

Linking on health with the Scottish Parliament and the new Scottish Executive

The Scottish parliamentary health committee is now known as the Health and Sport Committee - the Convenor being Christine Grahame and the vice-convenor Ross Finnie.

The Scottish Executive Health Department is now the Scottish Executive Department of Health and Wellbeing. Nicola Sturgeon is Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, with, for the first time, a separate portfolio for public health, Shona Robison being Minister for Public Health.

In her statement last week as part of the parliamentary debate on health and wellbeing, Ms Sturgeon highlighted the Executive's commitments which included:

- ◆ Raising the age for tobacco purchasing from 16 to 18 in October 07
- ◆ The publication of a Smoking Prevention Action Plan by spring 08
- ◆ 'Clamping down hard' on mis-selling of alcohol and accelerating the debate on a long-term strategy for alcohol misuse
- ◆ A short-life task force on the best approaches to tackling inequalities
- ◆ A Scottish summit on health inequalities 'early in the New Year'

As well as

- ◆ A refreshed three-year action move to implement the principles of the Kerr report

- ◆ The phasing out of prescription charges from April 2008
- ◆ The use of public money to build up the NHS, not expand the private sector
- ◆ Consultation on legislation to involve local people more through an element of direct election to NHS Boards

There is much here that will resonate with voluntary and community sector priorities for health.

The whole focus on public health will reassure the many hundreds of community groups and organisations working on health improvement and tackling health inequalities, while national charities such as ASH Scotland and Alcohol Focus Scotland will continue to work



closely with the new administration on action to reduce Scotland's dependency on tobacco and alcohol.

Progress achieved under the last government in endorsing the powerful role played by

communities themselves in improving their own health is likely to be sustained as the recommendations of the report *Healthy Communities: a shared challenge* are carried forward.

At the same time, large numbers of patient interest groups which have long supported the estimated 2m people in Scotland affected by long-term conditions and disabilities have seen their role in *Delivering for health* formalised through the recently-established Long-term Conditions Alliance Scotland (LTCAS).

Campaigning with the last Parliament to increase local voices in health service planning and delivery and to secure support for community health action has been strengthened by the participation of Voluntary Health Scotland, CHEX, the UK Public Health Association and Community Food and Health Scotland.

This all signifies progress, but for real change to take place the new administration will require to make a strong commitment to meaningful partnership with the voluntary sector in the provision of public services and in particular to changing

the balance of care towards a joined-up approach at local level to addressing persistent health inequalities. Our sector will have to work hard too to sustain action and work with the whole range of interests and political opinion.

Documenting Good Practice in CHP Committee Meetings

The Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) Good Practice in Community Health Partnerships (CHP) Committee Meetings Questionnaire is a set of 12 questions which all voluntary sector CHP committee members are encouraged to complete and return to VHS after each meeting.

The questions are designed to give VHS an understanding of the collective experiences of committee members and to compare experiences across Scotland.

The data will be used to track progress throughout CHP development, to target supports to VCS committee members and to applaud and share good practice as it emerges.

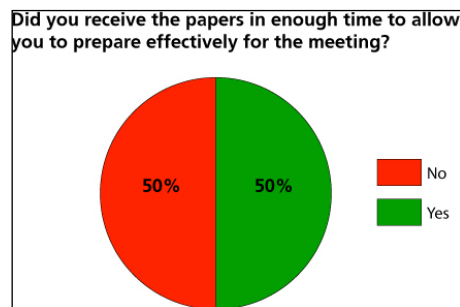
As well as providing evidence of the adoption of Compact principles, it is a useful tool for CHPs which are embedding the *Standards for Community Engagement* or the *NHS Scotland Informing, Engaging and Consulting* guidance into their practice.

It allows a baseline of current practice to be formed and the tracking of improvements which can be related to adopting the principles, standards and guidance.

VHS has started to gather responses and can offer some analysis of the information gained to date.

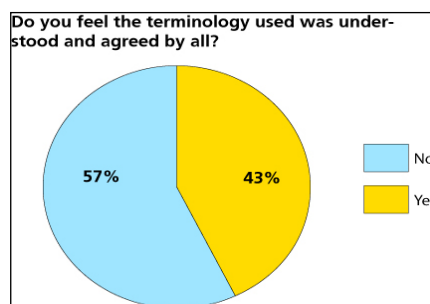
Meeting dates appear to have been agreed well in advance and are being strictly adhered to but there have been concerns expressed from committee members on how or if they are able to contribute to the meeting agenda.

In addition, in 50% of the responses the papers are being received for the meetings with very little time to prepare and it was indicated by several committee members that the



amount of paperwork received was excessive.

Terminology used at meetings is confusing as reported by 57% of the respondents and is another cause for concern, although some CHPs are actively working on this.



At least one CHP has produced a terminology guide, whilst another is actively working on reducing the amount of jargon used.

Some of the concerns about accessible terminology are related to the formality of the meetings and it has been suggested that less formal meetings would bring greater involvement from the voluntary and community sector.

In some cases the committee members receive travel and "out of pocket" expenses but so far, there are no returned questionnaires which give an indication of any other ongoing support for the work of the committee member.

At this early stage there is too little data to give any definitive indication of how the overall picture of voluntary sector involvement in CHP committees is progressing but initial responses appear to be showing cautious optimism and VHS will continue to provide updates as the information is gathered.

The strength of the data received from the questionnaire will be improved with every questionnaire returned, so if you are a CHP committee member please remember to return your questionnaire to VHS after each meeting.

If you are a CHP committee member and you have not received your questionnaire please contact Bill Weir at VHS for another copy to be sent out.

Email - Bill.Weir@VHScotland.org.uk
Tel 0131 652 5993

Thank you to VHS members

This summer edition of the Voluntary Health Scotland **Briefing** features extensive contribution from our members.

We are delighted with your response to our renewed invitation to contribute - it is through examples of local campaigns, new initiatives and research and partnerships with the NHS that the policy engagement which VHS takes forward with the Scottish Executive, NHS Health Scotland, SCVO and others really comes alive.

Please keep your contributions coming! Email to: phil.mcandrew@vhscotland.org.uk or post to 11 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh EH1 3BG.

Social economy and social enterprise integrates with the Third Sector Team

The Minister for Communities and Sport, Stewart Maxwell MSP, has underlined the Executive's commitment to the social economy and social enterprise by announcing that the Social Economy Unit (SEU) at Communities Scotland will be integrated into the Scottish Executive Third Sector Team in the Public Service Reform Directorate.



Ministerial direction will be provided by John Swinney MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, and Communities Scotland area offices will continue to support Local Social Economy Partnerships and provide other local social economy support.

Over the past three years, the SEU has contributed much to raising the profile of social economy approaches to service delivery, overseen the deployment of the £18m Futurebuilders Scotland programme and most recently, produced *Better Business - a strategy and action plan for social enterprise in Scotland*.

In its efforts it has been supported by voluntary sector partners Senscot and the Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition.

The SEU now sees its move to the Third Sector Team within

the Public Service Reform Directorate as a great opportunity to bring together policy interests across the spectrum of third sector, social economy and social enterprise.

The move will allow national policy responsibility to be integrated and streamlined.

In particular the remits of the existing Third Sector Team and the SEU have been converging considerably in areas related to public service reform and public sector procurement and in the use of the social enterprise business model as a way of ensuring the financial sustainability of the third sector.

VHS believes that this is also good news for the voluntary health sector. A number of recent events, including the conference put on by VHS in the spring - *From Social Economy to Social Enterprise: in the business of improving health* - have highlighted the contribution of social enterprise to health improvement and social enterprise is also one a key route to mobilising community engagement , particularly in the area of community food initiatives.

At the same time, and as debate about increasing the role of the voluntary sector in public service delivery accelerates, the presence of the SEU in the Third Sector Team has the potential to promote the unique contribution of voluntary and community driven social enterprise models of delivery to public health and health care programmes in Scotland.

For further information, contact Roddy Macdonald, Head of Social Economy Unit on 0131 479 5129 or at: Roddy.Macdonald@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk

Public Partnership Forum research commissioned

Now that Community Health Partnerships (CHPs) and Public Partnership Forums (PPFs) have been in place for a short time, the Scottish Health Council (SHC) has commissioned a study from FMR Research to explore any successes which have been achieved, to learn from the challenges faced in developing PPFs and to identify the pros and cons of flexible, rather than prescriptive, guidance.

To accomplish this, the researchers are exploring the challenges from the perspective of CHP managers, community representatives, interested members of the public who are not involved in any community group and members of the voluntary sector through a series of stakeholder interviews and events.

The final report is due out in the last week of October and will inform the SHC of the supports required for PPFs to ensure they are able to develop effective ways of involving local people in developing health services which are fit for purpose.

VHS is a member of the steering group for the research and will continue to give updates as the work continues.

For more information please contact Bill Weir on 0131 557 6845 or email: bill.weir@vhscotland.org.uk



Survey into child healthcare and services provision in Tayside

The effect of caring for a sick child at home can often be extensive, adding strain to those in charge of their care.

Fiona Bartley-Jones is Tayside Area Co-ordinator of Action for Sick Children Scotland and is currently asking parents in Angus, Dundee, and Perthshire how having a sick child in the family affects family life.

Her aim is to gather as much information as possible on which statutory and voluntary bodies, e.g. NHS trusts and illness based charities, could be used to help address the issues faced by parents with sick children aged from birth to 18.

"The idea to carry out a study really came about due to a series of hunches", she said.

"Through conversations with representatives from health and education authorities, we came to realise that there may be gaps in the services provided and it was important we spoke to people to find out if that was the case."

"The impact of caring for a sick child, whether the condition is acute or chronic, can affect almost any aspect of life."

The information gathered could lead to increased tailoring of health services to meet the needs of families and carers and Fiona is hoping to use it in a bid to lobby the appropriate bodies to make that happen.

"I am hopeful that by doing

this we can gain some real tangible outcomes that will help people who are in a difficult situation."

The survey would like to discover information about those requiring access to specialist care, or specialist equipment for home use: how easy is that? How long do you wait?

The study also asks whether teaching at home is a possibility: or if the child attends mainstream school when their condition permits, how supportive is their school in times of absence, given the special circumstances?

The survey is by questionnaire and Fiona is happy to make a home visit to talk people through it.



Action for Sick Children hopes to present the results to all the relevant agencies by September.

As well as hearing from individual carers and families, Fiona would welcome the chance to talk to charities and support groups, some of whose membership might then complete a questionnaire to share their experiences.

The survey makes no distinction between acute or chronically ill children and young people or mental or physical health issues - it is very holistic and inclusive in its scope

Fiona is keen to hear from as many people as possible and the first step is to complete the straight forward questionnaire.

More information is available at asc.eastscot@dsi.pipex.com or Action for Sick Children (Scotland) at 0131 553 6553.

Fair for All - Age seeks input from VHS members

Fair for All - Age is a strategic partnership between the Scottish Executive Health & Wellbeing Department and Fast Forward Positive Lifestyles.

It complements the other strands of Fair For All focusing on disability, gender, race, faith, and sexual orientation.

It has a role to support Patient Focus and Public Involvement (PFPI) action for age, addressing the needs of both older and younger people.

A consensus paper on key issues, challenges, current activity, gaps and emerging themes, has been commissioned from Rock Solid Social Research.

This will inform guidance, practical support, and information resources to support NHS Scotland to recognise and respond appropriately to individual needs and circumstances on the grounds of age.

Members of VHS are invited to contribute to this work by emailing comments on the following questions to Marion Lacey at the following address: marion.lacey@rocksolid-research.co.uk or you may phone her on: 0782 8511 226.

Q1 What difficulties or barriers do younger and older people experience accessing health services?

Q2 What actions could address these, or improve the situation?

Q3 Can you provide examples (3 at most) of actions/initiatives, and where these are currently taking place?

Please also supply a contact name and number in case Marion needs to contact respondents for further information.

Motor Neurone Disease Association calls for 50% funding from NHS Scotland

On the eve of Motor Neurone Disease Global Awareness Day, Margaret Mitchell, Conservative MSP for Central Scotland, called on MSPs to consider providing 50% funding from NHS Scotland for the Scottish Motor Neurone Disease Association.

She also called for more funding for research into the incurable condition.

For the SMNDA, sourcing funding from NHS Boards has been extremely difficult.

In 2006 the Association spent over £300,000 on the provision of a Care Team service and Specialist Equipment to support health and social services.

As trained clinical specialists they liaise with health and social care professionals to ensure the best possible care.

However, the service is overstretched, with staff working long hours and taking on NHS administration duties.

With the increase in people affected by MND and the corresponding increase in the support required, there is a critical need for more MND Care Team members.

The Minister for Public Health, Shona Robison, responded by saying that she planned to write to every NHS Board to "encourage" them to work with the SMNDA.



Last year the total contributed by NHS Boards was £9,415 or less than 3% of this.

MND is a serious, progressively disabling and fatal condition that can affect any adult at any time. It is not infectious, the cause is unknown and there is no known cure.

The Association is committed to helping people live with MND.

Fundamental to this care is the role of the MND Care Team, consisting of three full and three part time health professionals who are employed in the NHS but are only employed through the funding provided by the Association.

These professionals visit newly diagnosed patients to offer support and assess their needs.

Meantime, a centre for research into the condition is to be set up following a £1m donation from hotelier Donald MacDonald and his son, Euan, who has MND.

The Euan MacDonald Centre at Edinburgh University will focus on developing more effective treatment for sufferers.

The centre will be based next to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and will use stem cell technology.

Scientists will work jointly with the SMNDA while also liaising with other specialist centres worldwide in their search for a potential cure.

For more information about Motor Neurone Disease please visit the Scottish Motor Neurone Disease Association website at: <http://www.scotmnd.org.uk> or telephone: 0141 945 1077

VHS website to receive a makeover

The Voluntary Health Scotland website continues to grow in size and reach.

During the month of May over 63,000 hits were recorded and over 4000 megabytes were transferred.

Over the summer / autumn period the VHS website will be greatly enhanced to accommodate the higher usage and larger content.

Pages where a large amount of detail is provided, e.g. the news and library pages will be redesigned to allow easier and faster searching and display.

A completely new section on the website called 'Information' will bring together topics including News, Noticeboard, Training & Development, Funding sources, contact details of Healthy Living Centres and a series of pages dedicated to Community Health Partnerships.

These CHP pages will provide detail on the history, policy, associated advice notes and contact details of CHPs along with information about forthcoming events of interest and Public Partnership Forums (PPF).

A new interactive function on the website will be available in the coming weeks. This utility will allow all visitors to the site to take part in topical discussion fora such as Health Improvement & Inequalities, CHPs, Health Policy, Long Term Conditions and many others.

This discussion forum will provide a network of advice, guidance and sharing of good practice and is designed to assist the entire voluntary and community health sector in Scotland.

For more information on any item above please contact phil.mcandrew@vhscotland.org.uk or call 0131 557 6845.

C-Level urges new Minister to "work with us"

Of the 22,000 people in Scotland who have come into contact with Hepatitis C, over double this number are thought to have the virus, but are never diagnosed. The majority are aged 15-44 and almost half reside in the Glasgow and Clyde area.

The Scottish Executive launched Phase 1 of their Hepatitis C Action Plan in September 2006 - where the role of the voluntary sector is acknowledged as having "an important part to play in providing care, support and information" and it recognises that "there is a great deal of excellent work being undertaken in Scotland by a small number of voluntary sector Hepatitis C support services."

Since 2003, the charity C-Level has aimed at improving the quality of life for those affected by Hepatitis C, and has received over 5,000 information enquiries, with over 400 people attending in-house support groups.

In the past year alone, volunteer peer educators with the Glasgow-based organisation have made over 180 community visits.

Louise Chisholm, Manager, puts the charity's success down to its peer approach and sole focus.

"The relaxed environment, our approachability and lack of waiting lists enables us to build rapport and trust with our service users, ensuring that we are able to fully understand and empathise with their needs. One of the service users recently commented that he had learned more from C-Level than he had from health professionals throughout the course of his year long treatment."

Chisholm urges the new Scottish Minister for Health and Wellbeing to work with the voluntary sector

on tackling the issue.

"Harness our experience and work with us. I ask the new Executive to embrace the recommendations in the Hepatitis C Action Plan and welcome the opportunity for greater consultation and collaboration with voluntary organisations like C-Level."

C-Level is offering a series of one day training courses in Hepatitis C.

The course is aimed at:

- ◆ Health professionals
- ◆ Addiction and social care workers
- ◆ Drug & alcohol teams

Providing up to date and accurate information, delegates will be equipped with information necessary to support those at risk of or affected by the virus.

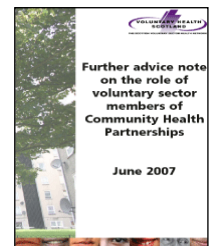


For further information about this training course please contact Moira Washington, moira@c-level.org.uk, telephone 0141 332 2520 or visit the C-Level website at www.c-level.org.uk

Revised Advice Note now available

The revised Advice Note on the role of voluntary and community sector members of CHP committees is now available from Voluntary Health Scotland.

This will be promoted to all voluntary sector CHP committee members over the next few weeks and the Scottish Executive Department of Health and Wellbeing will be distributing it to CHP General Managers and Chairs at the same time.



The Advice Note clarifies the organisational role which the voluntary and community sector can play in a CHP and differentiates this from the public involvement role of the PPF.

It has been developed from the initial training and development day for voluntary sector members of CHP committees and a further ten workshops exploring the themes from the day.

The Advice Note will be of interest to anyone who is working within a CHP, at whatever level and for whichever organisation or sector they may work for, to assist them in supporting the service planning and delivery partnership between the voluntary sector and other partners.

The advice note is available from the Voluntary Health Scotland website at http://www.vhscotland.org.uk/info/chps/docs/Further_guidance_June_2007.pdf

FAIR updates its Keep Yourself Healthy catalogue

FAIR (Family Advice and Information Resource) is an information and advice service in Edinburgh for people with learning disabilities, parents, carers and people who work with them.



The FAIR Multimedia service publishes a range of health booklets including a Keep Yourself Healthy Cancer Series.

The latest booklets in this series, 'A guide to giving up smoking' and 'Living with cancer 4: skin cancer' have just been released.

'A guide to giving up smoking' will be available free in Scotland through the local Healthcare Libraries.

A number of the 'Skin Cancer' leaflets will be available free whilst stocks last.

For more information please visit the FAIR website at: <http://www.fairadvice.org.uk> or telephone 0131 662 1962.

Arthritis Care introduce self management courses

Arthritis Care is delivering self management courses throughout Scotland that are designed to enable people with arthritis or other long term conditions to manage their symptoms more effectively.

Challenging Arthritis and **Challenging your Condition** are two courses that encourage individuals to take control of their lives.



All too often people with arthritis and other long term conditions are told by their doctors that they will just have to learn to live with their situation.

Unfortunately, the problem is that there are few opportunities to learn the necessary skills.

Now, however, the self-management programmes, run by Arthritis Care, are helping with this all too common debilitating and frustrating situation and participants learn to regain a real sense of control over their lives.

The **Challenging Arthritis** programme has been running successfully in Scotland for several years.

The **Challenge your condition** programme has been developed more recently and is often delivered in association with other organisations including the MS Society.

Course leaders with arthritis or other long term conditions, who have been trained by the charity, deliver the six-week course locally.

The course topics cover the principles of self-management and help participants to understand their condition and the effects of treatments.

They promote the development of coping strategies through the management of diet, exercise, depression, relaxation and pain control.

Each session lasts 2-2 ½ hours once a week. The cost is FREE to all participants.

To book your place or for further information please contact: Training Administrator, Alex, on 0845 600 3756, visit Arthritis Care's website, www.arthritiscare.org.uk or write to Arthritis Care, Unit 25A, Anniesland Business Park, 242 Netherton Rd Glasgow, G13 1EU.

Consultation on patients and doctors making decisions together

The General Medical Council (GMC) is holding a UK-wide public consultation on new draft guidance for doctors on issues of consent and good practice in decision-making.

The new guidance will replace the 1998 publication *Seeking patients' consent: the ethical considerations*. It is broader in scope than its predecessor,

placing greater emphasis on how doctors and patients work together to make decisions, and providing a framework that will apply to the range of situations that doctors face in practice.

It also reflects changes in the law, including the new mental capacity legislation and case law that requires doctors to explain the range of risks associated with a

proposed intervention.

You can take part in the consultation on-line at https://gmc.e-consultation.net/making_decisions.

A hard copy of the consultation document is available from the GMC Standards & Ethics Team, Regent's Place, 350 Euston Road, London NW1 3JN (telephone 020 7189 5404, email: standards.consult@gmc-uk.org).

Improving healthcare journeys - the Transport with Care Initiative

Often, people affected by illness or disability and needing to get to hospital or other NHS healthcare centres experience very early starts, long waits, circuitous and uncomfortable journeys because insufficient consideration has been given to transport in health planning. This is exacerbated in rural areas.

Aware that its non-emergency service was not being used as effectively or equitably as it might be, the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) has joined forces with the Joint Improvement Team (JIT) at the Scottish Executive Health Department, COSLA, several local authorities and NHS Boards and the Community Transport Association (CTA) Scotland. Together they are exploring the idea that transport available through local authority social work and education departments and community transport schemes might help with the problem of non-emergency access to healthcare.



This informal consortium aims to encourage the development of virtual co-ordinated transport fleets through local partnerships between the NHS, local authorities and voluntary sector community transport schemes.

It has scoped practice in existing partnerships, run two national events and produced information and development materials.

Now, active support is being given to informal pilot schemes in Perth and Kinross, Dumfries and Galloway and Glasgow.

Local people have expressed positive experience of being able to access one central contact point when

needing to get to health care appointments, although any one of several transport systems or providers might respond, depending on need.

There have however been challenges to partnership working. Some local authorities are concerned that the NHS ambulance service might be expecting too much of their transport provision.

For community transport schemes the prime concern revolves around meeting the full infrastructure costs of providing volunteer-driven services. It has thus taken time to build up understanding and trust amongst the consortium members.

A major player in the Transport with Care initiative is the Community Transport Association (CTA) in Scotland.

The CTA is a national charity giving voice and providing leadership and support to the hundreds of voluntary transport providers in Scotland.

"There are many voluntary and community organisations already providing transport to health services - these have largely been created by local communities seeking local solutions to transport problems", says John MacDonald CTA Director for Scotland. "Now, the NHS is asking for greater service provision from the voluntary sector. That's fine, but only if the true costs of running a voluntary or community transport service can be recovered".

Contact John MacDonald - Tel: 08707 743591 or at:

johnm@ctauk.org

To contact the SEHD about the initiative, e-mail:

mike.martin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

A new strategy for volunteering in health

There is substantive evidence that volunteering improves health and well-being and equally, that volunteering within the NHS makes a very significant contribution to health improvement and health care in Scotland.

Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) has supported a programme of volunteering in health since 2000 and now, VDS has been commissioned by the Executive's Department of Health and Wellbeing to develop and consult on new strategy for volunteering in the NHS.

Recently VDS asked VHS members to contribute evidence of good practice in current volunteering for health activities and gave members the opportunity to say what they hoped to see in the new strategy. VDS has combined this input with other information to form the draft strategy, which has already been put to a reference group for comment.

VDS intends to consult more widely on the draft strategy during July and is keen to hear from VHS members again. We shall disseminate the draft strategy electronically and encourage members to respond. In addition, if any VHS members have accounts of successful volunteering activities which they wish to publicise, the VHS Showcase Page on the website offers a promotional window.

For further information contact Norrie Murray at VDS - norrie.murray@vds.org.uk - tel 01786 479 593 or Helen Tyrrell at VHS - helen.tyrrell@vhscotland.org.uk - tel 0131 652 5992

Release of childhood leukaemia statistics held up once again

The Scottish Green Party has written to Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon, pressing her to require the NHS to release childhood leukaemia statistics in Dumfries and Galloway.

Following a Scottish Court ruling in December 2006 supporting Scotland's Information Commissioner, the Common Services Agency (CSA) which provides a statistical service to the NHS is to appeal to the House of Lords.



The CSA explained that the years for which data was available showed that a very small numbers of children had been affected and, consequently, there was a risk

that release of the information would give rise to a significant risk of indirect identification of living individuals.

However, the Scottish Information Commissioner did not agree with this explanation and ordered the CSA to provide the statistical data in a manipulated format so that it no longer contained personal data and could not allow potential identification of particular individuals.

It is understood that the UK Information Commissioner who holds overall responsibility for the Data Protection Act is to support the release of the information if the case does appear before the House of Lords.

Robin Harper of the Scottish Green Party said: "*I would urge Scottish Executive ministers to intervene on their civil servants to abide by the court ruling and release this information.*"

COPE survey indicates that those affected by mental ill-health still experience discrimination

Recent findings from a report by Caring Over People's Emotions (COPE) observed that one in five people surveyed felt discriminated against as a result of their mental health condition when trying to find employment.

This figure rose to one in three when the target group of those with mental and emotional health difficulties was analysed separately.

COPE is a training and rehabilitation partnership based in Drumchapel, Glasgow, which supports people with mental and emotional health problems.

Their work since 2001 has included addressing the problems experienced by their clients when attempting to either find employment or return to work after illness.

A recent study, named Project 42 and funded by Drumchapel Life, was initiated by COPE with the goal of discovering the barriers to employment and to creating an accessible database of local support services for their clients.

This piece of work included a survey of 500 people, 242 of whom were from the target audience, with the remainder being members of the public, in order to provide a more representative sample.

The survey showed that 50% of those in the overall sample were unemployed, 45% were employed and 5% gave no response. Of those unemployed, 59% were from the target group.

When asked if they felt embarrassed by asking for advice and information about mental health issues, one third of the respondents said that they did (43% of those

from the target group replied 'yes').

The findings also indicated that 44% would take support to help get back into work and overcome the barriers to employment but only 38% knew where to get this support.

Those in the target group were generally more likely to both take support (53%) and know where to find this support (48%) than those in the public group (35% and 29% respectively).

The report's findings will help people to find local support services via a new COPE website due to be launched at the end of July.

One area of concern is the lack of impact that the Scottish Executive agenda, *Choose Life*, has had on those involved in this survey.

The strategy was launched almost five years ago, with the aim of improving knowledge and awareness of 'what works' to prevent suicide, improve opportunities to prevent premature loss of life and provide hope and optimism for the future.

The final report on Project 42 will be available on the new COPE website. Meantime, the interim results can be downloaded from the VHS website at:

http://www.vhscotland.org.uk/library/vol/vol_pub.html

For more information on this project please contact Hilda Davis on 0141 944 5490.

New web-based health information gateway launched

The Health Information Plus website (www.healthinfoplus.scot.nhs.uk / www.healthinfoplus.org.uk), was launched in mid-April. This has been produced by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Knowledge Services working in close partnership with NHS 24.

Health Information Plus aims to provide an illustration of how partnership working across organisations, and use of technologies and standards for sharing information across systems can create a "one-stop shop" or a single, integrated point of access to quality assured health information sources for patients, carers and the public.

Health Information Plus builds upon the patient journey model to provide access to a wider range of relevant, quality assured sources from NHS Scotland, voluntary organisations, local authorities and beyond.

It provides information about health and well-being, diagnostic tests, conditions and treatments, services and support in NHS and partner agencies, and access to online communities and personal narratives to help people share experience and advice.

The website also guides users step by step to the wider evidence and knowledge base if they wish to access that in-depth

information to help them to participate in full in shared decision-making with healthcare professionals.



This collaborative approach means that Health Information Plus makes best use of NES Portal technology for sharing information hand in hand with resources from NHS 24 and other health information providers.

Health Information Plus also includes links to two subject-specific Portals, for Diabetes and Stroke (www.diabetesinfoplus.scot.nhs.uk, www.strokeinfoplus.scot.nhs.uk), which build upon the same models of information support for the patient journey and providing a single gateway to information from multiple quality assured sources.

This new family of Portals has been developed with substantial patient and public input to design and structure.

While it is still early days in development, the principles of collaboration across services and use of technology to provide an integrated platform for health information access are clear to see.

The planned expansion of NHS 24 Online and the new strategy to be developed by the Patient / Public Health Information Strategy Group should provide the opportunity to embed and realise these principles more fully in health information service developments in the future.

Forthcoming events

25th - 27th July:

8th National Regeneration Convention. *People, Power and Poverty: the role of communities in shaping places*
University of Loughborough

10th & 11th September:

Towards a Smoke Free Society
Edinburgh International Conference Centre

12th September:

Fit for Purpose
2nd Social Enterprise & Health Conference Trades Hall, Glasgow

13th & 14th September:

The Voice of Children
Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre

13th & 14th September:

Association of Community Health Partnerships Annual Conference - Macdonald Aviemore Highland Conference Centre

19th & 20th September:

Open Space: People Space – Innovative Approaches to Research Excellence in Landscape and Health,
Edinburgh

5th October:

Call for improvement - towards a strategic approach to customer care in public services
Perth Concert Hall

For more information on these events please visit the VHS website at:
<http://www.vhscotland.org.uk/events/conf.html>

Missing out on the e-news?

The monthly e-news bulletin is sent to a large number of those in the voluntary and community health sector providing information on current news, events, consultations and more.

Please contact phil.mcandrew@vhscotland.org.uk to add your email address to the distribution