

Governance Group Meeting Minutes
6 October 2016, 1.30pm
University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

REVIEWED BY CHAIR

Present: **Kabie Brook**, Autism Rights Group Highland; **Michael Dawson**, an autistic person; **James Fletcher**, ARC Scotland; **Anne Marie Gallagher**, NHS GGC; **Alistair Gilmour**, Autism Network Scotland; **Emma Hanley**, Autism Network Scotland; **Ian Hood**, Learning Disability Alliance Scotland; **Richard Ibbotson**, The Richmond Fellowship Scotland; **Jean MacLellan** (CHAIR), National Autism Co-ordination Project; **Donald Macleod**, National Autism Co-ordination Project; **Annette Pyle**, Scottish Government (Care, Support and Rights Division); **Cathy Steedman**, Autism Initiatives.

Guest: **Charlene Tait**, Scottish Autism.

Apologies: **Carolyn Brown**, Fife Council/Education; **Kjersti Fergusson**, Scottish Government; **Jamie MacDougall**, Scottish Government (Care, Support and Rights Division); **Iain McClure**, NHS Lothian; **Peter McCulloch**, Social Work Scotland; **Jess McPherson**, Scottish Government (Care, Support and Rights Division); **Jenny Paterson**, National Autistic Society; **Alan Somerville**, Scottish Autism; **John Urquhart**, COSLA.

Absent: **Thom Kirkwood**, Parental Peer Advocate.

I. Welcome, apologies and introductions – JMaCL welcomed the group to the meeting and apologies were heard.

The group discussed potential alterations to its membership. Kjersti Fergusson of the Scottish Government is to be offered a permanent place in the Governance Group; her colleague Robert Mitchell will continue to be invited as a guest when discussions become relevant to his position.

Members of the group were invited to provide named alternates from their organisations who might routinely attend in their absence as guests. An example of this is CT attending today on behalf of Scottish Autism in place of AS.

ACTION POINT – AP to provide the group with an update on the management structure of the Care, Support & Rights Division.

CB is keen to continue as a member of the group intends to discuss issues relating to education. It was thought that Scottish Government representation on matters of education would be beneficial so that discussions might better reflect the new Outcomes Framework.

PM of Social Work Scotland has relinquished his position on the group as he feels, following his new role at the organisation, another colleague would be better placed to represent SWS.

ACTION POINT – Duncan McIntyre of Social Work Scotland to be invited to take a permanent role on the Governance group.

II. Minutes

Page 5 of previous minutes – Paragraph beginning ‘TK began a brief discussion...’ to end with ‘momentum *and impact.*’

III. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Previous Action Point - AP to circulate paper on the Mental Welfare Commission and the Learning Disability Commission scoping exercise to the group.

Circulated.

Previous Action Point - JMcP asked that the group consider the measures to be taken by the new strategic partner as outlined in the Policy paper and offer any further comments and suggestions to AP/JMcP via AG.

JMcL was disappointed that no further comments on the report were received, while acknowledging that the evaluation process had previously offered members of the group an opportunity for comment. The scoping exercise on the new strategic partner will be completed based on conversations from the previous meeting and is expected to begin in the coming weeks.

ACTION POINT – any further comments to be considered from the group to be sent to AG as a matter of urgency.

Previous Action Point – Thom to share his framework for review of local autism plans.

Done.

The One Stop Shops

The group discussed issues arising following the closures of the One Stop Shops in Aberdeen and Lanarkshire. Aberdeen are now moving towards being an ‘autism friendly city’ while replacement services in North Lanarkshire are now being offered by HOPE for Autism, with further support offered by the National Autism Co-ordination Project. People wishing to access services and service providers signposting towards the One Stop Shops need to be aware of the recent changes to services.

IV. Working Group Activity reports

RI, JF, AMG

RI began to discuss his update on the activities of Working Group 1 which quickly led into the intended wider discussion on the future remits, membership and objectives of the strategy working groups. RI described the detailed review of Working Group 1’s work plan that formed the bulk of its most recent meeting, which found that some of its

stated activities are so broad as to be out with what the working group can itself achieve. RI thought that this might explain the dwindling attendance to group meetings – only six attended the September meeting – as members think the work of the group is beginning to lack substance and requires rejuvenation.

Prof. Tommy Mackay is expected to publish his Microsegmentation Report in the coming weeks, the detail of which sits across the remits of all three remaining working groups but features only in the work plan of Working Group 1. It is thought that a discussion on the conclusions of the report and future work based on them should take place at the Governance Group and inform the work plans of all three working groups.

Other activities included in work plans might suggest the invitation of new members to each group to allow useful discussions to more easily lead to practical outcomes for autistic people and their families. While attendance in some groups is beginning to drop on occasion, AP stated that government are aware that numerous colleagues at different organisations are keen to join their membership in future. The described need for new activities and discussion topics could both reinvigorate the existing membership and invite contributions from new members, with education an area particularly recognised by the Governance Group as requiring attention. Other activities on current work plans would benefit from a more focussed approach to a specific goal for the group rather than a wider, sometimes more vague objective. It was also suggested that the term 'working group' might be better replaced with 'review group' or another alternative name as a more accurate title, as the quarterly nature of meetings mean that new work originating within the group can be rare and slow to unfold.

EH noted that the current working groups have proven themselves productive and successful when there is clarity surrounding the remit of the group, which synchronises with the roles of members within their organisations and fits one of the overarching aims of the Scottish Strategy for Autism.

JF updated the group on the activities of Working Group 2 in what he described as a comparatively quiet period. The working group's work plan was redrafted as an external document and was widely shared and published to the [Strategy website](#). The group is also currently communicating with the Scottish Learning Disability Observatory (SLDO), through IH, and hopes to access their data describing autism diagnosis in Scotland as gleaned from the 2011 census.

JF feels that Working Group 2 is fortunate in that it has a distinct purpose which dovetails with its members' positions in their organisations, allowing it to be a well-functioning, successful group aimed at improving access to good transitions in Scotland. The launch of the upcoming *Principles of Good Transition 3* document and its autism supplement was discussed at its most recent meeting, with the likely publication of both documents potentially coinciding with the 5th Annual Scottish Strategy for Autism National conference in January.

KB launched a discussion among the group on what might be possible to ensure the good practice outlined in documents such as *PoGT* is carried out in practice, with DM commenting that unsatisfactory transitions are a common complaint heard on travels to local authorities undertaken by the National Autism Co-ordination Project. JF described how the current series of transitions training events being carried out by the Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland and Autism Network Scotland, *Autism & Transitions: Understanding Your Role*, meets with autistic people, their families and supporting practitioners to identify and share examples of good practice wherever they are found. JF stressed how these events aim to meet recognised needs within local authority services and are part of a larger process of responding to the concerns expressed by delegates of these events. The current *Autism & Transitions* events are a response to a previous ARC/ANS series of events, *Exploring Transitions: Digging Deeper*, and the findings of the current events will inform future activity. The current events have been well-attended though, as JMCL emphasised, the measuring of the impact of these events is paramount; JMCP has previously stated the need for an increased quantification of tangible results as we approach the half-way point of the ten-year Scottish Strategy for Autism. JF explained how the aim of these events is to objectively recognise the strengths and weaknesses of current transitions practices, to build a consensus on the issues to be addressed among the stakeholders of transitions processes, and to involve these stakeholders at each step of the process, creating momentum and building on the successes of childhood transitions as people begin to make use of adult services. The data provided by the national project on mapping transitions services is expected to be available in the new year, offering the opportunity to observe the trajectory of stakeholders who undergo successful transitions, to ask what these stakeholders went through at any point to make those transitions work, with the aim of replicating examples of successful cases in future. The Governance Group agreed on the importance therefore of seeing through current work being done in this area to best ensure its impacts are felt and are measurable.

AMG offered an update on the recent activity of Working Group 4, which last met in June shortly after the previous meeting of the Governance Group. The most substantial piece of work currently nearing completion is a webpage on the Autism Network Scotland website detailing the various different 'autism alert cards' available in Scotland. This is a piece of work instigated by Robert MacBean while employed by the National Autistic Society, carried on by KB of ARGH (Autism Rights Group Highland) and of the Governance Group, and moved forward by Jayne Porter of ANS. The page describes the different types of alert card available to autistic people, including versions that can be designed by the bearer, offered by a variety of organisations. No single design is recommended above the others and the designs are not intended to be in any way compulsory. KB made the point that they should be regarded as no more or less significant than an autistic person declaring themselves to be so when using a public utility or speaking to a person of authority. The generation of this webpage is the conclusion of a piece of work instigated by a debate in the Scottish Parliament on autism alert cards and, as AP noted, it is pleasing to have a tangible result to the discussion. A further potential webpage was suggested to feature the various mobile applications (or

‘apps’) currently being designed by different organisations to support people on the spectrum.

AMG also discussed issues around another long-term goal of the working group, to improve autism service provision and access to it, focussing here on the capacity of diagnostic services in Scotland. AMG described challenges facing services in different areas of the country around reducing waiting times whilst increasing access to services and thereby the numbers of people being assessed. AP stated that a scoping exercise to assess capacity of current diagnostic services is underway. It is hoped among the group that by increasing access to childhood diagnostic services and thereby the numbers of children diagnosed, the current high numbers of adults seeking assessment will thereby decrease over time. Representatives of both the Autism Education Trust and Education Scotland have been invited to the next meeting of Working Group 4 to discuss how upskilling teachers and others in education can gradually improve access to childhood assessments for schoolchildren. JMCL suggested that as part of the review of the Working Groups’ work plans, educational issues ought to be considered among the groups’ renewed objectives. Offering support to children in education in turn effects how the go on to access further services in future.

KB enquired as to how someone might request an alteration to the *Autism Outcomes Approach: Priorities 2015-17* document, as she feels that the aim of the strategy to offer ‘independence’ to autistic people in their daily lives would be better replaced with ‘autonomy’, making the point that “Successful autistic people aren't necessary needing services so much as successful because they access services.”

AP suggested that the group would have the opportunity to use a preferred description in the Governance Group’s outcomes document due to be published in April 2017, with the next version of the *Autism Outcomes* document expected circa 2019.

The discussion concluded with an agreement to take the current opportunity to refresh the working groups both in terms of their objectives and their membership, to focus on a new set of clear, achievable goals that are better synchronised with the Autism Outcomes and its future drafts.

ACTION POINT – The working groups will discuss both at their next meetings and between each other what they would like to precisely focus on achieving and the process for doing so, with invitations to innovative and appropriate new members to follow. Outcomes must be both impactful and measurable.

V. Coordination report

DM

DMCL offered the group an update on the latest activities of the National Autism Co-ordination Project, which has focussed lately on ‘moving into a more systematic approach to autism planning and delivery, as we continue to provide support at a local level, either in the development of implementation plans or in practical capacity

building, through the tools for the job the Network provides.' The enquiries the NACP receives from different areas of the country reflect the stage of implementation of the particular local authority's autism plan and the concerns that are key to the area, be that housing, criminal justice, or the effects and availability of out-of-area placements.

DMcL then led the group in discussions of key questions that have arisen from the work of the NACP. *Firstly, how do we support the longer-term sustainability of what is being achieved at a local level?*

JMcL described sustainability as the major issue facing local authority autism services in the current period of economic austerity. Issues of funding and consequent staff turnover are hindering progress in certain areas, despite pressure being created by the National Autism Co-ordination Project in their work aiding the implementation of local authority autism strategies. Different areas utilise different models, with some local authorities having a dedicated member of staff for autism whereas in others support of autistic people is simply an aspect of a larger remit.

RI stated that the effectiveness of service development in any area is typically the result of committed, motivated individuals having an impact at a local level. Similarly, the integration of local autism steering groups varies enormously between local authorities.

AMG described how examples of good practice and the expertise of good practitioners are not being shared sufficiently between local authorities, with services repeatedly reaching the same people. This simply maintains the status quo rather than offers improvement for those not being supported.

While the drive for the personalisation of services is becoming more prevalent, the level of available finances for service provision results in services having to accommodate the differing needs of people with a variety of conditions rather than those that specialise in autism. These measures can also be tracked to the lack of accurate, up-to-date data; funding for autism service provision is allocated based on inaccurate numbers of people seeking to access services. The work being done by different agencies on updating this data is therefore of paramount importance and has raised the profile of autism as a condition that requires extra funded support.

The group therefore regards motivated, expert autism services as a precious resource offering examples of good practice ripe for sharing. JMcL stated how recent events such as the Autism Lead Officers and Support Providers Collaboratives offer a prime opportunity to showcase and share such examples of good practice and to re-engage with practitioners and service providers who have previously disengaged from such conversations.

The second discussion point raised by DMcL in his paper was *How do we move the Collaborative to its next level of evolution to achieve true partnership working?*

The work being done in Highland through the Collaborative, which shares good practice

in support of service users across a number of local authorities, was cited as an example of true partnership working.

VI. Network Report

EH

EH offered her update on the work currently being done at Autism Network Scotland, as outlined in the paper submitted ahead of the meeting. Annie Watson's final engagement as network Advisor prior to taking a position elsewhere was to present at the Autism Europe Congress alongside RI on the Autism & Employment Network, whose website the Network hope will be a tangible resource for autism people in or seeking employment, as well as employers and supportive practitioners. The 4th annual Employability Conference also took place last week at the University of Strathclyde, discussing employability for autistic women, supporting disclosure in a new position and how to plan a career. ANS is also working with the Scottish Drugs Forum on a mobile app based around the recent event, *Keep Safe, Have Fun, Stay Out of Trouble* event, which encourages making appropriate choices and having better understanding of growing up and development. The event is to be repeated nationally in the coming months.

VII. Policy feedback

AP

AP updated the group on work being undertaken by the Policy team, as detailed in the paper submitted to the group ahead of this meeting.

An event is scheduled for 27th October which will encourage partnership working to build capacity for the innovation funded projects, which are collaborating with Inspiring Scotland to evidence their outcomes for autistic individuals.

The latest edition of the SIGN guidelines has been published and is available on [the Scottish Strategy for Autism website](#).

The Scottish Social Services Council are working with the Scottish Government on a series of workshops to provide third sector organisations with an idea of what the changing picture of commissioning for services entails.

The review of Autism Network Scotland, discussed at the previous meeting of the Governance Group, has now been published to [the Scottish Government website](#).

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland and the Mental Welfare Commission have held a series of wider engagement events on the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act 2003 commissioned by the Scottish Government, with further work planned based on the outcomes of these events.

ACTION POINT – AP to share feedback on wider engagement events prior to next meeting of the Governance group.

Scotland's first Accessible Transport Framework has now been [unveiled](#).

AP has met with colleagues working on the Disabled and Young Children's Framework to advise on the activities of different organisations that support autistic people, and is also working with colleagues in Employability on support for people with autism and/or learning disabilities. Jamie Hepburn MSP is now Minister for Employability and Training so brings engagement through his experience of working in autism. A substantial number of Innovation Funded project also relate to Employability.

VIII. Feedback on Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland, Investigation - The Death of Ms MN DM

DMcL discussed the paper disseminated, a collated, draft report of submissions to the Governance Group of responses from group members, each of the three working groups and local authority autism leads. The group was invited to consider the most important points of the feedback for the editing of the final response to the Mental Welfare Commission.

ACTION POINT – All Governance Group members to review the draft feedback report to the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland Investigation into the Death of Ms MN and suggest the points to feature in the final submitted version.

IX. Update on review of mental health legislation

Covered above.

X. Autism Europe International Congress AP

AP was pleased by the success of the Autism Europe Congress and by the showcase of the Strategy offered by the table co-hosted by Autism Network Scotland and NHS Education for Scotland. AP also noted that Mark McDonald MSP was disappointed he was not able to attend the event for longer.

CT also noted the positive interest in Scottish Autism's Right Click for Women programme. Both JMcL and CT however were disappointed by the number of expected delegates who did not attend on the day.

XI. 5th Annual National Autism Strategy Conference

The 5th annual Scottish Strategy for Autism Conference will take place on Monday 16th January 2017 with a keynote speech from Maureen Watt MSP, Minister for Mental Health. The theme for the event shall again be 'good autism practice'; a 'save the date' initial invitation has been distributed.

The group discussed potential examples of good practice that might be showcased at

the conference, including the upcoming Microsegmentation Report by Prof. Tommy MacKay; examples of good practice in the implementation of local authority autism plans; the *Principles of Good Transitions 3* and its autism supplement; the new SIGN guidelines booklets. A marketplace format for showcasing examples was popular with the group, akin to that seen at the Autism Europe Congress.

ACTION POINT – Suggestions of good autism practice to be showcased at the 5th Annual National Autism Strategy Conference to be communicated to AG.

XII. AOCB

CS discussed the current funding situation surrounding Autism Initiatives' one stop shops, for which it hopes to secure funding beyond the current financial year.

JMcL and AP offered their thanks to IH for his contribution to the Governance Group and to Working Group 2, as this will be his final meeting due to taking up a new position.

XIII. Date of Next Meeting – TBC for January.

ACTION ITEMS

ACTION POINT – AP to provide the group with an update on the management structure of the Care, Support & Rights Division.

ACTION POINT – Duncan McIntyre of Social Work Scotland to be invited to take a permanent role on the Governance group.

ACTION POINT – Any further comments on the Mental Welfare Commission and the Learning Disability Commission scoping exercise to be considered from the group to be sent to AG as a matter of urgency.

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