

Diversity and Equality Steering Group

Note of DESG meeting
Held in Committee Rm 2
CnES, Sandwick Rd
On 23 August 2012 at 11 am

PRESENT
Lena Morrison - CnES
Isobel Mackenzie – CnES
Gordon Thomas – Lewis Access Panel
Donnie White – Lewis Access Panel/MS
Society
Helen Froud
Mary Maclean – NHSWI
Carmen Morrison - SHC
Ken Maclennan

APOLOGIES
Lucy Macdonald - HDAP
Mandy Macleod – Cross Reach
Gayle Findlay – OHCPP
Catherine Barron – LCC/UHI
Roddy Mackay- Northern Constabulary

Welcome and Introductions Lena Morrison (LM) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.
Introductions were given by those in attendance.

Apologies Apologies were noted.

Minute of Meeting of 19 April 2012 The minute of the meeting of 19 April 2012 was approved as an accurate record of the meeting with the addition of Mandy Macleod, Crossreach in attendance at the meeting.

Holocaust Memorial Day Event LM sought permission from those in attendance to bring forward at item on the Agenda to be heard at the start of the meeting and introduced Ken Maclennan.

KM introduced himself and provided background information regarding himself and his work. Having lived in the authority area for a number of years and not being aware of any Holocaust related events in the past he wants to do something on the Island to mark the Holocaust Memorial Event Day on 27 January 2013 as there are still lessons to be learned and people are still dealing with.

KM is organising a exhibition in An Lanntair which is scheduled for 28 January 2013 – 2 February 2013 (the actual Holocaust Memorial Event Day is 27 January 2013) and this years theme is 'communities together – Building a Bridge'. Part of the exhibition will form a satellite exhibition which will be shown throughout Scotland.

KM is keen to get a much involvement and participation with the event as possible and has been in contact with the Churches, Trade Unions, Public Bodies and Third Sector Partners. KM is looking for support from DESG partners with regard to participation in the event, support, materials fro display, publicity for the event, funding towards the cost of the event, translation of material for the event into Gaelic, accessible materials.

Please find attached information relating to the proposed event and the October newsletter.

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LM thanked KM for attending.

Matters Arising

Shared Roots

Mary Maclean (MM) provided an update on the Shared Roots project – currently working with the West of Scotland Health and Ethnicity partnership. Looking at research pieces, it was noted that there is a lot of material available but not much evidence to support that findings of research is being acted on. It is anticipated that a further update will be available after January.

DESG Constitution

LM advised that the DESG constitution had been presented and approved at the OHCPP meeting of 27 June 2012.



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Engagement/ Consultation Groups

LM circulated a list of local groups which DESG can use to consult regarding Equality matters.



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Accessible Public Toilets

LM advised that Tony Wade, Sports Facility Manager confirmed that the toilet facilities within the Sports Centre in Lewis (Ionad Spors Leodhais) and the Sports Centre in Harris (Ionad Spors Eilean Na Hearadh) would be suitable to meet the requirements for accessible public toilets and there is suitable equipment (in terms of hoists, etc) and appropriate public insurance in place. LM will contact Kathryn Maciver (NHSWI) to discuss to take this forward.

Scottish Passported Benefits: Consultation on changes required as a result if the introduction of Universal Credit and Personal Independenc e Payment

It was noted that all Partners are aware of the potential implications that the proposal to introduce a Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment could have for vulnerable groups. LM advised the OHCPP were submitting a response to the consultation and asked all DESG members to use their networks to consider participating in this consultation. It was noted that the closing date for the consultation is 28 September 2012.

The members in attendance shared significant concerns regarding the impact that the proposed welfare reforms, particularly in relation to Housing Benefit, will have on vulnerable groups, particularly for elderly people, people with addictions, Women's Aid had identified risks for women, particularly those with dependents. IM advised that the proposals would have impacts for all authorities but particularly for remote authorities like our where there is not enough surplus accommodation. There is evidence of sole occupants of accommodation which would be more suitable for families however voluntary schemes in the past have failed to move people to more appropriate accommodation (due to lack of suitable accommodation available and also people have emotional attachments to the homes which they have raised their families in. The proposals mean that the amount money paid to some individuals would be capped based on an assessed need of living space and they would have to make up the difference. The proposed changes to payment of Housing Benefit also causes concerns. It is proposed that HB will no longer be paid direct to landlords, it will go to the individuals in receipt of the benefits, there are concerns that this money may not reach the landlords in all cases.

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There is the risk that in time non payment of rent will lead to evictions, increased homelessness and a reduction in the private sector rental property market. There are also risks associated with providing individuals with addiction problems lump sums of money and shorter terms risks associated with individuals who have no experience of budgeting or managing money. This is just a short summary of some of the risks identified which are likely to impact vulnerable groups and members were encouraged to participate in the consultation.

British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Consultation

It was noted that this is a proposal for a Bill to promote the use of British Sign Language (BSL) by requiring the Scottish Ministers and relevant public authorities to prepare and publish BSL plans. At this stage there is not a Bill, only a draft proposal for the legislation. Again DESG members were asked to use their networks to consider participating in this consultation. It was noted that the closing date for the consultation is 31 October 2012.

Partners Update

Comhairle

LM advised that there was another Consultation which was open regarding the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy for the period 2012-2017 and is seeking the views of the community and its partners on its draft proposals. The outcome of this consultation will be considered by the Comhairle in November 2012. The Comhairle will then decide what further consultation is needed following which the Comhairle aims to agree the strategy in November or December 2012.

LM advised that she had met with John Gill – Sight Action and Mandy Reid. They provided very useful information and best practice guidance and identified how existing resources with authorities could be used to better meet the needs of people with sensory needs. It was noted that there were gaps in the information held by authorities with regard to identifying people with sensory needs. Whilst it may not be the individuals primary care need, if the information is not captured it is likely that there will be missed opportunities to provide the best level of care for that individual. The information that is captured on the Carefirst system needs to be reviewed.

LM advised that there has been a number of access issues identified in connection with the WISP, primarily these were identified at new Sir E Scott School in Tarbert and the Nicolson Institute in Stornoway where the new schools were being build adjacent to the public Sports Centres and within very tight boundaries to work in. It is recognized that there may some level of inconvenience to users of these buildings at critical stages of the build process however in some instances there appeared to be a lack of preparation and communication. The Harris Access Panel identified a number of barriers and made recommendations which were fed through to the WISP Project Team to act on.

IM advised the member of another consultation that the Comhairle (specifically Housing Services has participated in) regarding the 'Housing Adaptations: Options for Change and Improvement'. IM advised that there is not enough money in budgets for adaptations, following the removal of ring-fenced funding it is not a priority. CnES have a small budget as do HHP. The Comhairle deals directly with home owners and works with the Occupational Therapy services. There are issued regarding the quality of the maintenance being applied. The principle of home owners funding their own improvements is being considered with some access to improvement grants however the implications of this are that housing conditions will reduce to an intolerable standard resulting in more demand for social housing. Experience of the scheme has shown that the majority of disabled people are already unable to afford loans to repair or improve their

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property as their incomes are too low or they are reliant on benefits to survive and therefore cannot access mainstream loan funding.

The Comhairle work closely with the Occupational Health Service to ensure that any adaptations made will not only meet the immediate needs of the individual but longer term needs in the future.

Stakeholders are encourage to respond to the consultation as again this will have impacts on vulnerable groups.

A link to the Comhairle's response to the consultation is available here:

<http://www.cne-siar.com/committees/environmental/agendas/august2012/K%20Item%2011%20HOUSING%20ADAPTATIONS%20OPTIONS%20FOR%20CHANGE%20AND%20IMPROVEMENT-%20CONSULTATION.pdf>

DW added that the MS Society Scotland have grants available to provide adaptations and respite. IM added that Social Work fund equipment while Housing fund adaptations of building

Lewis Access Panel

GT advised that a joint meeting with the Harris Disability Access Panel had been arranged with Keith Barron from Scottish Disability Equality Forum however this did not take place due to ill health.

GT is scheduled to attend the first Carers Parliament will be held at the Scottish Parliament on Monday 1 October. The day will bring together over 180 carers from every constituency in Scotland. There are two delegates expected to attend from the Western Isles and the event is scheduled to be televised.

MS Society

DW advised that a MS Nurse had now been appointed and the local MS Society are pleased with the progress to date.

DW advised the local MS Society are facing a challenge from the Comhairle who have advised that the Hyperbaric Chamber, which was gifted the MS Society a number of years ago and has been located at the Grianan Centre, will have to be removed. DW advised that it has been located at Grianan for a number of years, it is a convenient place to have it, it is next to the hydro therapy pool and other equipment which benefits users. It is maintained and insured by the local branch but they have been advised that there is a Health and Safety risk to other service users and employee's at Grianan and the Comhairle is under no duty to provide the Unit.

DW advised that the local branch are left with problem of trying to relocate the Unit so that local users will still be able to receive the benefits from it. They would love to set up a MS Resource Centre to provide services and have identified a building but access and rent could be an issue.

LM and CM advised that they would make enquiries regarding the situation.

Scottish Health Council

CM informed the members that the Scottish Health Council had been asked by the National Patient Experience to carry out an engagement exercise to obtain views about the Better Together Website. They are looking to engage with small groups of people to review the things like

LM and CM to make enquiries regarding the Hyperbaric Chamber.

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accessibility, layout, etc and the SHC will assist those in attendance to complete a short questionnaire to provide feedback. CM requested that anyone interested in participating in the project to contact her

Lewis Access Panel

GT advised that the first Carers Parliament is meeting on 1st October 2012 at Scottish Parliament. Two delegates from every authority area in Scotland are invited to attend. GT and Jinty Morrison are attending from the Western Isles. The meeting is scheduled to be televised live. GT will provide an update to the next DESG meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

11 December 2012 at 11am in the Comhairle Offices

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