

Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment

Minutes of the Cross Party Group for Visual Impairment meeting held on Wednesday 3 December 2015 in Radisson Blu, High Street, Edinburgh

Present:

Dennis Robertson MSP; Neil Bibby MSP; James Adams, RNIB Scotland; Paul Bartley, Optelec; Sandra Black; Alex Bowerman, Scottish Government; Elaine Brackenridge, Royal Blind; Ian Brown, RNIB Scotland; Catriona Burness, RNIB Scotland; Amanda Burt; Pamela Chater; Matthew Clark, Haggeye; Mo Colvin, Haggeye; Jacqueline Clougherty, RNIB Scotland; Jamie Cuthbertson, Macular Society; Jane Donnelly, Insight Radio; Jacqui Dougall, Scottish Government; Amanda Drollinger, ADA Scotland; Margaret Duncan, Scottish Government; Dominic Everett, RNIB Scotland; Sheena Guz, ADA Scotland; Cllr Sheila Hands, Angus Council; Nigel Harvey, RNIB Scotland; Richard Hellewell, Royal Blind; Clair Henderson, RNIB Scotland; Caitlin Howie, RNIB Scotland; Colin Howie, SCovi; Sarah Hughes, Royal Blind; Bob Ironside, VisionPK; Gozie Joe Adigwe, RNIB Scotland; Ross Macfadyen, RNIB Scotland; Ellen McCance, FSB Insight; Paul McCloskey, City of Edinburgh Council Libraries; Aaron McHale, Haggeye; Gillian Mitchell, Sight Action; Rod Murchison; Lynda Neilson, RNIB Scotland; John Paterson, SCovi; Sally Paterson, Royal Blind and SAVIE; Hussein Patwa; Terry Robinson; Hal Rollason, Optometry Scotland; Allan Russell, Insight Radio; Kirin Saeed; Emma Sands, RNIB; Ken Swa.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dennis Robertson MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Stuart McMillan MSP, Jenny Bloomfield, SCVO; Hilary Davies; John Donaldson, Royal Blind; Graham Findlay, North East Sensory Services; Richard Godfrey-McKay, Fife Society for the Blind; Jane Horsburgh, Guide Dogs; David McKerral, National Federation of the Blind Scotland; Elizabeth Millar, Haggeye; Ann Porter, Fife Society for the Blind; Mary Rasmussen; John Ravenscroft, Scottish Sensory Centre; Ken Reid, Scottish Vision Strategy; Fiona Sandford, Visibility; Janelle Scotland, Association of Talking Newspapers; Angus Scott, Eyecare Scotland; Danny

Sweeney, North Ayrshire Council; John Turley, SITE; Helen Wilkinson, RNIB Scotland; Clare Young, RNIB Scotland.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 7 October 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2015 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

4.1. Registration: Communication has been made to scope recommendations on outstanding issues. It was agreed to discuss Registration at a future meeting.

Action

- Registration to be discussed at future meeting.

5. Scottish Lobbying Bill: an overview

In the absence of Jenny Bloomfield, Catriona Burness gave an overview of the Scottish Lobbying Bill. The Bill is currently going through its first stage of consideration. It was noted that in order to meet with Ministers, organisations must register to lobby before making contact. Organisations will also be required to report on a 6 monthly basis on who they have lobbied, however this excludes Cross Party Groups.

The Bill will be open to amendment and scrutiny after committee proceedings. It is hoped the Bill will remain open and transparent and provide an effective route to MSPs and Ministers and as such was welcomed by the group. It was agreed that the group should be kept informed of progress and that the Bill should be discussed at a future meeting.

[POST MEETING NOTE: written briefing supplied by Jenny Bloomfield and attached as Appendix 1]

Action

- Scottish Lobbying Bill to be added to future agenda if required.

6. National Ophthalmology Workstream Update

Jacqui Dougall thanked the group for inviting her to give an update on the National Ophthalmology Workstream. The workstream focuses on a hospital setting, engaging with key stakeholders, promoting good practice, addressing current issues and ensuring safety and effectiveness. The Board consists of CEO's and Leads, who undertake a phased approach to embed the workstream in all geographical areas. Main focuses include streamlining pathways, up-skilling the workforce, working effectively and embedding

common practice. There are 3 parallel workstrands that help to ensure effective delivery:

- Local development plans
- Information for planning and development
- Conclusion.

‘Just Do Its’ are a set of measures put in place to encourage Local Authorities to follow good common practice. The workstream will inform discussions around capacity planning and will continue over the next 12 months

A National Ophthalmology event was held on 11 November which provided a positive contribution to services. The event encouraged ophthalmology and optometry services to build on good practice and work effectively together. It is planned to hold a series of peer review visits and should a further event be required, stakeholders will take a lead role. Buddy groups are also supported.

Ken Swa raised the question of how the Scottish Government will measure whether the workstream is meeting expectations and is of benefit to the patients. It was noted that the main focus of key stakeholders will be to help with empowerment over the next 12 months. A method of gathering national benchmarking data is being investigated, in order to provide outputs and evidencing.

Hal Rollason noted that Local Authorities should be required to implement best practice. The ‘Just Do Its’ are being driven forward in each area, anticipating that by maintaining a fast paced focus this will build momentum.

Dominic Everett noted that VINCYP (a managed clinical network for children and young people) were not involved in the planning and development of the workstream and may have fed in on pressure points relating specifically to children and young people.

It was noted that Jacqui, Alex Bowerman and Margaret Duncan should be invited to a future meeting to provide an update on the workstream before stepping down. The National Ophthalmology Workstream paper will be forwarded for circulation.

Action

- National Ophthalmology Workstream to be added to future agenda.
- National Ophthalmology Workstream paper to be supplied upon request.

7. SVS Update

Ross Macfadyen updated the group following the Scottish Vision Strategy Advisory Group meeting:

- Ross Macfadyen has been appointed as Chair of the group.
- The UK Vision Strategy Conference will be held on 14 June 2016 in London.
- The Scottish Government have implemented an Educational attainment working party to design a survey which will be sent to Local Authorities in order to establish an evidence base around educational attainment. SVS AG will feed into this.
- SVS Conference has been set for 23 March 2016 at the Stirling Court Hotel.

8. AOCB

There was no further business.

9. Future meetings

- 18.00-20.00 on 9 March 2016, Meeting and AGM, in partnership with CPG on Heart Disease and Stroke and CPG on Deafness
- Remaining 2016 meetings TBC

SCVO brief for members of the CPG on Visual Impairment

Lobbying Bill (Scotland)

This Bill, which is currently at Stage One in the Scottish Parliament (i.e., it has still not been decided on) is different from the UK Lobbying Act, as it's not just about election periods but is about lobbying in general.

The Bill, if it goes ahead in its current form, will affect charities and any groups where paid staff as part of their job work to lobby parliament – this includes advocacy and campaign work. Organisations which undertake this kind of activity will have to register their organisational name, address, and the names of any Directors (if your organisation is a company) with Scottish Parliament officials. Once registered, an organisation will have to submit six monthly returns, detailing: who attended the lobbying meeting, where and when it was, the type of meeting it was (e.g., a one-to-one meeting, a group discussion, and event, and so on), and the purpose of the meeting.

At the moment, volunteers aren't affected – but this could change. And again, at the moment only face-to-face activity with MSPs and ministers is covered; this could be extended to include email and telephone and other forms of communication. It all depends on what MSPs decide in the forthcoming stages of the Bill.

It's worth noting that meetings initiated by MSPs, and CPGs, are not covered; nor is parliamentary business in general, e.g., giving evidence to a committee. A parliamentary reception though would need registering.

In-house and consultant lobbyists are both covered.

The Lobbying Act (UK-wide)

Spending on certain campaigning activity is regulated in the run-up to elections. The regulated period for the Scottish Parliamentary election will start on 5 January 2016 and ends on 5 May 2016.

During the regulated period there are rules about how much your organisation can spend on 'regulated campaign activity'. This is activity which "can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against political parties or categories of candidates".

Unless your organisation registers with the Electoral Commission, you can only spend up to £10,000 (including staff costs) in Scotland during the

regulated period on this 'regulated campaign activity'. This same spending limit also applies if you work with other organisations and pool your resources.

In practical terms this means that in nearly all cases, your organisation can carry on with campaigning activity without registering with the Electoral Commission, as you are unlikely to reach the £10,000 threshold. That said, if you are a charity, make sure that your activity continues to comply with OSCR regulations. The guidance on the Lobbying Act from OSCR is also excellent.

If you are in any doubt as to whether or not you need to register with the Electoral Commission, you can contact SCVO's policy lead on this area, Felix Spittal: felix.spittal@scvo.org.uk

About us

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the national body representing the third sector. There are over 45,000 voluntary organisations in Scotland involving around 138,000 paid staff and approximately 1.3 million volunteers. The sector manages an income of £4.9 billion.

SCVO works in partnership with the third sector in Scotland to advance our shared values and interests. We have over 1,600 members who range from individuals and grassroots groups, to Scotland-wide organisations and intermediary bodies.

As the only inclusive representative umbrella organisation for the sector SCVO:

- has the largest Scotland-wide membership from the sector – our 1,600 members include charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes
- our governance and membership structures are democratic and accountable - with an elected board and policy committee from the sector, we are managed by the sector, for the sector
- brings together organisations and networks connecting across the whole of Scotland

SCVO works to support people to take voluntary action to help themselves and others, and to bring about social change.

Further details about SCVO can be found at www.scvo.org.uk.