

Meeting Note – Carers’ Panel

Title	Carers’ Panel
Venue	Zoom
Date	12/01/2022
Attendees	Anne Bisset, Dorothy Barbour, Helen Wedgwood, Jacki Aston, Joanne Armstrong, Heather Doig, Lorraine Sandie, Patricia Gordon, Kirsteen Powell (CoEL), MSP Paul McLennan (guest speaker), Lyn Jardine (from office of MSP Paul McLennan)
Apologies	Agnes Stevenson, Mary Baxter

Agenda

- Introductions
- Guest Speaker MSP Paul McLennan (including Q&A session)
- Any issues Panel members wish to raise/ Panel member updates
- Review of last month’s meeting notes and actions
 - Update on services currently offered by RVS volunteers
- Any other business

Summary of discussions

Paul McLennan gave a summary of the issues he has been involved in and/or become aware of that are directly relevant to carers since becoming an MSP. These include:

- Meetings with Bruce Dickie (NHS Lothian) and Alison McDonald (ELHSCP) regarding health and social care needs analysis across East Lothian, starting with North Berwick and Dunbar wards, including the re-provisioning of Edington and Belhaven Community Hospitals and Eskgreen and Abbey Care Homes. The purpose of the needs analysis is to establish the requirement for care, which will have to be future proofed in light of East Lothian’s growing population and people’s needs evolving over the life course and in relation to key transitions.
- Meeting with East Lothian Works, DWP and Skills Development Scotland to try to establish a clear pathway for adults with additional support needs to enter and remain in employment.
- Meeting with Marie Prior, new-in-post staff member for East Lothian Council’s in-house services for young carers.
- Supporting Anne’s Law, which seeks to ensure that people who live in adult care homes have rights to see and spend time with the people who are important to them. Currently, practice across Scotland and within care homes run by the same company varies greatly.
- Supporting Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood)(Scotland) Bill. This will give every disabled child or young person a right to a statutory transition plan up to their 26th birthday.
- Supporting right for respite for unpaid carers (summary of consultation responses due to be published shortly) and meeting with Coalition of Carers in Scotland (CoCiS)
- Meetings regarding the future of Leuchie House and the expansion of its services in East Lothian and across Scotland as it approaches its five-year funding review.

- Meetings regarding the re-provisioning of care in East Lothian, including resource centres for adults under the age of 65 and care providers.
- Meetings with Head of Education regarding school exclusions and improving transitions for children with additional support needs.
- Meetings with other special interest groups to understand some of the challenges they face including ELCAP (currently 60 to 70 staff short) and Can Do (play and leisure scheme for children and teenagers with additional support needs).

Panel members asked Paul McLennan about a range of issues, sharing some of their personal experiences.

Health and social care needs analysis/ respite for carers and alternative models of care

Anne shared that her late husband had received excellent care in the Eddington, a point acknowledged by Paul. He explained that the re-provisioning process is not being driven by concerns over the quality of care in the community hospitals. Rather, its purpose is to look at what care is needed locally, both now and in the future, and how it could be provided, given that some buildings do not meet current standards (e.g. for infection control) and there are gaps in services. Anne emphasised the importance of breaks from caring/ respite opportunities for carers and asked if alternative models of care, such as Buurtzorg Model, would be considered as part of re-provisioning process. Paul said he was keen for carers and local communities to be actively involved in process of identifying needs and developing solutions (“co-production”). Paul will raise issue with Bruce Dickie and arrange meeting with CoEL to take this forward. The needs analysis for North Berwick and Dunbar is due to be completed in April/May followed by a public consultation. The focus will then move on to other wards and service areas including resource centres. After the needs analysis will come decisions about budgets and priorities.

Employment for adults with additional support needs

Dorothy highlighted the difficulty adults with additional support needs have in accessing meaningful employment. Support schemes are piecemeal and often only last for 2 to 3 months. There is also very little support available for people aged 26 and over. Dorothy’s son was only diagnosed with autism in his late 20s. Paul acknowledged need for integrated employment pathway and is working with East Lothian Works, DWP and Skills Development Scotland on the same.

Support for young carers

Lorraine raised concerns about the lack of recognition of and support for young carers in schools. Paul acknowledged current problems in education. East Lothian Council is currently developing in-house service for young carers, which should be operating by new school year (August 2022). Paul suggested organising a meeting between CoEL and Marie Prior.

Children with additional support needs

Joanne voiced her frustration at the inconsistencies in the application of education policies in relation to children with additional support needs in East Lothian. She said GIRFEC (getting it right for every child) was a meaningless slogan in her son’s experience. Her son was informally excluded from school because there was not the support in place to meet his needs in the classroom. Joanne felt parents were often excluded from discussions and decision-making processes about their children’s needs. Both Joanne and Lorraine agreed there was not enough support for children with additional support needs with transitions. Paul acknowledged the shortcomings in the system and invited parent carers to raise any personal issues with him directly Paul.McLennan.MSP@Parliament.scot.

Finding support as a carer

Heather pointed out that it had taken her several years to find out what support was available to help her in her multiple caring roles that cross local authorities (East Lothian and Edinburgh). Paul encouraged carers to email him directly Paul.McLennan.MSP@Parliament.scot with any personal issues. He explained that one of the functions of his office was to help constituents identify and access the services they needed.

Carers card

Helen raised the issue of carer identification and recognition – individuals not recognising themselves as carers and services not recognising the essential roles carers play in the lives of the people they care for. Helen asked if Paul would support a local Carers ID card scheme giving carers access to discounts and services e.g. when accompanying cared for person to appointments. Paul said he would be pleased to support such a scheme. Paul explained that he saw part of his role as “joining the dots” and bring together the different parties required for action to happen. Heather pointed out that her caring role crossed local authority boundaries so ideally the card would be recognised and supported regionally or nationally.

Shortage of care workers in East Lothian

Patricia asked what was being done to tackle social care staff shortages in East Lothian, an issue that is directly affecting her daughter, who relies on support workers to live in a shared flat and access community activities. Paul acknowledged that pre-existing problems in social care had been made more acute by the pandemic, with staff absences and the diversion of staff to the mass vaccination programme. At a national level, Paul is supporting an increase in the minimum wage for adult social care workers and other efforts to make social care a more attractive career option. He also pointed out that East Lothian Council relies heavily on private care agencies to provide services (roughly 90% of services). This puts people at high degree of risk if one or two private agencies go bust. Other local authorities have more of a 50:50 split between statutory and non-statutory agencies delivering social care services. Paul is pushing for this balance to be re-addressed as part of the re-provisioning of care in East Lothian (see also comments about health and social care needs analysis above).

Regular meetings with MSP

Paul stated that he had found the discussion very helpful and suggested a quarterly meeting with carers as there was lots of work happening locally and nationally that would affect them directly (e.g. health and social care needs analysis in East Lothian and the development of a National Care Service). There was general support from Panel members for a regular meeting with Paul as well as other local political representatives.

Issues to raise in future discussions with MSP Paul McLennan

After Paul and Lyn had left the meeting, Panel members identified other areas of concern they wished to raise with MSP at a future date:

- Disabled travel cards being valid on all modes of transport (a person does not stop being disabled once they get off the bus!)
- Disabled parking spaces (need to be enforceable, yellow not white)
- Cost of living crisis – financial assistance for adults with disabilities with fuel bills

Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) volunteers – current services

Kirsteen reported that RVS volunteers are currently providing transport to medical appointments (in standard vehicles only which belong to the volunteers). Transport can be requested by calling 01875 811 011. There is a small charge for the service to cover volunteer fuel costs etc. Kirsteen raised Panel’s suggestion of volunteer escorts to attend appointments with people to fill gap in

services with RVS Manager Polly Cooke. Polly will include this feedback in their review of their Good Neighbours service.

National Care Service (NCS) consultation – summary of responses

Helen asked Kirsteen to circulate summary of responses to NCS consultation when it is released in as digestible a format as possible so it could be discussed at the next Panel meeting.

There was not time to review meeting note from December’s Panel Meeting – rolled over to following month.

Next steps/ Key decisions

- Kirsteen to follow up with MSP on suggested meetings
- Summary of responses to NCS to be discussed at February’s Panel Meeting

Actions		
Who	What	By when
Kirsteen	Arrange date with Jess to speak to Panel RE: CoEL business plan.	12/11/2021 Outstanding
Kirsteen	Invite Carers’ Lead/Strategy Officer back to speak to the Panel in early 2022.	31/01/2022
Kirsteen	Circulate summary of responses to National Care Service to Panel members, once published (expected January 2022)	04/02/2022
Kirsteen	Liaise with MSP Paul Mcleannan’s office regarding following meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role and representation for carers in health and social care needs analysis in East Lothian (meeting with Bruce Stickie?) • Role and representation for parent carers in young carers service (meeting with Marie Prior?) • Developing a local Carers Card (could this be recognised in wider Lothian region?) • Quarterly meeting between carers and MSP 	04/02/2022

Carer engagement opportunities – January 2022

No carer engagement opportunities document was produced for January 2021 as there was nothing new to add from December 2020.

Possible points to raise with MSP Paul McLennan (12th January 2022)

This paper highlights issues from previous discussions to help Panel members think about the points they may wish to raise with MSP Paul McLennan on Wednesday 12th January 2022.

Paul McLennan's comments during Carers' Hustings (Apr 2021)

During hustings, Paul said he as East Lothian's MSP and/or his party (SNP) would support carers by pushing for:

- A proper needs analysis of what care and support was required in East Lothian for carers and the people they care for to inform the setting of budgets and the procurement of services – Paul felt this knowledge was currently lacking.
- Opportunities for carers to be involved in budgeting processes (linked to point above)
- A right to respite to be added to the Carers (Scotland) Act as a matter of priority
- A National Care Service (NCS) based on a human rights approach
- Increased investment in mental health services
- An employability strategy for carers to support working carers
- A national minimum income guarantee to prevent carers being pushed into poverty by their caring roles

Paul also said he would act as an advocate for carers. One of the ways in which he proposed doing this was to establish a Carers Assembly in East Lothian.

Recording of hustings available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiydTm4EX6s&t=3445s>

Other issues raised by Panel members in previous meetings

Panel members had previously discussed asking Paul about:

- Responses to the consultation on the National Care Service (summary due to be published in January 2022 – date TBC)
- A local and/or national carer's ID card that would enable carers to access expedited services and discounts
- Breaks from caring (respite) and establishing how much money was needed to fund this
- Carers being involved in commissioning services that directly affect them
- Closure of services including care homes
- Difficulties accessing patient transport