

The Coalition of Carers in Scotland

Minutes of Annual General Meeting, 25th February 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
Alan Scougal	The Coalition of Carers in Scotland, Gairloch Community
Rosemary Nicholson	GAMH
Biliana Hamilton	GAMH
Jacqueline McBeath	Moving on Project
Tricia Morrison	Argyll and Bute Carers Network
Gordon Dodds	City of Edinburgh Council
Katy Webster	Angus Carers Centre
Morag O'Donnell	PRT Lanarkshire
Ruth MacLennan	Care for Carers
Alan Baird	ADSW
E Robertson	SNFAD
Cathy Peattie	M.S.P
Diana Buchanan	GSWCC
Fiona Collie	Carers Scotland
Tony Fitzpatrick	North Lanarkshire Carers Together
Elizabeth McDade	VSA Carers Centre, Aberdeen
E Golby	Perth Carers Group
Mary-Denise McKernon	Carers of West Lothian
Catherine Paterson	The Dochas Carers Centre
Carolan Connolly	West Glasgow Carers Centre
Bill Kidd	M.S.P
Malcolm Laughton	Scottish Parliament
Helena	PRTLCC
W Wright	PRT Lanarkshire
Maureen Kerley	North East Carers Forum
Louise Morgan	PRTC
Ian Biernat	Fife Carers Centre
Ronnie Blackadder	PRTC
Liz McCue	Falkirk
A McKay	Glasgow South East
Josephine McGill	Glasgow South East Carers Centre
Diane Goodman	Renfrewshire Carers Centre
Amy Anderson	Renfrewshire Carers Centre
Iain Love	Glasgow S.E Carers
Maureen Summers	Perth
Jim Lapsly	PRT for Carers
P Mahon	Carers Centre, Falkirk
Christine Reid	Carers Centre, Falkirk
Mary Ritchie	
Agnes MacMillan	Carers Centre, Alloa
James Duncanson	East End Carers
Christine Speedwell	Carers Centre, Ayrshire
Christine Farquhar	VOCAL
D MacGillivray	Carers of West Lothian

1. Welcome and Announcements

Alan welcomed everyone to our Annual General Meeting and made the following announcements::

- Alan drew people's attention to the contents of the Information Pack, Including a report on Our Activities 2008/2009
- Along with Shared Care Scotland, the Coalition has jointly developed a briefing paper entitled ' Give us a Break: Turning Commitments into Action' on the new respite guidance. This will be available in the next few weeks. It is free to members.
- Members were given an update on the Carers Poverty Protest. The Edinburgh Protestors will start from Edinburgh castle at 1pm on the 22nd April (Budget Day!) and arrive outside the Scottish Parliament at 1.45pm for a rally with followed by a Lobby of the MSP's.
- The Scottish Government has proposed a clarification of the free personal care legislation, to ensure that no local authority is able to charge pensioners for food preparation. Lord Sutherland's 2008 report into the implementation of free personal care found that eight councils – Argyll & Bute, Dundee City, Glasgow City, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders and Stirling – were charging for providing meals. This was criticised, and now the Government is submitting new regulations to Parliament to close the unintended loophole. Also included are separate regulations to increase care payments to account for inflation

2. Introducing the panel and the debate: 'The future of unpaid care in Scotland - What next for carers?'

Mary-Denise McKernon, Vice Chairperson of the Coalition introduced the panel for the debate.

Panel Members

- Catherine Patterson - Catherine is a carer from Argyll and Bute and a founder of the Dochas Centre which supports carers in the mid-Argyll area.
- Cathy Peattie MSP - Cathy is a member of parliament for Falkirk East (Scottish Labour) and Convener of the Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Carers
- Bill Kidd MSP - Bill is a member of parliament for Glasgow (Scottish National Party) and Deputy Convener of the Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Carers
- Alan Baird - Alan is the Director of Social Work at Dundee City Council and the President of the Association of Directors of Social Work
- Alan Scougal - Alan is a former carer from Wester Ross and Chairperson of the Coalition of Carers in Scotland

Each panel member then gave a five minute response to the question 'What next for carers'

3. Question and Answer Session

Q: Liz McCue - Falkirk Carers Centre: Previously money was ringfenced, we now have no guarantee that carer support services will continue to be funded. The reality is that carer centres deliver good services, but have had no increase in funding in the last six years.

A: Catherine Patterson: There is unequal access to carer support across Scotland. This is the case in Argyll and Bute. Carers did not appear in local Single Outcome Agreements which is worrying, which means we need someone at government level to have an overview of this and ensure carers services are invested in and are not in danger. For example, the only respite unit in Argyll and Bute is currently under threat and could close.

A: Alan Baird: Dundee is transparent about the number of hours of respite it provides and has a clear action plan for delivering the additional respite weeks. This may not be the case for all local authorities, but this will be monitored through COSLA

A: Cathy Peattie MSP: Numbers are meaningless. Community care needs to be ringfenced. It is not enough for carers to have a paragraph in Single Outcome Agreements. Local Authorities need to ensure carers have a say in local planning

Bill Kidd MSP: The agreement for additional respite weeks is on top of what local authorities provide already. If local authorities are not delivering properly then this needs to be addressed. I will speak to the minister about concerns. It is disappointing that local authorities do not all have a transparent plan for delivery like Dundee

Q: Bill Middleton, carer, Fife: The challenges of living and caring for someone with Alzheimer's has recently been highlighted by Terry Pratchett and John Suchet. Westminster have promised £150 million to improve the lives of people living with dementia. What will the Scottish government do to support people in the same position in Scotland?:

A: Bill Kidd MSP: I will find out from the minister if the money will be available in Scotland and if so, how it will be spent.

Q: David MacGillivray, carer, West Lothian: The Carers Allowance falls far short of recognising the savings made by the state due to the efforts of carers, and many carers don't qualify, such as the pensioner whose working life contributions earn a pension, who then loses their entitlement to carers allowance or the student who combines studying with looking after someone. How do you believe Carers Allowance should be reformed?:

A: Bill Kidd MSP: There is a review of welfare benefits going on at Westminster at the moment, but it has failed to address the issue of carers, of the contribution they make and particularly of recognising the issue of carers who are of retirement age who do not qualify for Carers Allowance. The Cross-Party Working Group on Carers would be willing to write to the pensions secretary to raise this issue.

Comment: David MacGillivray: Older people slip through the net. I would also like to give the example of a carer giving up work to look after someone with a mental illness who doesn't qualify for Carers Allowance, because the person they look after stays in care overnight.

A: Alan Scougal: Carers go through hoops for inadequate financial support, yet the government has provided 5 billion to subsidise the banks. How can we shift priorities to recognise the contribution carers make to society?

A: Cathy Peattie MSP: The system doesn't understand carers. We know what needs to be done.

Comment: Fiona Collie, Carers Scotland: The Carer Poverty Protest planned for 22nd April, will hopefully put pressure on politicians. There is an election in 2 years time and carers and organisations need to make contact with politicians and gain a commitment to review Carers Allowance. The Scottish politicians can also address the problem. For example, three-quarters of carers are living in fuel poverty.

Q: Donna, Falkirk PRTC: The carers assessment process is inadequate. Few are completed and when they are they don't result in services. How can this be improved?

A: Cathy Peattie MSP: We need a commitment to go forward with assessments in SOAs. This has been picked up in SWIA inspections, with uptake of carers assessments only at 17%.

Alan Baird: Not enough is being done. We have a duty to assess, but no obligation to do anything afterwards. Staff feel they are raising false expectations. As the demand on social work services increases legislation needs to change if carers assessments are to be meaningful.

Bill Kidd MSP: Apologies for leaving at this point. I will address these issues with Cathy Peattie and the minister

Comment: Seb Fisher, VOCAL Carers Centre: The first meeting of the new Carers Strategy Meeting is on Friday. I would like to note a few things. What is it we want to progress in terms of policy and research and Carers Rights issues? At the moment carers can ask for an assessment, but have no right to services. They can ask for flexible working, but have no right to it. The carer movement, like the trade union movement, represents a large workforce. A larger workforce than paid health workers. They have no basic rights, no health and safety measures, no right to breaks or an income. We need to negotiate for rights for carers

Q: Carolann Connelly, carer Glasgow: Parents looking after children who have complex care needs and require 2 to 1 support, have been told by Glasgow City Council that they need to look at other less expensive forms of support

A: Alan Baird: There is a big issue around individual care packages not recognising demographic changes, For example, children living into adulthood with increased needs. There needs to be greater awareness about this and greater support from government.

Q: Ann Anderson. carer. Edinburgh: In the future we know there will be more people requiring care, both because of an ageing population and because more people are living with long term conditions, yet there will not be an increase in resources to pay for this care. What solutions are there to this problem?

A: Alan Baird: We are working with COSLA to look at resource transfer. When hospital wards closed this put more pressure on social services. The NHS needs to pay more to compensate for these savings.

A: Cathy Peattie MSP: In Falkirk it is difficult for people to access long term care as the social work department says it costs too much. I would like to hear from people on this issue. There is plenty of money, it is not being used appropriately. Carers just don't have the energy to shout. It is important to lobby your MSPs For example the Equal Opportunities Committee are today holding a debate on unpaid carers.

4. Annual General Meeting -

Chairperson's report

A copy of the Chairperson's report is available on request.

Network Coordinator's report

A copy of the Network Coordinator's report is available on request.

Treasurer's report

A copy of the Treasurer's report, or a copy of the certified accounts are available on request.

Election of Executive Committee members

The following members of the Executive Committee were re-elected. There were no new nominations.

Ann Anderson	A former carer from Edinburgh and Chair of VOCAL – (Voice of Carers Across Lothian)
Sebastian Fischer	Convenor, Policy and Partnership Group & Carers in Europe Group , Chief Executive of VOCAL
Tony Fitzpatrick	A carer from Lanarkshire
Pat Gallagher	Manager of West Glasgow Carers Centre
Elizabeth McDade	A carer from Aberdeen
Mary-Denise McKernan	Vice Chairperson & Convenor, Short Breaks Group Manager of Carers of West Lothian.
Bill Middleton	A carer from Fife
Suzanne Munday	Manager of MECOPP, Minority Ethnic Carers Project
Sheena Munro	Convenor Rural and Remote Carers Group Chief Executive of Highland Community Care Forum
Alan Scougal	Chairperson , Former carer from Wester Ross and Chair of Gairloch and District Community Care Forum
Mary Stewart	Treasurer , Manager of Fife Carers Centre.
Jan Wells	Carers Services Manager, Volunteer Services Aberdeen

5. Ideas Fayre

This provided members with the opportunity to share ideas and examples of good practice.

6. 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