



&Complex Needs &Dual Diagnosis

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

**Minutes from the 52nd All Party Parliamentary Group on Complex Needs and Dual Diagnosis
meeting – Improving support for young people with complex needs
Wednesday 8th May 2024, 13:30-15:00 (Hybrid)**

Chair – Jane Stevenson MP

Jane Stevenson (JS) welcomed everyone to the 2024 AGM for the APPG for complex needs on improving support for young people with complex needs. The APPG has been running for 17 years now and during the that time we have covered a diverse range of important topics which seek to tackle the gaps in provision for those with complex needs.

JS: explained that the AGM will run till 14:00 and then our following meeting which will discuss how to better support for young people with complex needs.

Review of APPG activity over the past year

JS: opened the AGM by summarizing the APPG's activities over the past year. In May 2023, the group discussed mental health provision in light of the Major Conditions Strategy, hearing from professionals and those with lived experience about social factors impacting mental health. The February meeting focused on supporting individuals with both mental health and substance use needs, featuring insights from guest speakers including practitioners and policymakers. **JS** also mentioned her upcoming essay for MEAM on this topic.

- **Election of Officers**

Officers confirmed: Jane Stevenson MP (Chair), Lord Watson of Wyre Forest (Co-chair), Steve Reed MP, Jeff Smith MP.

No objections were raised.

- **Approval of Income and Expenditure**

APPG expenditure, including staff time provided by the Turning Point secretariat, valued at under £1,500.

This concludes the formalities of the AGM.

1. Chairs introductory comments: supporting young people with complex needs

JS: In the past decade children and young people have often been overlooked and the impact is increasingly clear; with higher levels of child poverty, a growing mental health crisis for young people, and waiting times for support and treatment at unsustainable levels. There is a greater number of children being taken into care due to reaching a point of crisis.

JS: 445,000 people were in contact with children and young people's mental health services in November 2023, up from 362,000 two years earlier in November 2021. The Government has said it is working with NHS England to implement new access and waiting time standards for mental health services, including CYPMHS. There is an existing waiting time standard for children and young people's eating disorder services. This standard is not being met.

JS: in social care, as of 31 March 2023, there was a 9% increase in the number of children's homes (to 2,880) and a 7% increase in the number of places (to 10,818) compared with 31 March 2022.

JS: on to housing, Councils face £300m youth homelessness funding gap. A record number of young people faced homelessness last year and an increasing proportion of them were not assessed for support, according to new research by Centre Point.

JS: in substance use, new WHO report finds girls in the UK are drinking, smoking and vaping more than boys, while the country is "top of the charts" globally for child alcohol use.

JS: within the past decade youth services has been a primary casualty when it comes to public service cuts. Real terms spending on youth services fell by 64% between 2011/12 and 2021/22, from £947 million down to just £341 million. In mental health, the majority of funding for Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS) is not ring-fenced. Similarly, young people's substance use services continue to suffer from a lack of ring-fenced money and are rarely stipulated within broader substance use contracts. With the general election fast approaching, improving services and support for children and young people should be a key priority for policy makers moving forward and the APPG would like to take this opportunity to discuss current care and what is needed to improve support for children and young people.

2. Introducing speakers

JS: Considering this landscape, we are delighted to welcome a great panel of speakers today who will share their insight with us regarding this important issue. Firstly, **Rose, Young Partner at Peer Power Youth.**

Rose spoke about her own experiences navigating support for young people. This included navigating the system with additional needs around neurodiversity and the lack of support for neurodiverse young people within the care system and within health and care system more broadly. Rose spoke on negative experiences surrounding outsourced services which did not provide timely and appropriate support. Rose also spoke about very poor experience in foster care, including abuse, and inadequate management of the situation by local services as well as inadequate support.

Rose then spoke about her experience as a Young Partner at Peer Power. Young Partners use lived and learned experience (of the justice system, being in care, experience of contact with crime in the community or contact with the police) to influence the work and practices of professionals, helping them to make services better for children and young people. The activity is varied from public

campaigns to evidence sessions to cross agency meetings such as the APPG. In 2023, Rose spoke at the Public Accounts Committee providing insights on how the Government's Children's Social Care Implementation Strategy could be improved.

Charly Dale, Head of Health Services at New Horizon Youth Centre

Charly Dale (CD) shared her own lived experience and insight as a practitioner working within New Horizon Youth Centre's Health team, including key challenges and practices in supporting young people in accessing relevant health services. New Horizon Youth Centre supports young people experiencing homelessness.

CD outlined the health provision and support services offered by NHYC (New Horizon Youth Centre) to young people, particularly those experiencing homelessness. Services include housing advice, benefits support, education and employment guidance, counselling, mental health advocacy, physical and sexual health advice, access to showers, hot food, clothing, and essentials. The centre also provides youth work and life skills programs, external legal and immigration advice, and one-to-one support for independent living and communication skills. The health team consists of a full-time nurse, counsellors, a communications tutor, and management staff.

CD highlighted the significant impact of youth homelessness on emotional and physical wellbeing, including loneliness, violence, risky behaviors, substance use, sexually transmitted infections, malnutrition, and various infectious diseases. Data shows high rates of mental health needs, substance use (with 47% using alcohol and 33% using cannabis), and smoking among young people. Barriers to accessing health services include stigma, lack of appropriate environments, discontinuity of care, and practical challenges. In the past year at New Horizon Youth Centre, 118 young people were supported by the nurse, 94 accessed counselling, and 58 received communications skills support. Notably, 52% of those who accessed health services reported a positive improvement in their health and wellbeing.

Iryna Pona, Head of Youth Research, Policy and Evaluation at The Children's Society

Iryna Pona (IP) spoke about the Children at the Table coalition and the policy context surrounding support for young people with complex needs and key points leading up to the general election. Ahead of an upcoming general election, the UK's five leading children's charities – Action for Children, Barnardo's, The Children's Society, the National Children's Bureau and NSPCC – have joined together with the aim of ensuring politicians across Government work together to invest in improving the lives of babies, children and young people, and putting their needs and voices at the heart of decision making.

IP presented on the launch of the "Children at the Table" campaign to urge the next UK government to prioritize babies, children, and young people in policy and spending decisions. The coalition calls for collaborative action to improve children's lives, ensure their voices are central to decision-making, and increase investment in their wellbeing. The campaign was launched ahead of the general election, with a joint policy report published in November 2023 and a parliamentary launch in January. Young people have played a leading role in events at major party conferences, and their participation has been key to the campaign's impact.

IP explained that the campaign's petition has garnered over 25,000 signatures and is supported by 187 organizations, including Save the Children and UNICEF. Activities continue with plans for further events, media engagement, and petition hand-ins to the new government. Supporters are

encouraged to sign the petition and join as partner organizations. **IP** emphasises the youth-led nature of the campaign and the importance of listening to and acting on young people's views to transform children's lives in the UK.

3. Whole group discussion

School absences and mental health demand: Recent figures indicate that school absences have risen beyond pre-pandemic levels, with one in five children now 'persistently absent' (missing 10% or more of school time). The group discussed whether there is a relationship between this trend and the increasing demand for young people's mental health services, and considered what this relationship might entail.

Continuity of care for young people with complex needs: The importance of improving continuity of care for young people with complex needs was raised, with suggestions invited on effective strategies to address this.

Utilising lived experience in support: Attendees considered how best to utilise the role of lived experience in supporting young people with complex needs, recognising the value of insight from those with direct experience.

Resilience and knowledge within the workforce: Discussion centred on how to build resilience and knowledge within the workforce supporting young people, to ensure adequate and tolerant support across services, including mental health and substance use.

Effective and early assessment: The need for both early and effective assessment was highlighted, with an emphasis on taking into account the complex and individual relationships between a young person's needs, substance use, cognitive and emotional symptoms, behaviour, and social context.

Involving young people and families in care planning: The group discussed ways to better involve young people (and their family or carers, where appropriate) in the development of support, treatment, and care plans.

Collaboration between commissioners and providers: Suggestions were invited on how commissioners and providers could work more effectively together to reach shared solutions for young people's services and support.

4. Close meeting

JS thanked all for coming today.

If you have any questions regarding this meeting, the inquiry, or anything else, please contact via Turning Point secretariat officers, Tom Wright, and Gemma Bruce.

Secretariat contacts

Tom Wright – email: Tom.Wright@turning-point.co.uk or phone: 07907 337782

Gemma Bruce – email: Gemma.bruce@turning-point.co.uk or phone: 07739 746118

Attendees

Name	Role	Organisation
Jane Stevenson MP	MP	House of Commons
Jeff Smith MP	MP	House of Commons
Alistair Carmichael MP	MP	House of Commons
Rose	Young Partner	Peer Power Youth
Clarissa	Team leader	Peer Power Youth
Charly Dale	Head of Health Services	New Horizon Youth Centre
Iryna Pona	Head of Youth Research, Policy and Evaluation	The Children's Society
Jake Mills	Chief Executive	Chasing the Stigma
Elsa Corry-Roake	External Affairs Manager	HumanKind
Marghe Milani	Course Leader for Addiction Studies	University of West London
Alan Butler		University of West London
John Graham	Therapeutic Counsellor	Self-employed
Catherine Convey	Mental Health Complex Needs Lead	AdvanceUK
Joy Hibbins	CE and Founder	Suicide Crisis
Robert Stebbings	Policy and Communications Lead	Adfam
Lee Wilson	Regional Director	HumanKind
Sarah Wileman	Director of Development	Mental Health Matters
Stefani Kaur Nagpal-Besely	Project Manager & Trainer	Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL)
Jackie Bunting	Supported Living Manager	Turning Point
Ivan Liburd	Community Safety Co-Ordinator	Leicester City Council
Bethany Shakiba	Team Leader	Turning Point
Kushboo Gosai	Operations Manager	SASH
Rob Fletcher	Operations Manager	SASH
Kene'h Oweh	registered Independent Pharmacist Prescriber	Self-employed
Amelia Canning	Policy Officer	Sense
Louisa Steele	Policy Officer	Standing Together
Gemma Bruce	Head of External Affairs	Turning Point
Tom Wright	Policy Officer	Turning Point
Sarah Kennedy	Director of External Affairs and Marketing	Turning Point