

**Minutes from the Falkirk Carers Forum on Zoom  
Wednesday 24 February 2021**

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**Present:** Frank Donnelly, Myra Flynn, Iain Kirkman, Morven Mack, Kay Purves, Theresa Parker, Aileen Thomson, Marion Wilson

Professionals – Safia Ali (Al-Masaar Forth Valley), Fay Godfrey (Alzheimers Scotland), Stuart Irwin (Falkirk Council), Annette Kerr (Falkirk Health & Social Care Partnership), Donna Laidlaw (Strathcarron Hospice), Jessie-Anne Malcolm (NHS Forth Valley), Alan Robertson (Social Security Scotland), Neil Sowerby (Falkirk District Association for Mental Health), Lorna Swinney (Falkirk District Association for Mental Health), Lauren Urquhart (Self Directed Support Forth Valley)

**Apologies:** Carole Findlay (Town Break Stirling), Diana Morgan (NHS Forth Valley), Ania Sandland (Outside the Box)

**In Attendance:** Margaret Anderson, Cath Brunton, Susan Docherty, Laura McKenzie

**1. Welcome**

Susan welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. Apologies from Diana Morgan (NHS Forth Valley). DM is not permitted to use Zoom. DM is available via telephone or email to offer any help.

**2. Review of minutes from previous forum:** An amendment was made to section 2.2

**2.2 SDS** – paid personal assistant provided for the cared for person, the use of family members as a paid assistant should only be used as a last resort. Seconded FD.

**3. Stuart Irwin (Falkirk Council Community Choices Development Officer)** introduced and presented information of a new project called 'Community Choices' better known as Participatory Funding which allows the local authority to give the local community a greater say in how to spend the funding. The local authority handover 1% to the participatory budget to pass on to the local community and ask how the budget is best spent. The funding is open to applications from individuals, charities and small groups and it is not restricted to only constituted groups. The aim of the funding is focussed around four themes; Fair, Healthier, Connected and more Inclusive Community and to improve the quality of life in the community, creating positive and long lasting differences. Talking today of the small grants applications up to £1500 and Playspace which is capital funding and grants start at £5000. If anyone wants to apply, they must first send in an Expression of Interest Form to the Advisory Panel. This panel still has vacancies and SI invited anyone attending to apply. The panel looks at any improvement that could be made to the expression of interest form and after consultation it would go forward to the application, which is then open to the public vote. The funding It will be a community decision in conjunction with the Health and Social Care Partnership.

SI advised spaces were still available if anyone was interested in taking a position on the Advisory panel. This is a new funding project, which will be operating long term and is different from Community grants which still exist. The funding was launched 8 February 2021 and expressions of interest should be made by the 6 March 2021, to enable funds to be distributed in this financial year, with the possibility of a second panel later in the year. This funding should have been launched last February but due to Covid it has been delayed hence the tight timescale and lack of publicity. Project forms are available from the website - [www.falkirk.gov.uk/comchoices](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/comchoices)

SI provided the forum the opportunity to ask any questions about the Community Choices funding.

- 3.1** SA (Al-Maasar) asked if it is possible to be on the Advisory panel but also to apply for the funding and is it possible for communities can come together to make a joint application? SI advised it would be possible to be involved with the panel and make an application. Joint applications from different communities would be welcomed.
- 3.2** Carer expressed concern about the short timescale and people are not aware of the new project due to lack of publicity. Would there be any flexibility in sending applications if past the deadline date or more flexibility? SI agreed the timescale was tight and if anyone knew of any group or person that have ideas to contact him personally and hopefully allow some flexibility over a few more days. Though most of information is online, some leaflets had been distributed to local pharmacies and supermarkets.
- 3.3** LS (FDAMH) asked if it is possible to spend the money on technology items such as a new video camera, to support online support groups, short courses or promote a service. SI advised that if it suggested that these items would improve digital inclusion then definitely as the lack of accessibility to digital has been big challenge for individuals and community groups.
- 3.4** Carer stated the council is in discussion of offloading local capital resources offering the community to take over the running of these buildings or lose them altogether. To empower local communities would it not be better to reinstall local self-government in the form of local communities and to simply restore local community self-control in the form of the original councils. SI stated he is not involved in the Strategic Property Review and has taken a note of carers concerns to pass on to appropriate people.
- 3.5** Carer expressed concern over the short timescale and create an extension and does this impact on local grants and Gala Day Funding. SI said that due to the tight timescale they are looking to hopefully have a second round of funding later this year. The community grants fund still exists. SI will pass on concerns re timescale to managers. SI offered a response to this question and point he raised about Gala Day Funding.
- 3.6** Carer asked if the 1 million pounds available was for a calendar year or a tax year. SI answered the funding was to be finalised for the budget 20/21 but due to pandemic will be carried forward to the next financial year.
- 3.7** SA asked how many groups can apply per ward to be to be successful. Expressed concerns on the lack of information. If this a previous funding project (participatory funding) and renamed surely the council will have learned from mistakes. SI advised there was a similar scheme from the Scottish government in 2016 to issue small grants and the

Community Choices funding is an entirely new project. Timeline concerns will be passed on. Each ward is awarded £1500 and permitted to one vote per person.

#### **4. Carers Issues/Open Floor**

- 4.1** Carer thanked SD for emails for groups entitled to vaccine and dates available. SD replied different authorities on different time scales, but every carer will get the opportunity to get vaccinated.
- 4.2** AK (Falkirk H & SC Partnership) advised the forum that all carers will get the vaccine but will not get a letter. Carers will be able to access an online portal when it becomes live. The carers centre will keep carers updated on that information and to encourage carers to self refer for the vaccine. Also, NHS inform have a dedicated page for any Covid related concerns. There is no need to contact or register with your GP for the vaccine.
- 4.3** CB asked what about carers who are not online. SD suggested carers register with the Carers Centre and can communicate most recent information by post or telephone. AK also advised that the NHS Inform website provides a telephone number for self referral. LMCK updated that the centre is putting together the E-bulletin and Newsletter which will include the Scottish Government letter to carers will receive an update on the vaccine in the next coming week.
- 4.4** JM (NHS Forth Valley) advised that if no communication is received about a date for the vaccine encouraged carers to use the NHS inform telephone number. LMCK advised there was a mass marketing campaign starting soon to encourage use of the NHS portal and telephone number. JM is currently signposting carers to the centre at the Covid Vaccination clinics she attends.
- 4.5** Carer asked FD in his capacity working with Enable, if any online services for cared for people to use. FD advised nothing available now. The Action Group opening after the summer hopefully September. Action: SD to discuss other information of groups offering support with the carer.

#### **5. Professionals Update**

- 5.1** AK reported no route map available yet to re-open day services or respite, this will be dependent on the success of the vaccine programme. As soon as an update is available, AK will share any information with the Carers Centre. Flexible Respite applications are still available and will continue into next year.
- 5.2** LU (SDS Forth Valley) advised they are still supporting Personal Assistance employers and ensuring they have been able to access PPE and Lateral Flow Tests. They are also offering letters of proof of identity to enable access to Vaccine centres and providing guidance to SDS recipients on how to spend their budget to ensure they get maximum benefit.
- 5.3** AR (Social Security Scotland) provided an update and firstly information about the new Scottish Child payment benefit which was launched this week. This benefit is for children under six years of age and live in a low income family. The payment is £10 per week paid every four weeks.

Currently, SSS have a recruitment drive for a local delivery team to manage the changeover from Child DLA to Child Disability Payment which will operate initially in three pilot areas hopefully to go live in the Autumn 2021. In Spring 2022, SSS will be introducing the Adult Disability Payment which will replace the current Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and another change to benefits will be that the Pension Age Disability Payment will replace Attendance Allowance (AA).

**5.4** LS (FDAMH) are delivering new online courses via Zoom. The Parent Education Course will be launched 31 March and this course will be offered to parents or guardians caring for someone with mental health issues. It is hoped FDAMH will be able to set up an Informal Support Group for carers who are caring for someone with mental health issues.

It is also the 40 Anniversary of FDAMH and various events will be held throughout the year. LS recently attended the Trauma Informed Course and offered to share details of the course to anyone interested. SD will send out details of this course with the forum minutes.

**6 Integrated Joint Board (IJB)Update.**

MM (IJB Rep) will be sending over her report to SD due to time restraints this morning and advised the next IJB meeting is being held on 19 March 2021. The report will be sent out with the minutes.

**10. AOB**

SD invited attendees to take part in the online Carer's poll.

Date of Next Forum: Tuesday 8 June and the forum will be followed by Central Carers Associations AGM.