

Meeting of the National SDS Collaboration

Wednesday 5 November 1-3pm

Chaired by: Pauline Lunn, Director, In Control Scotland

Attended: Alastair Minty, Alison Upton, Ann Marie Penman, Anna Shaughnessy, Anne-Marie Monaghan, April O'Neil, Ashley Drennan, Beth Allen, Ben Davren, Brett Rogers, Calum Carlyle, Cheryl Taylor, Colin Holligan, Diane Hamilton, Don Morrison, Donna Murray, Elspeth Critchley, Ewan Carmichael, Frank Reilly, Gordon Dodds, Iain Ramsay, Jackie Eaton, Jane Kellock, Jaynie Mitchell, Jeremy Adderley, Joanne McGee, Karen Procek, Karin Heber, Kaye Robertson, Laura Finnan Cowan, Leighann Bain, Lyn Pornaro, Magali Redding, Matt Crilly, Megan O'Hara-Knight, Michelle Fleming, Morag Duncan, Narek Bido, Pauline Boyce, Pauline Lunn, Pawel Kopec, Peter Scott, Rebecca Aldridge, Rhiann McLean, Robert White, Saara Viitanen, Sharon Mcleod, Sharon Stevely, Sheila Hanney, Stacey Highfield, Steph Hayle, Veronica Dunn, and Zoe McIntyre.

Apologies: Andy Miller, Ashely Mazs, Becky Duff, Chris Watson, Ekaterina Todorova, Dawn Ranson, Donald Macleod, Geri McCormick, Kirsty Sangster, Lee Shennan, Lewis Shaw, Lisa Paul, Lizanne McCahill, Rachel Mackay, Rob Gowans, Ronald Culley, and Susan Kelso.

1. Welcome

Karin Heber, Stacey Highfield, Saara Viitanen, and Pawel Kopec were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Addressing Outcome 4: Leadership

a. Overview of SDS Improvement Plan work that addresses leadership outcome (Jane Kellock and Zoe McIntyre)

Presentation about work funded under this outcome in the SDS Improvement Plan by Social Work Scotland and Self Directed Support Scotland delivered.

b. SDS and the Independent Living Movement (Anne Marie Monaghan)

Tribute paid to Etienne D'Aboville, who recently passed away, and expressed how his influence impacts and should continue to impact leadership today.

c. Impact of Cuts on Direct Payments- presentation of evidence (Rhiann Maclean)

Presentation delivered about impact of cuts on Direct Payments. Research due to be published in subsequent months.

d. Overview of Connected Conversations evidence from Outcomes 1/2/3 (Karen Procek)

Emerging themes from Connected Conversations work this year included:

- The need for a fairer, more transparent, and person-centred system, and consistent rights-based care for all.
- People with lived experience often feel that the system is secretive, lacks transparency, and is failing to uphold choice, control, and dignity.
- There remains a stark gap between the vision of SDS and the lived reality due to disempowerment, inflexibility, and inconsistency in delivery, highlighting a leadership gap.

3. Reflection in discussion groups

- How should we communicate the evidence to leaders to ensure it leads to change in SDS implementation?
- How can you/your organisation contribute to gathering/sharing evidence on the impact of cuts of Direct Payments/SDS Option 1?

Key discussion points included:

- Participants expressing a mix of relief that these issues around the impact of SDS cuts being discussed and frustration/anger at how long they have persisted.
- Calls for action focused on accountability, culture change, and the need to move beyond endlessly documenting problems to driving change, both in the short and long term.
- Several participants suggested working in a collective manner, particularly with upcoming Scottish Parliament elections, to strengthen influencing for improved Self-directed Support (SDS).
- The groups recognised that the problems are not just political but also rooted in practice and culture, highlighting a lack of disability competence, compassion, consistency, transparency, and accountability in services.
- There were reflections on the need for better communication to leaders, sharing real stories, and demonstrating the lived impact of policy and funding decisions.
- Contributors emphasised the importance of disabled people being heard.
- Participants reiterated the importance of distinguishing blame between political decisions and frontline staff.

4. Current issues

- COSLA update (Matt Crilly)

COSLA has launched its manifesto for the next year's Scottish Parliament election. COSLA, Scottish Government, and health/social care partners are developing a new "support and improvement approach," designed to help services that are not meeting expected standards.

5. AOCB

Stacey Highfield from GCIL introduced the "Voices at Work" project and the recruitment process for a steering group and a wider consultation group, focusing on specific conditions and experiences.

Date of next meeting – 3 December 2025