often not fit for purpose with old buildings and lack of practical workspace.

The above issues all contribute to the serious attainment gap for VI children and young people.

[Stuart McMillan MSP had to leave the meeting early for parliamentary business. Jenny Marra MSP assumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.]

There followed detailed discussion around the above issues and also the total failure to address the social needs of VI children within schools. Social inclusion is a major issue which should be embedded within habilitation training. It was noted that there has been a long history of warm words on these vital issues, but there is a need for a major change.

Action

- Write to the Minister and invite to attend a future meeting focussing on these issues in detail - James Adams

8. SVS Update

Ken Reid updated the CPG:

- Evidence is building of the successful implementation of the Scottish Vision Strategy. Detail is available on request to Hazel McFarlane, RNIB Scotland who has been working on the monitoring framework
- Registration is an ongoing area of concern. Recent advice has been submitted suggesting a short life working group should be formed to review Registration of both adults and children. It is recommended that the CPG revisit this matter at a later date.

Actions

- Registration to feature on future agenda.

9. AOCB

There was no further business.

10. Future meetings

- 1pm on Wednesday 7 October (Committee Room 1)
- 5pm on Thursday 3 December (Committee Room 3)