

Carers Forum Meeting

9th September 2016

Notes

Gavin Newlands MP Paisley North came along to the forum today and as he had to leave early it was decided to look at the issues carers have. To see if there is anything that he can help with.

- 2 Young Adult Carers mentioned the petition and the campaign that the young carers and young adult carers are running around free public transport for carers. Amanda has launch a petition on line and the Young carers, young Adult carers forum have been working on a DVD to highlight the issues. The group agreed that this was something that would help a lot of carers especially those younger carers who were going to college/uni or school and to help them get out and about. Gavin said that while this would be a issue for Holyrood that he would certainly raise it in Westminster as this will be an issue nation wide for carers.
Gavin is meeting with McGill's buses and will mention the campaign to them.
- Carers allowance for over 65- while carers over the age of 65 are entitled to carers allowance if they are in receipt of a state pension which is more than the value of carers allowance they do not get any money only an underlying entitlement. While carers allowance is one of the benefits that has been devolved to Scotland it is certainly something that he will raise in parliament.

Carers who had attended the Carers parliament last year felt that this issue was raised then but was just brushed under the carpet.

Diane Goodman Centre manager stated that we have invited Jeanne Freeman Scottish Minister for Social security along to the forum to talk about the new devolved powers that the Scottish government will have. We will be having an extra meeting to discuss the welfare benefits.

Many of the carers present feel that while the Scottish government is now dealing with this issue that it also needs to be raised at Westminster as what happens there can influence what happens in Scotland. Gavin said that he had always been a supporter of carers and in his maiden speech had asked for carers allowance to be raised to at least job seekers level but he now realises that it should be a lot more.

- The issue of Council tax was also raised and how carers are not aware of the benefit that can possibly be claimed. There was also a discussion around the raising of council tax and or income tax and how the Scottish government had been given the power to raise additional tax up to 15% but had not used it. Gavin says they may now be looking to raise additional moneys this way so that we can make a difference to people's lives.

Gavin stated that across parliament there is a will to support carers but there need to be a motion to give carers more support. Min Davis Tory MP from Essex has organised a carers day debate so hopefully there will be a motion from this. This can however take up to 3 years before it will be debated.

The carers feel that all parties and governments should be working together to further the recognition and supports for carers. Gavin stated that there is now cross party working group looking at carers issues both at Westminster and Scottish government level.

Diane thanked Gavin for coming along to the meeting.

Community Empowerment Act

Stuart Graham from the council gave a presentation explain the community empowerment act and the powers that it will give to the community.

The forum agreed to ask for a consultation around the act, the council can fund this. It is important that carers have a say on what happens in Renfrewshire and the impact it will have on carers eg. Taking a bus route off, state of the pavements.

We are all aware that money is tight but we need to look at planning ahead with what we have.

Update from the Integrated Joint Board.

There have been 4 meeting so far – we do not seem to be bringing anything to the board but this may be because everybody is just finding their way. Although it is felt that decisions are made behind the scenes or out with the meetings.

The Carers Champion has now been appointed and given a place on the board. The Carers Champion will always be the provost. The Carers Champion will attend meetings that will not be a voting member

At the last meeting the Health board had still not submitted their budget but think that this is now in place so this will be discussed at the next meeting.

Helen has been along to a training session organised by the coalition of Carers for all carers' reps on the Integrated Joint boards. It would appear that in most areas that carers have the same concerns about the boards in that they feel decisions have already been made and that the amount of paper work involved is huge. In many areas carers are not even mentioned in there strategic plans only 4 out of 32 mention carers.

At the next meeting Helen is going to ask if all members of the board have had carers awareness training.

Carers feel that they are not being consulted or know what is going on. As a forum we need to be more vocal, we need to recruit new members and have to look at inviting our local MSPs along to the forum.

The next meeting for the forum is on Friday 28th October 2016 at 10.30am