

Cross-Party Group on Disability

13 September 2023 on Teams

Minute

Present

MSPs

Jeremy Balfour MSP
Pam Duncan Glancy MSP

Office of MSPs

Julia Shillitto
Rhona McGrath
Helen McCabe
Kayleigh O'Neil

Invited guests

Kirstie Wilson
Iain Rae
Alice Noble

Non-MSP Group Members

Baroness Stephanie Fraser
Linda Bamford
Maureen Morrison
Dr Caroline Gould
Patricia Ferguson
Mike Harrison
Sue Bowen
Derek Kelter
Diana Winfield
Jenny Miller
Gavin Yates
Rebecca Scarlet
Donna Tomlin
Maureen McAllister
Margaret Anslow
Terry Robinson
Mark Gaffney
Lyn Pornaro
Ian Buchanan

Apologies

Tess White MSP
Alexander Stewart MSP
Jackie Baillie MSP
Katy Clark MSP
Paul O’Kane MSP
Gillian Mackay MSP
Ally Irvine
David Nicholson
Marg McNeil
Stanley Flett
Jacqueline Cowan
Claire Bysouth
Gwen McNeil

Agenda item 1

Jeremy Balfour MSP (JB) welcomed everyone to the meeting including Deputy Convener, Pam Duncan-Glancy, (PDG).

Apologies received are noted in the minutes.

The minutes of 7 June 2023, and re-run AGM minutes of 27 July were approved.

Agenda item 2

Scottish Parliament Event Announcement

Iain Rae and Alice Noble – invited along today to give a heads up to the CPG about the first Summit for Disabled People to be held at the Scottish Parliament on Sat 25th November. Scottish Parliament teams have been working closely with Pam and Jeremy to create this first summit to mark the Day of Persons with Disabilities. Invites will be sent out next week. This will be a hybrid summit so attendees from all over Scotland will be invited to the Parliament but also everyone else interested will be able to log on and listen/engage online. Keynote speakers and speeches from Jeremy and Pam.

PDG Thanks to Events team and Jeremy/Pam and teams. This Summit elevates Day for Disabled People in Scotland. Help our fight for equality. Thanks also to the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament for hosting this Summit.

JB Excited for people to come together and watch online. This Summit will showcase what we have achieved so far, and where we need to go. Also written to Scottish Parliament Business Manager to ask if we can have a Government debate to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I wanted this not just to be a Members Debate but a Scottish Government initiated debate. **The details of the**

Summit are confidential until the official announcement next week so please keep to yourself. Go to Scottish Parliament website next week for more information.

Agenda item 3

Private Member Bill Updates

JB Update on Disability Commissioner Bill. Working away in background and have first draft of the Bill which is continuing to be worked on. Not too distant future, JB hopes to lodge it with Parliament. Thanks to those who have shown an interest. Any comments then please feed them into JB.

PDG – Transitions Bill. Bill at Stage 1 and Committee coming to conclusion on evidence heard. Committee have put their concerns/comments into a letter – they agree with Scot Govt that something needs to change in current transition provision. Still don't have a situation where young disabled people have a right to a transitions plan. Recent Programme for Govt not sufficient. No minister assigned a specific responsibility on it. Awaiting Committee response then see how PDG achieves those aims – she can either keep Bill going or work with Scot Govt in a different way. Any information or evidence you wish to share with MSP or Committee then please write to them and show your support.

Q – **Linda Bamford** – transition from non-disabled to disabled – is this transition too wide for this Bill? PDG agreed there is a number of transitions in a disabled persons life. This bill specifically focussed on transition from school to next step. So this Bill does not cover the full transition from non-disabled to disabled but would cover people in school who are non-disabled who become disabled whilst at school age.

Q – **Baroness Stephanie Fraser** – Cerebral Palsy hugely welcome PDG Bill.

Q – **Maureen McAllister** – work in transition clinics with people with arthritis. Having the support withing school with transitions to apprenticeships/employment etc will be very useful. Looking to produce a booklet for those moving into further education with musculoskeletal conditions.

Agenda item 4

Access Panel Report

JB – Access Panels – first draft of a Disability Access Panel report issued to CPG members. Jeremy met with many Access Panels across Scotland over last few months and was interested to see what issues came up. This paper brings together common themes and issues. No surprise to see the issues that have come up. If any comments, then please drop JB an email. First draft of this report has gone back to

Access Panels for their comments. Hope to put this paper back to CPG Disability in December and then send to appropriate people – Transport Scotland etc. and ask to discuss at subsequent CPGs next year. Hope to give second draft well before CPG in December so we can discuss fully.

Q – **Maureen McAllister** – has worked with Glasgow Access Panel. Lots of unsung work going on with Access Panels. Most of them are volunteers. Access Panels give support to local people for campaigns. Local Authorities are a hit and miss – sometimes ask for advice but don't often adopt what is said. More power to Access Panels would be good.

Q – **Lyn Pornaro** (Disability Equality Scotland) – no surprises in the report. Need to shout about the good work that Access Panels do. Have an Access Panel site on their website. Small wins are still wins. Speak to Access Panels every day so should be able to give qualitative feedback. Welcome raising the awareness of Access Panels. JB – if there are geographic gaps in Access Panels then please let us know then we can still have time to add comments into the report.

Q – **Terry Robinson** – no-one really listening to Access Panel voices. Consultation and meetings seems to be regarded as box ticked so no need for action.

Q – **Diana Winfield** – Independent Access Group in Shetland. Will drop an email and meet with you. And let JB know of any other independent groups that might want a meeting.

Q – **Donna Tomlin** – Welcome this report. Highlights key community issues. Not much info/issues raised on disabled children and carers. JB said that many Access Panels are older generation and therefore not as much input from younger parents/carers/children. Happy to meet to discuss.

Q – **Linda Bamford** – good success when *meaningful* involvement and engagement. le community hospital in Aviemore ie left/right transfers for toileting. Transport came through as a key need – accessible and affordable. Need Transport Scotland along to CPG next year. Accessible travel framework is a 10yr framework and now in year 7 with not much progress. Timing is right to get an update with accessibility team on the final 3 years on the framework. Access Panels are the experts.

Q – **Dr Caroline Gould** – Aviemore Hospital – room design was given by designers but then ignored so disagreed that this is a good example of inclusive design. Broadford Hospital in Skye – Caroline cannot use a single toilet in it with her wheelchair. Assumption in all guidance used that wheelchair users can bend legs at the knee. Have to live in an inaccessible world – something has to change. Not seeing the change needed via this CPG on Disability. **PDG** – we have same frustrations on a daily basis. Pace of change is very slow. Purpose of this group is to share experiences and pull together in a cross-party approach and give things teeth.

Language around reasonable adjustments is long misunderstood – plaguing disability equality for a long time. But this is a place of solidarity.

Q – **Diana Winfield** – In terms of buildings, she has looked at buildings in Shetland ie 1.5m turning space doesn't exist, and found it doesn't exist in Shetland. No success in contacting building standards. What options do people have? Don't want to upset Shetlanders. **JB** – Building Standards is a local authority/council issue but can chat further if required.

Agenda item 5

Kirstie Wilson from Purple Space – Inner Confidence

KW a Learning Development and Engagement Mgr. A networking hub organisation. Their focus on supporting disability resource groups. Small social business working with both public and private sector. 4000 members across 200 organisations across the UK, Spain and abroad.

Purple Space want to help organisations build confidence from the inside out. Build employee networks. Build confidence of every disabled employee. They have touched the lives of 1.5m disabled employees around the world.

UK Govt – 1 in 5 of working population are classed as disabled. Challenging for employees and employers to create an inclusive working world. Need a sophisticated approach to change.

Phase 1 of change

- Passing of disability equality employment legislation

Phase 2 of change

- Enlighted employers make change and disabled organisations help ie workplace adjustments

Phase 3 of change

- Employees themselves are driving change. Share experience and help our employers anticipate and accommodate this aspect of human different

Purple Space was established in 2015 with Kate Nash OBE as founder. In 2015 Kate was researching first book and spoke to 2500 employees and asked “what holds you back from sharing personal information on disability or ill health”. No surprise the findings. Organisations need to learn directly from their own disabled employees.

Why do people shy away from identifying from disability? Most disabilities are acquired during peoples working life, so it can be hard to adapt while continuing work. Most disabilities are non-visible ie anxiety, chronic fatigue so people have a choice in what information to share. What happens when I share – will it hold me back, be held

against me or discriminated against? Historically, disability has lacked something like the Pride Movement where we can celebrate our differences. Purple Light movement has been rebranded as Positively Purple.

Identified after 8yrs of work at Purple Space – 5 trust tests:-

1. Look for organisation that is learning directly from their own people ie listening groups, employee network. Own people help identify barriers. Employees own lived experience.
2. Since Pandemic, an organisation needs to take digital accessibility seriously – both employee and customer access. Employers need to be open to advantages of digital era. Ie software, work from home days etc
3. Reasonable adjustments – workplace adjustments – what is reasonable? As employees look to see if they can make a request easily and will happen quickly ie ergonomic chair.
4. External levers to push progress. See that employers celebrate success. Ie Scottish Parliament celebrate International day of Persons with Disabilities.
5. Notice personal inner confidence – see employer put importance on this. Senior Mgrs are able to share their own lived experience or family member can be key to drive confidence of employees to feel they can share their story.

Purple Space have created content to share with employers on various conditions to help with first conversations. 6 fundamentals to these conversations and 6 hurdles to overcome.

Disability networks are important – employees are driving this third phase of change. Help those who come behind ie new people coming into the business. Organisations learn from their own people and have systems/policies to facilitate change their people are needing.

10-15% of an organisation's workforce could potentially identify as disabled. Employers might focus on data capture, but the argument is many people might not be declaring and numbers might be higher than data suggests until employees feel able to be their authentic self and declare their disability.

Purple Space have work going on delivering sessions to share best practice and challenges, run Positively Purple movement (was Purple Light Up), hosting an event at London Eye to celebrate Positively Purple, run roundtable sessions with executives to make cultural changes within their organisations. First global summit in 2024 where invite disability network and employers from around the world.

Questions

Q – **Linda Bamford** – Spoke about % of employees that identify as disabled. Are numbers going up with this type of work ie Barclays, PWC etc. KW said the number of employees sharing information has increased and increase in number of graduates coming into the organisation sharing their disability information up front.

Q – **Diana Winfield** – How do you deal with council employers where people are frightened to share? Compared to private sector? KW work with all sectors ie health sector, law firms – it can be hard to share across a lot of sectors. KW believe inner confidence of individual people can help. Can be top-down encouragement to work with disability forums but also learn from people from ground up.

KW has shared with JB Kate's first book and link is below:-

[Home \(purplespace.org\)](http://purplespace.org)

[link for people to download](#)

JB – can we share KW email address? Confirmed.

- Kirstie Wilson <kirstie@purplespace.org>

Agenda item 6

AOB

Next meeting Wed 6th December. Invited Cab Secretary of Social Justice and Social Security to come along. To guarantee your question, please submit in advance but may be opportunity to ask questions on the day if there is time.

Meeting format – hybrid vs online. JB will put this question on the minutes, so if you can respond with preference – online, hybrid or all in-person then that can formulate future plans. Dec meeting will be online.

Q – **Diana Winfield** – some people find written questions harder so might need to ask oral questions on the day. **JB** agreed that this would not be a problem.

Close at 14.04pm.