

Cross-Party Group on Health Inequalities

12.30-1.45pm Tuesday 1 February 2022

Minute

Present

MSPs

Brian Whittle
Carol Mochan

Invited guests

Petra Biberbach, Planning Aid Scotland
Narek Bido, Addictions Support & Counselling (ASC)
Sara Bradley, University of Highlands and Islands
Margaret Brown, NHS Highland
Steve Brown, Roche
Hilda Campbell, COPE Scotland
Lily Craig, Leeds Playhouse
Fleur Dijkman, Planning Aid Scotland
Gillian Fergie, University of Glasgow
Alex Ferris, Leeds Playhouse
Brian Forbes, AstraZeneca
Helen Forrest, Children's Health Scotland
Jennifer Forsyth, Obesity Action Scotland
Susan Fullerton, PLUS (Forth Valley) Ltd
Kate Joester, Living Streets
Avril Johnstone, University of Glasgow
Maureen Kennedy, NASUWT
Una MacFadyen, PLUS Forth Valley and Children's Health Scotland
Ellie Manners, Leeds Playhouse
Ishbel McGeorge, Office of Emma Harpers MSP
Kirsty McNab, Scottish Sports Futures
Sarah Murray, Royal Voluntary Service
Fiona Pirrie, East Ayrshire Carers Centre Ltd
Gemma Richardson, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Katherine Smith, University of Strathclyde
Anna Wilson, Planning Aid Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

Pervin Ahmad, Saheliya
Sade Aworinde, Deaf Links

Gillian Bell, MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow
Lauren Blair, Voluntary Health Scotland
Shaymaa Bolbol, Linknet
Christine Carlin, Home-Start
Alison Crofts, Voluntary Health Scotland
Paula Fraser, VOX Scotland
Alana Harper, Deaf Links
Amy Hickman, Breast Cancer Now
Catherine Hughes, The ALLIANCE/Poverty Alliance/Friends of Centre for Integrative Care
Murdo Macdonald, Church of Scotland
Angus Maclean, Befriending Networks
Mark Macleod, Energy Saving Trust - Home Energy Scotland
David Main, Voluntary Health Scotland
Leigh Mair, Scottish Rural Health Partnership
Ian McCall, Paths for All
Rebecca McColl, SFAD
Janis McDonald, The ALLIANCE (Sensory Hub)
Helen Morrison, Paths for All
Maureen O'Neill, Faith in Older People
Fiona O'Sullivan, Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity
Nell Page, Salvesen Mindroom Centre
Fiona Partington, The Health Agency
Sarah Randell, Teapot Trust
Bushra Riaz, Kidney Research UK
Daniela Rondina, SIAA
Arvind Salwan, Care Inspectorate
Mary Sinclair, Social Enterprise Network Scotland (SENScot)
Kimberley Somerside, Voluntary Health Scotland
Claire Stevens, Voluntary Health Scotland
Francesca Vaghi, The ALLIANCE
Tom Wightman, Pasda
Kirstin Worsley, The Breastfeeding Network

1 Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Emma Harper MSP, Donald Cameron MSP and Paul O'Kane MSP.

Claire Stevens, Chief Executive of Voluntary Health Scotland, opened the meeting and handed over to Brian Whittle, MSP and CPG co-convener, who chaired the session.

2 Minutes of last meeting

Narek Bido, ASC, approved and Paula Fraser, VOX Scotland, seconded the minutes of the CPG meeting held on Monday 6th December 2021 as an accurate record.

3 Previous Matters Arising

Brian Whittle noted there had not been sufficient time between the two CPG meetings to follow-up on the matters arising and Voluntary Health Scotland would follow-up with those involved.

- MSPs to place CLWs on the agenda of the Scottish Budget. Paul O’Kane agreed to take this forward, with a focus on securing long term funding.
- To ask government through parliamentary questions about the pace of the CLW programme rollout in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK.
- To highlight the value of the CLW programme in a motion to parliament. Voluntary Health Scotland agreed to work with members of the group on this collaboratively.

4 Applications to join the CPG

The following applications to join the CPG were agreed:

- Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Kidney Research UK

5 Topic for discussion: Active approaches to health inequalities affecting children and young people

Active Healthy Kids Scotland Report Card

The CPG heard from

- Dr Avril Johnston, Research Associate, MRC/CSO Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow

Avril Johnston provided a presentation on the [Active Healthy Kids Scotland Report Card](#) - a “state of the nation” report card on the physical activity and health of children and adolescents in Scotland prior to the pandemic. It was published in November 2021 and focused on physical activity and inequalities.

Avril outlined how the economic, physical and social environment impacted children’s ability to take part in physical activity. Barriers included the employment status of parents or caregivers; access to green space and active travel infrastructure; and encouragement from the peers and adults around children.

The report card graded “health behaviours” and “the influences on behaviour”. She noted that the data was inconclusive for a number of behaviours and advocated throughout for better monitoring of these indicators. On fitness for example there was no nationally available data and obesity data was only available for primary 1. There was also not enough data on diet, but it was assumed this would likely be graded F - “succeeding with very few children”.

The inequalities among children in the most and least deprived areas were stark. Children from more deprived areas:

- Had higher levels of screen time
- Were engaging in less sports
- Had higher levels of obesity
- Were less likely to meet the physical activity recommendations
- Had less access to safe outdoor spaces
- Had fewer adults volunteering in sport

Avril's key messages were the need to consider the wider system; improve monitoring of physical activity and indicators; ensure policies didn't widen inequalities; have a greater focus on policy implementation and evaluation; and consider how COVID might have widened inequalities on health behaviours. Avril felt the Active Scotland Delivery Plan was a decent policy but monitoring and implementation needed improved. She said Public Health Scotland had suggested BMI was increasing along with inequalities and the role of COVID in this had to be considered. She confirmed the report card on the impact of COVID would be published by the end of 2023 and an international comparison would be published in 2022.

Creative Insights

The CPG then heard from:

- Dr Gillian Fergie, Research Associate, MRC/CSO Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow

Gillian Fergie said we didn't know enough about young people's perspectives of health inequalities, and that's where this research came in. [Creative Insights](#) was conceived pre-pandemic and the workshops were co-produced with young people. It allowed for researchers to explore the relationship between art, creativity and research, and for the artists to foster relationships in the community.

Gillian said the young people who took part had a very nuanced understanding of the fundamental causes of health inequalities, for example how diet can be impacted by access to food. The young people also recognised how the school environment and support networks influenced health. The workshops teased out these contextual influences on health and explored potential policy solutions with the young people.

Their key concerns were around the disruption to education and missed opportunities from the pandemic, concerns about the job market, the need to address mental health and the importance of relationships and social contact. They felt material security was key across these priorities and provided specific suggestions for tackling these issues. Gillian noted some of the solutions the young people suggested were similar to those raised in Avril's presentation, such as access to green space. They also advocated for community empowerment and a more transparent policy landscape.

During the questions:

- **Daily Mile:** In response to a question, Brian Whittle confirmed the daily mile was in place in some schools. However, he warned COVID will have had a huge impact on health inequalities.
- **Disabilities:** In response to a question on reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, Avril said data wasn't available with regards to health inequalities. She felt this was a gap we needed to understand at a national level. Brian Whittle said that through his work with power-chair football he felt travel was often a significant additional barrier to participation which increased inequality. Avril said participation among children with additional support needs needed improved and confirmed hearing impairment wasn't looked at in this specific report card.
- **Urban & Rural Environment:** On the difference between urban and rural areas, Avril highlighted the SPACES study of children's physical activity and location which assessed the difference in physical activity between urban and rural children. She felt the difference between rural and urban could be looked at as part of the report card in the future.
- **Decision Making:** On engaging with young people in the decision-making process, Gillian felt young people were keen to be involved. She noted the young people wanted to be engaged in policies beyond the school environment, such as macro level policies on employment. She added this would make government processes more transparent for young people.
- **BAME Participation:** It was asked whether there had been any analysis on children from black and ethnic minority communities, especially among girls who may feel excluded due to dress codes and lack of role models over and above poverty and inequality. Brian Whittle felt sport was a great equaliser and education through sport on these issues was important. In physical activity, Avril said this data wasn't standardised across each health behaviour, but it did exist and there was a need for further exploration. Gillian said the young people from Creative Insights spoke lots about racism and health inequalities, there were findings on this. Brian Whittle suggested racism was something we should explore as a CPG.
- **Collaboration:** Gillian was asked whether the principles of the UNCRC were considered in designing the creative methods adopted in Creative Insights. She explained the methods were developed in collaboration with the creative partner organisations through their established ways of working. She encouraged people to get in touch to talk more about the design process.
- **Monitoring Activity:** On the improved monitoring of physical activity, there were questions on what currently existed and whether it could be standardised. Avril said the physical activity measurement was nowhere near good enough. She explained the data in the Scottish health survey only reported on physical activity, not differing by intensity. She said there was a need for more creative partnership working with sports organisations.
- **Active Gaming:** On active gaming, Avril noted phones collected our movement and that data could be used in some way with the appropriate permissions. Brian Whittle felt looking at what tech children use and how we could harness it would require investment from government.
- **Research Findings:** With regards to feeding back the findings of the Creative Insights research to the young people, Gillian confirmed they were in communication throughout as it was a collaboration.

- **Pandemic Impacts:** Brian Whittle highlighted how the pandemic had exacerbated inequalities. He highlighted sport had seen a reduction in children participating, especially around disability. He asked what interventions we needed from government. Avril said the Scottish delivery plan for physical activity was good and used best practice, but implementation and monitoring needed improved. She explained this would help us understand how to improve policy rather than creating a new one. Gillian added that infrastructure needed to be available to young people for them to participate. Brian Whittle felt sport had become the bastion of the middle classes. He highlighted children often had to travel to take part and we needed to bring sports to young people. He also noted there were more cycle paths in middle class areas. Brian Whittle said he would take forward a parliamentary debate off the back of this discussion.

6 Any other competent business

Social Care Pay

Susan Fullerton, CEO of Plus Forth Valley, briefly highlighted the inequity that had arisen for children's services as a result of the Scottish Budget announcement which applied to adult services but not children's services: "To retain care workers and support better pay and conditions, local government will be required to deliver a £10.50 minimum hourly rate for adult social care workers in commissioned services, in line with the public sector pay policy".

Susan Fullerton explained this was only for staff working with adults and asked what this meant for retention in children's health and social care settings. She noted this was the same job, they were just supporting different people. She questioned whether ministers were aware of the inequity. Brian Whittle said this was the first he had heard of it and agreed to ask the question of government. He said if it needed to be raised in the chamber it would be him or a colleague. Claire Stevens added that Voluntary Health Scotland would be happy to hear from other organisations experiencing this. Brian Whittle emphasised that he welcomed interventions from members on issues like this.

Actions to be taken forward:

- Brian Whittle agreed to put forward a motion for debate on active approaches to health inequalities affecting children and young people. Voluntary Health Scotland will help provide a briefing on this.
- Brian Whittle agreed to raise with government the inequity between children and adult social care pay arising from the Scottish Budget announcement.

7 Date and topic of next meeting

Tuesday 3rd May 6pm-7.30pm online via Zoom- Joint meeting with the CPG on Mental Health with Emma Harper MSP chairing.