

Diversity and Equality Steering Group

Note of DESG meeting
Held in Committee Rm 2
CnES, Sandwick Rd
On 28 March 2013 at 11 am

PRESENT

Lena Morrison - CnES
Gillian Johnson – CnES
John Murray – Police Scotland
Mandy Macleod – Cross Reach
Isobel Mackenzie – CnES
Gordon Thomas – Lewis Access Panel
Elizabeth Macdonald – Harris Access
Panel
Lucy Macdonald – Harris Access
Panel
Gayle Findlay - OHCPP

APOLOGIES

Helen Froud
Donnie White – Lewis Access Panel
Mary Maclean – NHS Health
Promotion

Welcome and Introductions

Lena Morrison (LM) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Apologies

Apologies were noted.

Minute of Meeting of 11 December 2013

The minute of the meeting of 23 August was approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
It was noted regarding the item '**Disabled Toilets at the Hospital**' that there was no emergency line located within the facility as is recommended practice and reference was made to the requirement to have a blue colour contrast for the hand rails however the requirement is simply that there should be a colour contrast.

Matters Arising

No matters arising.

Poverty Seminar /Action Group Updates

Gayle Findlay (GF) provided an update on the Poverty Action Group (PAG). The PAG engages key agencies and those with an interest in poverty matters. It is more of a lobbying group, they are unable to take a political stance regarding matters of concern.

The group are looking at ways to mitigate the impact of the welfare reform and how they can respond and source support for individuals/families regarding the implications of the Welfare Reform. Two Poverty Seminars have taken place to date. Part of the focus was to identify what poverty 'looks like' within the authority and how it may present itself. There is 'hidden' poverty within the authority area as culturally there is a sense of pride in not wishing to be identified a reliant on benefits. The awareness of fuel poverty has help understanding of poverty within the community.

An 'officers group' has been established to look at the new

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'Scottish Welfare Fund' and how other 'in kind' support can be accessed. The Scottish Welfare Fund will only consider high priority claims, there is only £47,000 to cover the grants. The Revenues and Benefits section is currently working to understand the application process to provide support to individuals.

The PAG are also looking at the cost of the welfare reform to the local economy and ensure that everybody knows where to access advice and support. The route which is being taken at present is to hold briefings with all front line staff (including police, nurses, social workers, revs & benefits, etc). The CAB will also be in a position to provide assistance.

Single Outcome Agreement (SOA)

Gayle Findlay (GF) provided an update on the SOA for 2013-23 which was requested by the Scottish Government. The draft has just been approved to be submitted to the Scottish Government and an EQIA will be completed. It was noted that high level work was covered over a ten year period. The OHCPP will focus on 7 areas over the next 3 years:-

- Sustainable Economic Growth
- Older people
- Best start in life (Children)
- Harmful effects of alcohol
- Physical and social activity
- Addressing poverty and inequalities
- Better Connected (quality infrastructure for broadband, travel and renewables)

There is an emphasis on the causes and impact of poverty (and the impact of the welfare reform). At present this is a huge task and the OHCPP are keen to take a pro-active stance with a continuous link between all agencies with an interest.

The group agreed that this was a worrying situation both nationally and locally. A discussion took place re concerns about the impact the direct payments will have with the opportunity provided for claimants to pocket the money and spend it on other means (potential to feed addictions and place them, families and home at risk). It was noted that support would be required for assist claimants with budgeting if they have never had to manage monthly payments and be responsible for paying bills, etc. There is a potential risk to increased crime rates.

There is a problem within the authority area re housing as there isn't a sufficient supply of suitable housing to move people to (ie smaller homes) even where people are willing to move. HHP have stated that they won't evict people unless the Sheriff instructs them to do so. HHP have made contact with all those impacted by the Social Housing Size Criteria ('Bedroom Tax'), and the majority of residents have stated that they cannot afford the additional payments. The local situation has is worsened by a historic policy where young couples would be allocated at least a two bed house as there was the assumption that they would go on to have a family at some stage. There is not a sufficient supply of one bedroom accommodation and waiting list times are getting longer. It was further noted that some aspects of family life have not been given due consideration, health perspectives, those managing disabilities, armed forces, foster carers, etc. The changes are anticipated to have huge impacts on health and family life.

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PASS Group

Jane Ballantyne was invited to DESG to provide information regarding this group, she has however left this post to take up a post with the Comhairle. The aim and remit of the group is detailed below, further information can be sought from the CAB.

Patient Advice and Support Group

The aim of the group is to provide information, advice and guidance and assistance in the planning and development of PASS in the local health board area.

The advisory group will have no contractual or operational involvement, but will assist the Health Board and CAB to ensure an effective, efficient service to meet the needs of the service users.

Remit

- Provide information, advice and guidance to contribute to the development and delivery of PASS
- Provide information about initiatives, plans and strategies of statutory and other agencies which may have an impact on the delivery of PASS.
- Review and advise on PASS development plans and strategies where required.
- Contribute to the marketing and promotional activity for PASS.
- Exchange good practice of relevance to PASS.
- Assist in planning joint training and staff development events.

Specific Duties

LM shared the link the legislation which details the Specific Duties set out in the Equality Act 2010. The specific duties came into effect from 27 May 2012 with the majority duties to be reported on by 30 April 2013. The specific duties are as follows:-

- Duty to report on progress on mainstreaming the equality duty
- Duty to publish equality outcomes and report progress
- Duty to assess and review policies and practices
- Duty to gather information and use employee information
- Duty to publish pay gap information
- Duty to publish statements on equal pay
- Duty to consider award criteria and condition in relation to public procurement
- Duty to publish in a manner which is accessible

A discussion took place regarding the impact of the specific duties would have in relation to the new Police Scotland force which comes into being on 1 April 2013 combining the previous 8 Police Forces throughout Scotland. John Murray (JM) from Police Scotland advised that there would be huge changes across Scotland with regard to Policing. There is now only a requirement to publish one set of equality outcomes, etc rather than each constabulary publishing a set for each area. The group expressed concern that local needs and concerns would be overlooked. JM advised that different areas across Scotland will have different needs and priorities, the Western Isles area of policing will be feeding in what is needed within the authority area. Local Policing Plans will reflect local needs and this will feed into agreed equality outcomes, it is expected that these will be broadly similar across the country. JM also noted that Stephen House, Chief Constable of Police Scotland is very supportive of Equality and Diversity issues.

Consideration of the role/purpose of DESG

LM wished to obtain the views of the group as to what the role/purpose of DESG should be. It was noted that DESG does not have any funding however it could be used as a lobbying group on local issues for smaller groups who find it difficult to advocate on their on behalf.

LM to draft and circulate an Action Plan for the

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next meeting.

It was agreed that DESG should decide on agreed priorities to focus on over the next 12 months, this may be specific to one of the partners or involve a number of stakeholders. LM agreed to draft an Action Plan for consideration by DESG members.

Partners Update

Police Scotland

JM updated the group with regard to the level of Hate Crime recorded within the authority area for 2012. There are 7 categories of Hate Crime which are detailed below along with the number of recorded incidents:-

Type	No of Incidents
Gender/Sexual	1 (3 month sentence given)
Mental Disability	0
Age	0
Physical Disability	0
Racial	2 (1 warning, 1 ongoing)
Religion	0
Other	0

It was noted that the numbers are very low and it was highlighted that the fear of being identified/targeted is likely to make people more resistant to raise a complaint. JM advised that generally there wasn't a problem with people being concerned about being identified.

Cross Reach

MM advised that there is a lack of variety and a lack of supportive opportunities that the service can use to support clients they are working with. Often clients are having to repeat short courses to simply provide them with something to focus on. The Learning Disability Forum is aware of the issue and it is something which is being looked at but with reduced funding available it will continue to be a challenge to provide opportunities for those in need of support.

Chair of DESG

CNES

IM advise that there are major changes in Homeless Legislation underway which continues to be a difficult area for the authority to manage. There are more people falling into the category of 'homeless' who haven't brought the situation on themselves and there is a real shortage of social rental accommodation within the authority area. A 24 bed temporary accommodation unit is scheduled to start construction in April 2013 however it is recognised that this will not solve the issue. There are nearly 50 homes in use in the authority area for families who fall within the homeless category and there are another 30 B&B's used to support homeless individuals. At best people will wait 18 months for HHP accommodation.

Lewis Access Panel

GT advise that the LAP have been in consultation with Calmac to ensure that all types of disabilities are taken into account during the planning stages for the new ferry. The meetings that have taken place to date have been positive and their comments appear to be taken on board.

The Airport continues to be an area of concern, an access survey was completed last year, some things have been done but a lot of action points remain outstanding. The LAP continue to look for potential hazards and making recommendations to allow disabled

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people to be independent.

GT also provided a quick update regarding the Carers Parliament which he attended last year. It was a good event with the morning session being addressed by the Minister for Health followed by participation in a number of workshops. The afternoon session was opened to the floor with a question and answer session with a Panel. The event is being planned again.

Harris Disability Access Panel

LM advised that the HDAP have also been involved in consultations with Calmac regarding the new ferry. Communication has been open and Calmac representatives have been honest that not issues have been figured out yet. Further meetings are planned to go over the plans and it is positive to note that concerns are being taken on board.

The HDAP have participated in the consultation process of the Local-Area Co-ordinators (LAC) and raised concerns that there wasn't as much direct consultaion with the service users as they would have expected and that clients needs aren't being fully considered. LM has been advised that the S&CS department are developing a Participation Strategy and that the HDAP will be involved in informing the strategy.

The HDAP are also working on re-designing their website

Date of Next Meeting TBC

Meeting Closed