

### Note of Meeting

**Present:** Jim McCormick (Chair), (JMCC); Alan McDevitt (AMc), Tressa Burke (Deputy Chair) (TB); Fiona Collie (FC); Ewan MacDonald (EMacD); Shaben Begum (SB); Frank Reilly (FR), Carol Tannahill (CT), Ed Pybus (EP), Etienne d'Aboville (Ed'A); Jatin Haria (JH); Angela O'Hagan (AO'H), Andrew Strong (AS),

**Apologies:** Sarah Hammond (SH), Bill Scott (BS), Lucinda Godfrey (LG), Carolyn Lochhead (CL),

**In Attendance:** Kate Thomson-McDermott (KTM), James Wilson (JW)

**Secretariat:** Victoria Miller (VM)

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

JMcC welcomed everyone to the meeting and reflected on the two and a half years of the group. JMcC confirmed and welcomed three new members to the group: Ed Pybus, Carolyn Lockhead and Bill Scott.

JMcC noted that there are still potentially gaps in the membership in terms of some skills and expertise and that he would welcome potential suggestions on this.

The papers for the day's discussion were introduced, in particular the Cabinet Secretary's letter of 31<sup>st</sup> July, detailing a proposed timetable of work for the group. JMcC outlined the agenda for this meeting.

VM confirmed the date of the next meeting as the 14<sup>th</sup> November. TB asked VM to look for a later start date for that meeting.

#### **DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 1:** VM to try to alter the start time of the next group meeting with the Cabinet Secretary

**Action for:** VM

**Action by:** after Group meeting

JMcC spoke about the time line in the Cabinet Secretary's letter of 31<sup>st</sup> July, noting a review to workload in the start of 2020 and towards the end of parliamentary term. JMcC spoke about the substantive advice provided in terms of DACYP dated 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019. JMcC reflected that it would be good to start on tasks earlier to prevent over burden on some members. JMcC noted that the advice reflected the degree of engagement that went into it.

The group discussed the data and information needed for DACBEAG advice pieces.

EP noted there has been no response from the Cabinet Secretary in terms of the Sources of Evidence.

#### **DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 2:** VM & JW to let members know about the progress of the response from the Cabinet Secretary on Sources of Evidence

**Action for:** VM & JW

**Action by:** after Group meeting

The group discussed topics not covered in the Cabinet Secretary's letter; Equalities Strategy, Monitoring & Evaluation and Take Up. The group discussed the importance of evidence in the advice pieces, feedback to the group on their work and of the functioning of a benefit.

JW presented to the Group the expectations and thoughts of the Scottish Government in terms of the recent Cabinet Secretary's letter. JW noted the importance of the Group's work in terms of shaping

policy and that some of the timelines from the letter could be looked at if this would assist the group. JW noted the amount of work within the Scottish Government being completed in terms of equality and stated that comments from the group or additional involvement in the process would be welcomed, if members are interested. JW noted that should more information, research, data or supporting documents be needed, then the group can ask the secretariat to organise and provide this. JW noted the interest of the group, on how to make case transfer less stressful and how to meet the needs of the people with the replacement for PIP. JW noted that some rules and processes might change, such as the mobility 20 metre rule, and that many people are unhappy with the current approach and therefore, that it makes sense to question if it is fit for purpose. JW noted that Take Up strategy will be laid in Parliament. JW noted SCoSS's role in terms of the charter and stated that if DACBEAG is interested in being involved at this stage that it is possible.

#### **DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 3:** JMCC to let the secretariat know if the group needs more meetings, information, data in order to assist the group.

**Action for:** JMCC

**Action by:** after Group meeting

The group raised questions or comments in terms of the longer term plans of the Government in terms of; benefits, monitoring and the current policy in terms of Fraud.

#### **DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 4:** JW to organise communication with the group in terms of Fraud Policy

**Action for:** JW

**Action by:** after Group meeting

The group discussed indefinite awards and the problem of review at any point if needed. There was discussion of writing to the Cabinet Secretary on this topic. The group asked JW about DWP no longer transferring DLA cases to PIP, and the number of people this will impact when the cases are transferred to Scotland.

#### **DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 5:** JW to revert to the group on the proposed approach to case transfer of those who were not accessed under PIP.

**Action for:** JW

**Action by:** after Group meeting

The group discussed evaluation and monitoring and made reference to the evaluation of the smoking ban as being ground breaking for Scotland. JW responded to questions in terms of the benefits timetable. The group noted the importance of context for the Benefit system, that it works in conjunction with other elements such as housing, primary care, social care etc. AO'H asked to see the equality strategy.

#### **DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 6:** JW to revert to the group in terms of the Equality Strategy.

**Action for:** JW

**Action by:** after Group meeting

The group discussed the presentation from JW and the letter from the Cabinet Secretary with the priorities for the group. There was also discussion about external group stakeholder involvement with the Government and involvement/engagement with the workload for the group.

#### **DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 7:** VM and JMCC to draft the response to the Cabinet Secretary's letter and circulate to the group for comment.

**Action for:** VM & JMCC

**Action by:** after Group meeting

The group discussed the approach to advice on entitlement decisions and DAWAP including supporting evidence required.

**DACBEAG 29082019**

**Action 8:** VM to confirm redline deadlines for the advice requested.

**Action for:** VM

**Action by:** after Group meeting

The group discussed the need for more clarification on what was required by the Scottish Government and the desire to involve more of the group into the advice process, by involving them more broadly in tasks. The group discussed accessing information and experiences of those who have different experiences of the system, such as those who were turned down for benefits. Suggestions were made from the group for ways of accessing this feedback, such as those who work for appeal tribunals and to broaden the scope of the response beyond the request of the Scottish Government.

**DACBEAG 29082019 Action 9:**

**JMcC, TB & VM** to draft a consultation proposal

**Action for:** JMcC, TB & VM

**Action by:** after Group meeting

EP reflected on a recent Digital Portal Meeting with Government Officials noting the work being undertaken on Policy, Program and Legal simultaneously. A number of questions and feedback points were raised by the group.

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**Action 10:** VM to use the summary of points to draft a letter in response to this meeting. It was proposed that this letter be circulated to officials before being sent to the Cabinet Secretary

**Action for:** VM

**Action by:** after Group meeting

AO'H presented on the upcoming meeting topic of Equality Impact Assessments and the group discussed. It was noted that a new Head of Equality position has been created at the Scottish Government and reference was made to the National Performance Framework. JMcC noted that the group was happy for the Equality Impact questions raised to be addressed to the Scottish Government.

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**Action 11:** VM to organise a meeting with the new Head of Equality if decided appropriate

**Action for:** VM

**Action by:** If decided appropriate in the future

JMcC asked for any other business.

EP spoke about concerns in relation to regulations, that eligibility criteria is not set in the regulations. The group discussed the approach to the regulations.

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**Action 12:** EP to share a proposed draft of a letter to the Cabinet Secretary regarding this and circulate to the group

**Action for:** EP in conjunction with JMcC

**Action by:** after Group meeting

JMcC asked for any other business and thanked those in attendance.

**Close**