

The Coalition of Carers in Scotland Minutes 26th August 2009

Present:

Mary Stewart	Fife Carers Centre
Bill Middleton	Fife Carers Centre
Seb Fischer	Voice of Carers Across Lothian (VOCAL)
Claire Cairns	The Coalition of Carers in Scotland
Peter Hibberd	Carers Centre, Kirkcaldy
Iain Biernat	Fife Carers Centre
Hanneli Doehner	Wir Pflegen
Agnes McMillan	Falkirk Carers Centre
Liz McCue	PRT Falkirk Carers Centre
J Duncanson	East End Carers
M McIntyre	East End Carers
Heather Gouck	Moving on Project, Dundee
Lynn Williams	PRTC
Florence Burke	PRTC
Shona	HCCF
Sheena Munro	HCCF
Rosie Lawrence	SWIA
Alice Gray	Carers Support
Gordon Paterson	Scottish Government
Carolan Connolly	West Glasgow PRT
Audrey Thompson	Planning Together
Shelley Gray	LTCAS
Ann Anderson	VOCAL
Sue Bernard	VSA Carers Centre
Elizabeth McDade	VSA Carers Centre
Tricia Morrison	A&B Carers Network
Catherine Paterson	Dochas Carers Centre
Rhona Spowart	Independent Advocacy Perth
Clare Gallagher	Independent Advocacy Perth
Rosemary McLean	Perth and Kinross Housing
Marcia McGuinness	North West Carers Centre
Teresa Woodman	North West Carers Centre
Sam Clarke	NLCT
DP MacGillivray	Carers of West Lothian
Maureen Summers	Carer, Perth

1. Welcome and Announcements

Alan welcomed everyone to the meeting and emphasised the importance of the European carers movement and its relevance to carers in Scotland.

2. Dr Hanneli Doehner, Hamburg University

Dr Doehner covered the following issues in her presentation:

- Results of the EUROFAMCARE study. The largest ever study into the situation for family carers in Europe
- Eurocarers – An insight into the carers movement in Europe
- Development of ‘Wir pflegen’ the German Carers Association

3. Sebastian Fischer, VOCAL

Seb gave an update on progress towards the European Carers Conference in Edinburgh. The conference will take place in Edinburgh from the 17th to the 20th of May 2010.

4. Questions, Answers and Discussions

Q: In terms of carer support, the percentage of carers in Germany receiving this service is very low. What are your thoughts on this?

A: Everyone should have access to support and information. In Germany for the first time we have this service, many countries don't have access to this service at all.

Q: In Germany is there support for specific illnesses, for example, dementia, mental illness?

A: Yes, all such support is illness orientated. There are several organisations like this providing support.

Q: How can the carers movement in Europe work with the European Parliament to get results for carers?

A: It is important to make sure carers have a profile in Europe. There are opportunities to look for European funding for the development of the carers movement.

We also need to make links between professional carers and family carers to increase carers rights and have them on the same footing as paid workers. If we have a strong carers lobby leading to legislation in Europe this will have significant influence on legislation in Scotland and other countries.

At the moment carers have no rights. This is the key issue which must be addressed, legislative rights for carers at the hard end of caring to save them from having to fight for services.

Comment: A lone voice is no good. Lobbying by carers is very important, Carers groups have to be involved

Q: Do the statistics in the report refer just to older carers or all carers?

A: Only carers over 65. In Germany there was no awareness of young carers until very recently.

Q: We talk about the economic value of carers, but we need more refined arguments and research

A: We also need to extend this to other European countries. Not just the value of caring in pounds, but costings of the economic benefits of carer support, such as training is very important.

In Germany carers have a right to training, but carers need to go to training, it is not provided in the home.

Comment: Parent carers have taken much longer to gain recognition and may still not be recognised in other countries. It is important to make sure we reach them as well as carers of older people.

5. Dr Richard Simpson MSP, The Scottish Labour Party

In advance of the next General Election this session explored how we can best influence political parties to secure better recognition, rights and support for carers. Dr Simpson provided an introduction.

6. Question, Answer and Discussion Session

Q: You emphasise the importance of Carers Assessments, but access to an assessment does not mean access to services.

A: Carers assessments are important as a first step. They are important in identifying unmet need and they are important to help us plan for the future. They also help to plan for crisis situations when the carer may not be able to continue caring.

Carers need time to themselves and should get access to respite. However we are a long way from perfect in terms of giving carers the support they need.

Q: In Scotland carers can no longer be ignored. Politicians are scared of getting into costs and are more cautious in written statements

A: It is important that you give your views through the consultation process. Comments need to be precise, sharp and meaningful.

Q: In the last 15 to 20 years we have gained recognition for carers and they are high on the political agenda. We need to shift now to gaining rights for carers. The SNP has already promised a minimum entitlement to respite for carers in the greatest need. It is disappointing that there is not more commitment to carers, for example, rights to carer training and emotional support.

A: There is more focus on crisis care and preventative care has decreased. We need support for better access to carer assessments with an emphasis on training. Equality for carer is important and can be justified in terms of human rights and equality.

7. Discussion Groups

The groups discussed what messages they wanted to give to political parties in the run up to the General Election, looking particularly at supporting carers through employment and welfare benefits.

8. Final Remarks and Closing

Alan thanked all the speakers and everyone for coming.

A copy of all presentations are available by contacting Claire Cairns at Tel: 01786 825529 or E-mail: coalition@carersnet.org or on our Website at www.carersnet.org/meetings/last.php