

Meeting Note – Carers’ Panel

Title	Carers’ Panel
Venue	Zoom
Date	08/10/2021
Attendees	Agnes Stevenson, Anne Bisset, Lorraine Sandie, Kirsteen Powell (CoEL)
Apologies	Helen Wedgwood, Jacqui Aston, Patricia Gordon

Agenda

- Introductions
- Review September meeting notes and update on actions
 - DWP’s use of telephone assessments
 - Date of CoEL online AGM (Mon 29th Nov)
 - CEO accepted invite to speak to Panel about new business plan
- Review group values and activities of Carers’ Panel so far – are they meeting members’ expectations.
- Discuss how Panel wishes to present itself at CoEL online AGM (Mon 29th Nov)
- New developments in CoEL
 - Telephone befriending (due to be launched early 2022)
- Carer engagement opportunities
- Any other business

Summary of discussions

Benefits – Assessments & Appeals

Kirsteen shared information from Lisa McIlwraith (Welfare Rights Coordinator at CoEL) about the rationale behind the DWP’s use of telephone assessments following concerns raised by Panel members in a previous meeting. According to Lisa, the DWP is using telephone assessments for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) claims to limit face-to-face interactions during the pandemic. In Lisa’s experience, telephone assessments work better for the vast majority of carers/ people being cared for as no judgement can be made about how an applicant has arrived at an appointment. Lisa explained that people who attended face-to-face assessments were very rarely awarded the mobility component, the implication being that assessors assumed that if an applicant was able to attend an appointment they were able to get around, overlooking the substantial difficulties they had in doing so.

Agnes, Anne and Lorraine shared their experiences of tribunals and the lack of empathy of some of the decision makers in the process. Lorraine said she was unprepared for how hostile the questioning would be. Anne and Lorraine had struggled to get support to prepare for the tribunal and to present the facts during the tribunal. Lorraine was eventually helped by the Action Group. Anne had been advised to approach the Welfare Officer at East Lothian Council; however, he did not have the capacity to take on her case. Panel members felt this was an area where CoEL could offer support. Kirsteen agreed to find out what information, advice and support was available for carers going through appeals process and how CoEL could assist

CoEL Business Plan

Kirsteen noted that Jess Wade had agreed to speak to Panel about CoEL’s new business plan once it had been written and reviewed by Board.

Flu and Covid-19 booster for carers

Lorraine asked how carers would be able to access the flu and Covid-19 booster vaccine. Kirsteen explained that the Scottish Government was due to launch a self-registration system (online portal and helpline) by the end of October to allow carers to book an appointment. COEL will publicise the details once announced.

Group Values

Panel members reviewed group values drafted at the start of the year. No changes were made. There was a brief discussion of membership of the Panel. There was unanimous agreement that former carers had much to contribute and that it was important that different voices were heard – that the Panel remain open and inclusive to avoid the same individuals assuming the roles of spokespeople. Lorraine observed that although Panel members had very different caring roles there were common threads, for example, in relation to the earlier discussion on tribunals. Anne added that she felt the Panel was currently achieving its goal of being carer-led.

CoEL AGM

Panel members discussed options for presenting at COEL's online AGM on Monday 29th November. It was agreed that Kirsteen would put together a video of clips of Panel members sharing a little of their story – why they had joined the Panel, what they had learned or found helpful about the experience, why they would encourage other carers to become involved. Kirsteen will arrange 1:1 Zoom calls with Panel members who wish to take part to make video recordings.

Information Stalls

Anne updated the Panel on her activities to reach out to carers in the community. She has held information stalls in Aberlady and Gullane and is planning one in North Berwick next. She has made eye-catching "Are you a carer, too?" badges. Agnes volunteered to help at a future stall and gave consent for Kirsteen to share her contact details with Anne. Kirsteen is still trying to secure a stall at Haddington Market - availability depends on a regular stallholder cancelling a booking.

Carers' Rights Day (Thu 25th Nov)

Panel members discussed options to mark Carers' Rights day. Agnes shared that she was recently interviewed by Sight Scotland for a feature in the East Lothian Courier. It was agreed Kirsteen would draft an article based on 1:1 Zoom calls with Panel members to send to the East Lothian Courier, with photographs if possible, to coincide with Carers' Rights Day.

Are you a carer too? Blog post series

Kirsteen raised the possibility of Panel members, and other carers, contributing to a blog post series "Are you a carer too?" on the CoEL website – an idea to be revisited in a future meeting.

Telephone befriending project

Kirsteen shared that CoEL will launch its telephone befriending project in early 2022. She will be contacting carers who expressed an interest in being on a steering group for the project via CoEL's annual survey in the coming weeks.

Next steps/ Key decisions

- Panel will invite ELHSCP Carers' Lead and Strategy Officer to meetings every six months to maintain dialogue and build understanding between carers and commissioners/service providers
- Panel will submit article with photos to East Lothian Courier to coincide with Carers' Rights Day (25th Nov)

Actions

Who	What	By when
Kirsteen	Contact Panel members to arrange 1:1 recorded Zoom interviews (for those who wish to be involved) in awareness raising video for CoEL AGM.	22/10/2021
Kirsteen	Draft article for East Lothian Courier based on 1:1 Zoom interviews.	05/11/2021
Kirsteen	Research what support is available to carers going through the appeals process. Discuss with colleagues how COEL can better assist carers in this area. Report back to Panel on findings.	12/11/2021
Kirsteen	Arrange date with Jess to speak to Panel RE: CoEL business plan.	12/11/2021
Kirsteen	Invite Carers' Lead/Strategy Officer back to speak to the Panel in early 2022.	31/01/2021

Carer engagement opportunities – October 2021

Immediate (next 4 – 6 weeks)

#1 Coalition of Carers in Scotland (CoCiS) AGM – Wed 20th Oct, 10:00 to 12:30

The theme of the meeting will be the Scottish Government's plans to develop a National Care Service including a right to breaks for unpaid carers. For further information and to register, please click link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/coalition-of-carers-in-scotland-annual-general-meeting-tickets-185649551807>

#2 National Care Service Consultation (closes Tue 2nd Nov)

The Scottish Government is currently seeking people's views on how a National Care Service should operate including a right to breaks for unpaid carers (sometimes also called a "right to respite"). The National Carers Organisations (NCOs) have produced a set of [briefing documents](#) summarising the parts of the Scottish Government's proposals that are most directly relevant to unpaid carers. You can submit a written response via the [Scottish Government's consultation portal](#). You only have to respond to the issues that interest you. You do not have to read the full consultation paper (113 pages) or answer all of the questions (there are 96!) unless you wish to.

CoEL will also be running online focus groups (assuming there is sufficient interest from local carers) on the following dates:

- Wed 13th Oct, 6 to 7 pm (evening session)
- Thu 14th Oct, 12:30 to 1:30 pm (lunchtime session)
- Tue 19th Oct, 10:30 to 11:30 am (morning session)

We will use the views gathered in the focus groups to inform our written response as an organisation to the consultation. To book your place on a CoEL focus group, please call 0131 665 0135 or email centre@coel.org.uk

Medium term (next 3 months)

#1 Carers' Rights Day (Thu 25th Nov)

Does the Panel want to try to arrange another Q&A event with elected officials in or around Carers' Rights Day? Three of the candidates who took part in the Carers Hustings are now in the Scottish Parliament - Paul McLennan (SNP) is the East Lothian Constituency MSP and Craig Hoy (Conservative) and Martin Whitfield are MSPs for the South Scotland region.

#2 CoEL Online AGM (Mon 29th Nov, 10:30 am to tbc) – invitation to present on Carers' Panel

In the last meeting, I mentioned that CEO Jess Wade has invited the Carers' Panel to give short presentation or share a short video at COEL's online AGM to raise awareness of its existence amongst carers in East Lothian. How would the Panel like to present itself? I had wondered about

creating a short video, that everyone could review and approve in advance, combining little clips of Panel members talking about their experience of the Carers' Panel – what it is and does, why they joined, what they have learned from being involved, why they would encourage other carers to join etc. I would do all the tech side and interview Panel members individually via Zoom to create the video recordings. The audience could be restricted to the AGM. But if the Panel wished, the video could also go on our website. This is simply an idea – other suggestions are welcome!

#3 Carers' Blog – “Are you a carer too?”

We previously spoke about holding an information stall at Haddington Farmers Market, possibly under the banner of “Are you a carer too?”. I still haven't been able to secure a slot with the organiser Val Shields (we can only access one when a regular stall handler cancels a booking). I will keep trying. In the meantime, I had wondered about trying to create a collection of carers' experiences/ stories to publish on the CoEL website and Facebook page to showcase the diversity of carers and caring roles (I realise this material would not reach everyone). Would any Panel members be interested in contributing a piece? (It could be a piece of writing, a photo with some explanatory text, a short, recorded interview etc.)

Hot Topics in September

COEL is still actively pursuing the following topics with ELHSCP and elected officials but there are no updates to share at present:

- Difficulty seeing GPs especially Riverside Medical Practice
- Difficulty accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Re-opening of resource centres for adults with complex needs
- Shortage of packages of care/ temporary changes to existing package of care in light of this shortage