



Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project

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cc.

Maggie Chapman MSP

MSP Karen Adam MSP

Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP

Pam Gosal MSP

Rachael Hamilton MSP

Fulton MacGregor MSP

Joe FitzPatrick MSP

The Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

13 March 2023

Dear Mr FitzPatrick

Request for Support

As Convenor of the Scottish Parliament Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee I am seeking your urgent assistance in raising the funding crisis currently facing the MECOPP Gypsy/Traveller Community Health Worker Service with the Minister for Equalities and Older People and the Minister for Public Health.

The Community Health Worker Service recruits, trains and supports Gypsy/Travellers to provide health advocacy for their community on a wide range of health care issues. The aim of the service is to address longstanding health inequalities experienced by Gypsy/Travellers, and to improve their health and wellbeing. The interim evaluation of the programme, attached, demonstrates its success and achievements.

As Convenor of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, yourself and fellow Committee Members have heard first-hand of the barriers Gypsy/Travellers continue to experience in accessing public sector services, including health. NHS systems, policies and structures have consistently failed Gypsy/Travellers often treating them with contempt, misunderstanding and bias. The Community Health Workers are overcoming these barriers and forming effective partnerships in response to the needs and demands of their community.

MECOPP received two years funding to establish the service from the Scottish Government's Health Improvement Division. It was anticipated that a further one-year funding package from the Government would also be available to allow for discussions with NHS Boards to take place in 2023/24 to agree sustainable long-term funding. However, to date, officials have only secured three months funding out of the twelve, meaning that in the next few weeks redundancy notices will have to be served on the Community Health Workers.

The success of this service cannot be underestimated, the impact it is having on the community, the workers and public sector services exceeds all expectations. It is central to the delivery of the Scottish Action Plan '*Improving the Lives of Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers*' as it impacts on all aspects of the plan, not just health and well-being.

The effect of closing this service will be felt at many levels not just at a community level, but also the trust, respect and credibility that MECOPP and the Scottish Government have worked hard to develop with the community will be lost. And at a time when the Government and partners are in the process of considering the content for the next National Action Plan for Scotland's Gypsy/Travellers.

I have had the privilege of working with the Committee in several Evidence Sessions and I know the Committee is both acutely aware of, and committed to, addressing the inequalities experienced by the community on a daily basis. Please do not let this be one more inequality.

Thank you for any assistance you can provide in raising this with the appropriate Ministers.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Munday
Gypsy/Traveller Service Lead
MECOPP

Margaret Chiwanza
Chief Executive
MECOPP