



Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board

**MINUTES OF THE FULL BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2007.**

Present

BOARD

Mrs Anne Spaight MBE
Mrs Simone Baker
Mrs Judith Holt
Mr Zubair Khan
Dr Ben Ko
Dr Ian McGill
Dr Ronald Pearce
Mrs Sarah Playforth
Mrs Clair Poole
Mr Douglas Ross
Prof David Scott
Mrs Sarah Vines
Mrs Christine Whitehead

VISITORS

Ms Florence Lea – Reviewer
Mr John Bergman – Disability and Carers Service
Mr Norman Cockett – Disability and Carers Benefits Division
Dr Martin Donnelly - Secretary DLAAB (NI)
Mr Stanley Millar – Chairman DLAAB (NI)
Ms Janis Creane - Department for Social Development (NI)
Dr Roger Thomas – Health and Benefits Division
Dr Clare Leris – Health and Benefits Division
Ms Carol Attfield – Signing Interpreter

SECRETARIAT

Sharon Foster-King
Mr John Hicks

APOLOGIES

Dr. Amit Arora
Mrs Jean Cooper
Dr. Mohammad Obaidullah
Prof. Tom Sensky
Mr Bruce Calderwood DCD
Mr Bill Gunnyeon

Agenda Item 1- Opening Remarks and Apologies

1.1 The Chairman extended a warm welcome to members and visitors. In particular she welcomed Mr Cockett and Mr Khan who were attending their first meeting. Mr Khan had recently joined the Board filling the caring responsibilities role. The Chair then informed the Board that Mrs Bell and Mrs Wildash were now working on European issues and that Sharon Foster-King and Mrs Jane Cocking were now part of the Secretariat team. Mrs Bell, through the Chair, thanked the Board for their support and good humour.

1.2 Apologies for absence from Dr. Arora, Mrs Cooper, Professor Sensky, Mr Calderwood, Mr Gunnyeon, and Mr Heard. Mrs Thompson was also unable to attend the meeting but had had a long conversation with the Chair who would report back later.

Agenda Item 2- Minutes of Full Board Meeting- Tuesday 26 June 2007

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June were agreed with the following amendments:

- 5.3 replace 'there' with 'their'.
- 7.1 replace child psychologist with child psychiatrist.

The Chair asked all members to note future Full Board dates, 12 February 2008 and 10 June 2008.

Agenda Item 3 – Matters Arising.

3.1 1.2 The Secretariat is in ongoing discussions with LS Trillium about evacuation procedures. One of the reasons for having this meeting in Caxton House was the better evacuation plans.

4.3 Cleared

7.4 Mr Ross suggested Third Force News. Further suggestions welcome.

8.1 Mr Khan to visit Birmingham DBC on 13 November

Agenda Item 4 – Report on the review of DLAAB.

4.1 The Chair invited Ms Lea to give her report to the meeting. Ms Lea thanked the Board for their input and time. She stressed that the report, which should be regarded as being confidential, contained a number of recommendations which Ministers may accept or reject.

4.2 Ms Lea reminded those present of the Terms of Reference of the review and the particular questions she had been asked to look at before outlining the recommendations in her report and the conclusions she had reached.

4.3 The Chair thanked Ms Lea for her report and commented that the Board is a Non Departmental Public Body which means that it can provide information to

Ministers which the Department cannot and that if the Board is seen as being too close to the Department it would damage its independence.

4.4 Mr Cockett informed the meeting that the report would go to Ministers; any action taken in response would not be done in secret, his attending the meeting had clarified the Department's responsibilities to the Board. He confirmed that advice to Ministers must be full and independent and that the Board would not change its current role until officially told to do so by DWP Ministers.

4.5 The Chair thanked Ms Lea for her report and said she thought it a very fair report and was optimistic for the future.

Agenda Item 5 – How the Malignancy Study Report is being taken forward.

5.1 The Board was commissioned to undertake a study looking at the disabling effects of malignancies; treatments, triggers and evidence sources. A report had been delivered and subsequently a number of Board members had attended a meeting to discuss revised guidance for Decision Makers. The Chair invited Dr Leris, a policy doctor in the Health and Benefits Division who is involved in writing that guidance, to update the Board on how the recommendations in the report were being taken forward.

5.2 Dr Leris reported that, in time, it was hoped that there would be working age specific guidance on 21 different malignancies, including the most common disabling effects, available to Decision Makers. Work on guidance on five malignancies was currently under way with each malignancy being looked at by an oncologist and specialist nurse. It was hoped that this phase would be completed by the end of November 2007.

5.3 Dr Leris noted that initial treatments can be disabling but it is not uncommon to return to full health and, in such situations, time limited awards should be made. She also confirmed that there would be several reminders in the guidance urging Decision Makers to be aware, and take account of, non malignant disabling conditions that might be associated with malignancies.

5.4 Dr Leris had noted the Board's concern over the amount of time wasted when those recently diagnosed with cancer had been encouraged to apply for DLA when there was no chance of an award being made. She was in touch with Macmillan nurses about this. The Board was also concerned that some claimants, having been turned down for DLA, may not reapply at a time when there was a greater chance of their claim succeeding.

5.5 The Board noted that the Disability Discrimination Act covered cancer patients from the moment of diagnosis. There was general agreement that the guidance produced must meet the needs of Decision Makers.

5.6 In closing, Dr Leris thanked the Board for their report and commented that a lot of the points raised had been incorporated into the guidance. The Chair responded by saying the Board was happy to help in any way it could.

Agenda Item 6 – Update from DLAAB Northern Ireland.

6.1 The Chair invited Mr Millar to update the Board on the activities of the Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board (Northern Ireland).

6.2 Mr Millar reported that in April 2006 there had been a review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland. This had a significant impact on DLAAB(NI) as the review recommended that its responsibilities should be transferred to the GB Board. In the spring of 2007 powers were devolved back to Northern Ireland. The proposal to dis-establish DLAAB (NI) still exists but there is higher profile legislation to pass before the necessary Bill can be introduced. In these circumstances it is difficult for the NI Board to make long term plans but it does intend to look at the work of the Social Security Standards Committee, changes in the Motability scheme and two reports relating to the Independent Living Review.

6.3 Mr Millar formally invited the Chair to the December 12 meeting of DLAAB(NI). He also noted that he had met with Ms Lea, and, while welcoming the recommendation in the review relating to Northern Ireland, recognised that there was a huge amount of work ahead of the GB Board.

6.4 The Chair commented that future adverts for DLAAB vacancies should be run UK wide and that the GB Board would continue to provide colleagues in Northern Ireland with as much support as possible.

Agenda item 7 – Recruitment update.

7.1 The Chair invited the Secretariat to provide an update on the current recruitment situation. The Secretariat reported that the Board has some vacancies including one for a disabled person. The Secretariat propose a joint recruitment exercise with adverts running in January and will write to the Chair seeking approval of their proposals. The Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments supports such combined exercises.

Action Point – All Board members invited to suggest where an advert for a disabled member for the Board could be run.

Action Point – Secretariat to write to the Chair seeking approval of recruitment plans.

Agenda Item 8 – Date of Next Full Board Meeting.

8.1 The next full Board meeting will be on Tuesday 12 February 2008 in Conference Room 1 Caxton House. The Chair then announced other dates that were likely to be of interest to Board members:

17 October 2007, Higher Rate Mobility study day, Room 123, The Adelphi;
23 October 2007, Meeting with Behcet's Society, Room 102 The Adelphi;
8 October 2007, Social Security Advisory Committee Stakeholders meeting
(Chair only).

20 November 2007, Higher Rate Mobility report writing day, Room 640, The Adelphi;
12 February 2008, Full Board meeting, Caxton House and
10 June 2008, Full Board meeting.

Action Point – All Board members asked to note dates.

Agenda item 9 – Any other Business.

9.1 The Chair reported that Disability and Carers Benefits Division had been commissioned to undertake a social research project looking at “DLA and Work”. This will be a two year study and will focus on interviews with DLA claimants. A Steering Group will be established and volunteers from DLAAB were being sought to join that Group. Some expressions of interest from Board members were noted and the Secretariat will take forward.

Action Point – Secretariat to investigate likely locations of meetings and whether daily fees and travel expenses would be payable. Secretariat to liaise with DCB5 over DLAAB membership of a Steering Group.

9.2 A draft Annual Report for the period 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007 is with the Chair and will be circulated to members in due course.

9.3 The Chair had recently met with Sir Richard Tilt, the Chairman of the Social Security Advisory Committee, and will be attending a Stakeholders’ day. The Chair hopes to meet with the Disability Employment Advisory Council shortly.

Action Point – Secretariat to invite Sir Richard to the next DLAAB full Board meeting to discuss the work of SSAC.

Action Point – Secretariat to arrange a meeting between the Chair and the Chair of DEAC.

Meeting closed