

Diversity and Equality Steering Group

Minute of Meeting

held at Western Isles Hospital on 11th December 2009 at 14.00pm.

Present

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| Norma Morrison | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Chairperson) |
| Calum Russell | NHS Western Isles |
| Lucy Macdonald | Harris Access Panel |
| Elizabeth Macdonald | Harris Access Panel |
| TK Shadakshari | NHS Western Isles |
| Lena Morrison | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar |
| Donnie White | Lewis Access Panel |
| Helen Froud | Improvement Forum |
| Roddy MacKay | Northern Constabulary |
| Mark Jones | Northern Constabulary |
| Jane Macleod | NHS Western Isles |
| Isabel MacKenzie | Comhairle nan Eilean Siar |

Apologies

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| Denise Symington | NHS Western Isles |
| Mandy Macleod | Crossreach |
| Iain Mackenzie | Third Sector Hebrides |
| Alan Ross | Harris Access Panel |
| Gordon Thomas | Lewis Access Panel |
| Martin Malcolm | NHS Western Isles |
| Karen France | NHS Western Isles |
| Carmen Morrison | Scottish Health Council |

Minutes

The Minutes of Meeting of 28th October 2009 were approved subject to a correction at AOCB regarding Access Panel access to funding of £2000. It was noted that the Access Panels had not secured this funding but an application could be submitted to the Scottish Disability Equality Forum (SDEF) and funding would be provided if the criteria was met. The application is yet to be submitted.

Matters Arising

CPIG – The group were advised that discussions were ongoing regarding the Community Partnership Information Group (CPIG). There will be a review of CPIG and membership of the group is an issue. A discussion regarding CPIG will take place at the next Community Planning Partnership meeting in January.

Disabled Persons Parking Places (Scotland) Act 2009 – the group were advised that the introduction of the new legislation it is evident that there are very onerous conditions that apply to the enforcement of disabled bays by public authorities. The Comhairle will work with the local police and traffic wardens to enforce the disabled spaces in the town centre. However the bays that exist in rural areas in places like church car parks and at shops or supermarkets present logistical and financial issues. SCOTS (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland) have written the Scottish Government with regard to funding the requirements of the act and we await their response.

Hate Free Hebrides – the group were advised that this would be taken to the next Community Safety Partnership meeting on 26th January 2010.

Update from DEWG and REWG

The group were advised that the Disability Equality Working Group (DEWG) meet on 4 December 2009. The group discussed progress that had been made over the past year and what the priorities should be for the Action Plans for the next three years. It was evident that communication between the authorities and the Access Panels was still a concern. If the Access Panels became involved in access issues at the earliest stage to provide their expertise then a lot of time and potentially money could be saved. It was also noted that Access and Disabled Parking Places also remained a priority.

There had not been another Race Equality Working Group (REWG) meeting since October as alternative to engagement needed to be explored. Lena advised the group that she visited the 'Learning Shop' service delivered by the Comhairle and met with the ESOL worker and some of the attendee's at the session. It was evident that language would be a barrier to those present to actively participate in groups such as REWG and DESG. They relied very much on the ESOL worker to get their point across and to understand the information being provided. Information was left with them to think about any barriers or challenges they face in integrating into the community or accessing services, etc. It was identified that a list of services and information would be useful, similar to that which the CPP provided in Latvian and Polish, this will be explored further.

Disability Involvement and Diversity Monitoring

The group were advised that the Scottish Government have got a 'drive' on disability involvement at present and the requirement for authorities to get this right rather than it being a 'tick the boxes' exercise. Scottish Ministers are paying particular attention to this at present and questions are being asked of authorities.

The NHS Western Isles (NHSWI) are the first board in the country to get DDA involvement in Property Strategy. No work that is carried out regarding DDA will be sanctioned until the plans have been checked and authorised by members of the Property Strategy Group which includes Access Panel members. Work had been identified to upgrade buildings up to compliance 'B' standard, funds to complete this work have been allocated and needs to be used by March 2010.

The Health Board were visited by the Improvement Service (IS) who gather statistics and report on them. It was noted that NHSWI were struggling with the monitoring and collation

of information about service users. It was anticipated that it was going to be a struggle to get the information required. Following a visit to GP surgeries, out of 2000 requests all but 8 replies were received which was a fantastic response. It was felt that we are sometimes fearful of asking these questions but it should be encouraged as equality and diversity is not going away. The group look forward to receiving further updates in the New Year.

Transgender Group

The were advised the member who raised this point (not present at meeting) understood that a grant to support the setting up of the group would be provided by CPP however this does not appear to be the case. Helen advised the group that she had spoken at length with the existing Lesbian Group and they are adamant at present that they wish their network to remain for lesbians alone and at the present time are not interested in becoming part of a LGBT group. The group recognised there should be a support group for Transgender people if they require it. The group were advised that 13 people who have gone through the sex change operation locally but they have fears of being recognised and there is a fear of discrimination. It was stated that those who work for the Health Board don't want to be identified and it was acknowledged that they are in a comparable position to that of Lesbian/Gay groups 10 or 15 years ago.

Funding through the CPP would not be available. Funding through 'Stonewall' needs to come through DESG and funding is allocated per head of population, given the population of the Western Isles any funding received would be relatively small and there is a strict criterion to go through to receive any allocation.

The Police are only involved where matters of crime have been reported and would offer advice and assistance. The group were advised that often transgender people don't report incidents to the police, not for fear of reporting it but fear of being identified if it goes through the courts and in the press, publicity alone would identify individuals when it goes into the public arena. The group were advised that this could be addressed by speaking to the Procurator Fiscal. It was noted that this is not just a diversity issue, it is an equal fear of any individual who reports a crime.

Mark advised that it is still important for people to report crimes even if they don't wish to pursue it. It will still be recorded as a crime and the information would be used to identify patterns of crime/behaviour. Individuals would not need to be identified. It was also noted that even if individuals didn't want the reported incident to go as far as court police involvement could still step in to assist the individual and information obtained for intelligence gathering.

This could also link into the 'Hate Free Hebrides' website. The next Community Planning Safety meeting is on 26th January and the use of the website will be raised at this meeting. By this time an evaluation of the 'Hate Free Highland' website will have been completed so there will be more information to share. It was acknowledged that there is going to be challenges with it and alternatives should also be considered if funding and involvement is going to be an issue.

Action Plan

The group were asked if they were happy with what was on the action plan. A discussion took place regarding 'gender based violence' following a recent Scottish Government project and whether this is an area the group should have more focus on. It was agreed that this remains a sensitive area with specific targets requiring specialist skills and it would not be appropriate for DESG to be a lead group in this area when other agencies (eg Social Work) have more expertise and resources to work with. It was noted that DESG would consider any equalities issues brought to the groups attention. It was also noted that there are new guidelines being issued regarding domestic abuse, Calum Russell will be getting 100 copies of the new guidance and will distribute accordingly.

Election of New Chair of DESG

The Constitution for DESG states that the Chair of DESG should be on a rotational basis. Nominations were invited to from those present at the meeting to Chair the DESG meetings for the next year. NHS WI and CnES had previously had representatives chairing the meetings. It was agreed by those present that nominations should be opened up to the voluntary sector. Helen Froud, Improvement Forum, was proposed by Norma Morrison and seconded by Roddy Mackay. Helen Froud accepted based on the provision on administrative support.

AOCB

Single Equality Bill – Helen informed the meeting that it appears that the Single Equality Bill will go through this Parliament Session. Consultation was still open on it and those in attendance were encouraged to view it and comment as appropriate. It was noted that you don't have to comment on all parts of it – simply select the parts that are of interest to you.

Mutuality Bill – Calum advised that this bill is being drafted at present but the legislation that is coming through at present appears to be a duplication of the Single Equality Bill. Further information to follow.

Date of Next meeting

Meeting dates will be agreed for the next year and when meeting rooms have been booked confirmation of the dates will be sent to DESG members.

