

Cross-Party Group on Disability

11 December 2024 at 1pm-2.30pm on Teams

Minute

Present

MSPs

Jeremy Balfour MSP
Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP

Invited guests

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Elie Clark – (Office of Cab Sec)
Sarah Manson – (Office of Cab Sec)
Saibhe Brock – (Scot Gov)
Rab Walker – Falling Up
Liz Walker – Falling Up
Drew Walker – Falling Up

Non-MSP Group Members

Julia Shillitto – (Secretariat)
Rhona McGrath (Office of Jeremy Balfour MSP)
Eloise Richmond (Office of Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP)
Marc-David Jacobs (Office of Emma Roddick MSP)
Mike Harrison (Treasurer)
Baroness Stephanie Fraser – Cerebral Palsy Scotland
Dr Caroline Gould - Individual
Mandy Reid – SUSE Scotland
Mel Coulter – (ENT – electronic note-taker) for Mandy Reid
Andrena McMenemey – (ENT – electronic note-taker) for Mandy Reid
Maureen Nisbet - Individual
Richard Pollock – Edinburgh Access Panel
Lucy Mulvagh – The ALLIANCE
Joanne Devitt – MACS
Karen Procek - Individual
Dr Nils Kusters -
Heather Smith – Disability Information Scotland
Fiona Souter - PAMIS
Tony Slaven – STUC / Unison
Marta Wittek - SIAA
Douglas Ross – Strathclyde University
Chris Ringland – The Evangelical Alliance Scotland

Sally Witcher – Inclusive New Normal
Susan Walls - Contact
Salena Begley MBE – Family First
Sarah Reilly - Individual
Zara Grew – Sight Scotland
Sue Bowen – Dyslexia Scotland
Katie Edwards – Police Scotland
Maggie Ellis – EKTG & WSA
Megan O’Hara Knight
Alison Pendragon - ADC
Linda Bamford – MACS
Diana Winfield - Individual
Colette McDiarmid – MND Scotland
Tress Burke – Glasgow Disability Alliance
Stuart McIver – Long Covid Scotland
Bill Scott - Individual

Apologies

Paul O’Kane MSP
Dr Lisa O’Lary – Napier University
Amanda Foster – Individual
Caron Jenkins – Versus Arthritis
Maureen McAllister – Versus Arthritis
Robin Wickes – Edinburgh Access Panel
Terry Robinson – Individual
Donna Tomlin – Contact
Liisa Lehtinen - SIAA

Agenda item 1

Minutes of 2 October 2024 approved.

Agenda item 2

New Members approved : Sarah Reilly – Individual
The ALLIANCE – Lucy Mulvagh
Evangelical Alliance Scotland – Chris Ringland
The University of Strathclyde – Paul Gallagher

Agenda item 3

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice responded to Questions:-

Heather Smith: Disability Information Scotland – What is the future potential to combine ADP and Blue Badge assessment process?

Cabinet Secretary: There have been some developments in Social Security Scotland with linkages esp 5 family payments. Tricky with blue Badge as administered by local authority and system is delivered by Dept for Transport. Not a quick sort and not able to be done in short or even medium term, but is a challenge being looked at by Social Security Scotland. Keen to look more at automation and data sharing.

Sue Bowen: Dyslexia Scotland – ADP – 10% of Scottish population who are dyslexic have issues with travel etc. Social Security Scotland Award results for ADP patients are not consistent and hard for dyslexic people to meet the descriptors.

Cabinet Secretary: The agency has been set up not to have set list of criteria and tick box – it is more person centred and focuses on how the particular condition impacts each individual. A challenge therefore, to make it as straightforward as possible and ensure form/advisors etc are designed in a way to make the right decision in a timely manner. No such thing as a “usual” case. If there is a concern regarding awards from CPG members, then please let Social Security Scotland know via the redeterminations process, or, if concerns that a condition has not been treated uniformly, then keen to pick up via Social Security Scotland agency and/or the Scottish Government.

Marta Wittek: SIAA – Need our voices heard in decision making. UNCRC rights upheld in regards to children’s advocacy.

Cabinet Secretary: Want to link SIAA and officials in Human Rights team in Scot Govt dealing with UNCRC. Shirley-Anne Somerville happy for her officials to get in touch with SIAA to see how they can reassure that Scottish Government is taking this on board.

Stuart McIver - Long Covid Scotland – what role does the Scottish Government play in ensuring effective outputs in this area of human rights?

Cabinet Secretary: Cannot stress enough the importance of the third sector in providing a service and support. Scottish Government needs to work with the third sector. My colleagues have been meeting with people with Long Covid at the start of December. Third sector is a bridge between ministers and those with lived experience.

Stephanie Fraser: Cerebral Palsy Scotland – In a tight financial climate, organisations are experiencing unprecedented demand for services and lack of funding? le Cora. What reassurances can the Scottish Government give to these groups?

Cabinet Secretary – Need to push UK Government for full funding and make changes to how they are doing this. Still have financial challenges and need to look at what we can do within that context. I am looking within my portfolio, once budget passed, how can we provide an awareness to third sector about how much money they can expect to get once budget passed to help with planning. Conscious, we are not just talking about organisations but people’s livelihoods.

Tony Slavin: CPG Working Group – Disability Employment Charter – 9 asks. Has the Scottish Government looked at the document and do they have any comment?

Cabinet Secretary: Not aware of any contact with the Working Group and the Charter – and many of the asks are related to reserved matters. But the Scottish Government still needs to look at what devolved matters can still be looked at ie employment matters. Need to ensure the Working Group is linked to Scottish Government officials to see what connections need to be made. Officials on this call will make contact to discuss further.

Caroline :CPG Working Group – what is the purpose of the CPG on Disability and how can it change things for the better?

Cabinet Secretary:– not for a Minister to answer but for the CPG Convenor – up to the group to decide what its purpose is! Jeremy Balfour MSP confirmed this question can be explored at a later meeting.

Maureen Nisbet: individual member – what does the Equality Act 2010 mean in today's society?

Cabinet Secretary: The Equalities Act is important in eliminating discrimination and to ensure rights are lawfully protected. It needs to be meaningful and usable. Awareness of equality law is important through individuals and public services ie through equality impact assessments.

Marjory Pollock: Edinburgh Access Panel – For Edinburgh to be an inclusive city, the council should reconsider its zero car sites policy and the placing of car parking in relation to accessible flats. Would the Scottish Government strengthen planning law to improve accessible parking?

Cabinet Secretary: Planning guidance was adopted in 2023. Car parking provision in new developments is to reduce reliance on a car to help move to net zero but needs to give consideration to those that need a car for accessibility. Views of disabled people need to be sought when councils are looking to reduce car parking spaces as they need to make reasonable adjustments. Can see your particular comments on Edinburgh are for the council, but they should be taking the Equality Act into account.

Colette McDarimid: MND Scotland – There has been a cut to overall housing budget and adaptations budget. We have seen the impact on our MND members, can the decision be reversed in the upcoming budget?

Cabinet Secretary: The affordable housing supply budget cut has been reversed. And significant change have been made to the adaptations budget which now has a £20m uplift – and this money should be rolled out to RSLs asap. Working with my officials along with Housing team to make sure that we are all looking at how flexible the affordable housing supply budget is, to ensure it is used to make biggest impact in next 12 months.

Tressa Burke: GDA – Is there any update on Disability Equality Plan. The 3 DPOs working on the plan have withdrawn from working with the Scottish Government. We have 3 core asks and need to see some action before we can come back to the table. We need some assurances.

Cabinet Secretary: I was catching up with Kaukab Stewart, Minister for Equalities this week and there has been an initial extra £2m allocated to assist with the plan. The plan is the first step but appreciate it doesn't go far enough. Discussions have started with DPO's on how to spend the £2m budget – waiting on feedback from officials and then sign off how that budget is being spent. Regarding the funding of DPOs – fairer funding discussed earlier in this call and I aim to get letters out to people before the budget is passed in February to provide reassurances. Work ongoing but will update before Christmas.

Sally Witcher: Can we start thinking about how pandemic disabled groups (Long Covid) can get out of a Healthcare silo and be viewed in the wider context of disability and social justice. Working on ADP review and it doesn't work for people with energy impairments. Long Covid is still seen as a healthcare issue but needs repositioned as an equalities issue.

Cabinet Secretary: I will contact Kaukab Stewart, Minister for Equalities and she can take a wider look with officials where linkages can be made.

Alison Pendragon : How is the Equality Act being enforced – the UK Government is currently in breach of Articles 5-12.

Cabinet Secretary: Need to link with secretariat and convenor of this group and how to link in disabled people's rights.

Agenda item 4

Presentation Item – Rab Walker, Drew Walker & Liz Walker – Falling Up Together. The Gugging Artists gave an overview with visuals of how they promote inclusion, equality, destigmatization through art for those living in the face of chronic mental illnesses.

Website: [Falling Up Together | art collective](#)

Facebook: Falling UP Together SCIO - [Falling UP Together SCIO | Facebook](#)

Drew's PhD thesis: <https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/the-importance-of-place>

Agenda item 5

AOB

Jeremy Balfour MSP: Tonight after decision time, there is a debate in the Scottish Parliament on Changing Places Toilets, where I will be able to ask the Scottish Government about the £10m funding plan which has been scrapped. You can watch via the Scottish Parliament website at 5.55pm today or watch on catchup.

Maggie Ellis (individual) – feels the CPG on Disability has failed to address the topic of the illegality of locked disabled toilets. Nearly 4 years since this topic was first raised and the CPG has still not met with the First Minister. Why should we buy a radar key for £5 and this doesn't help foreign disabled visitors.

Jeremy Balfour MSP response – Confirmed the CPG wrote to the First Minister and he offered a meeting with Kaukab Stewart, Minister of Equalities. Please provide dates and I will set up the meeting.

Maggie Ellis – need to look at format of the CPG as feel the business agenda is not being covered.

Jeremy Balfour MSP response – happy to take any business questions at AOB section of the agenda if not covered in the other areas.

Alison – would like an answer to her question.

Jeremy Balfour MSP response – this can be followed up at a later meeting

Linda Bamford – Comment that she found today's discussion very useful - Both guest speakers and Cabinet Minister. Very interesting to hear other people's issues and suggestions. At times she feels members of the CPG can look to attack rather than listen and engage respectfully.

Date of the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 1pm-2.30pm on Teams.

Jeremy Balfour MSP thanked everyone for attending and wished all a happy Christmas.

Meeting End.