

28 February 2014

Stewart Stevenson MSP
Convenor
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments
Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Stewart Stevenson,

I am writing to raise an issue about lobbying at the Scottish Parliament. It relates to the operation of Cross Party Groups on Chronic Pain and on Health Inequalities.

In particular it relates to the role of organisations called the 'Health Inequalities Alliance' and the 'Well Being Alliance.'

These organisations are both associated with a person called Jacquie Forde and indeed the former appears to be the predecessor of the latter. Both were based at the same address in Glasgow (11-12 Newton Terrace). The Wellbeing Alliance is registered to the home address of Jacquie Forde in Edinburgh, though still based in Glasgow and was incorporated at Companies House on the 26 October 2012.

I note that the Cross Party Group on Health Inequalities discloses the following support in its most recent report:

Voluntary Secretarial Support from Jacquie Forde of The Wellbeing Alliance
Period September 2011 to March 2013
32 days
Value of this support –My time is voluntary as an individual
Refreshments £401.50 provided by the Health Inequalities Alliance
£141.95 provided by the Wellbeing Alliance¹

I note that the Cross Party Group on Chronic Pain discloses in its March 2013 report that 'Jacqueline Forde of the Health Inequalities Alliance' was elected unopposed as secretary on May 23 2012.² In its subsequent report in June 2013 it notes that :

Secretariat support supplied on a voluntary basis by Jacquie Forde.³

¹ http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/CrossPartyGroups/Health%20Inequalities/Health_Inequalities.pdf

² http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/CrossPartyGroups/Chronic%20Pain/Chronic_Pain.pdf

³ http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/CrossPartyGroups/Chronic%20Pain/Chronic_Pain_20120523.pdf

No details are given about the number of hours devoted to the Group or the cost of this. In the body of the report the following is noted:

- January 23rd 2013 meeting refreshments were sponsored by The Wellbeing Alliance (£32.40)
- March 13th 2013 meeting refreshments were sponsored by The Wellbeing Alliance (£64.40)
- May 29th 2013 meeting refreshments were sponsored by The Wellbeing Alliance (£64.40)

Turning to the new rules adopted by the Committee in early 2013. I note that

- Cross-Party Groups must register details of all donations or material assistance which have a value of more than £500 a year.
- ...that where an external organisation provides secretariat support to a Cross-Party Group, there is a cost to that organisation in terms of the time and other resources devoted to Cross-Party Group activities by any staff, particularly the specific individual who fulfils the secretary role, and that the cost of this service should be considered as material assistance received by the Cross-Party Group.⁴

I note that in this case the report of the groups does not include any estimate of the value of the contribution.

I further note that the Committee's call for evidence on Cross Party Groups sought views on whether organisations providing secretariat services should be required to make available on request certain information, such as a full client list for a consultancy firm or for a charity/not-for-profit organisation a list of companies which have made a donation of more than £5,000 in the previous 12 months.⁵

The Committee decided that:

a requirement for organisations providing secretariat services to provide this information *if requested* is appropriate. In making this recommendation, the

⁴ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/57292.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/57292.aspx>

Committee highlights that the information would only be required if requested by the Committee and that such a request would usually be prompted by a specific concern about the functioning of a particular Group, such as a complaint being made to the Committee or a failure by the Group to provide details of financial assistance.⁶

I would like the committee to consider whether given the information above it might want to ask the relevant Cross Party Groups and indeed the Wellbeing Alliance (and its predecessor) to disclose further information on the support received including putting a value on the time donated by Jacquie Forde. Given the fact that the organization of which she is Chief Executive is donating money for refreshments, it seems arguable that the time she donates might be regarded as a cost on the Wellbeing Alliance. Even if on a pro bono basis, presumably the notional cost of the time should be calculated/disclosed.

However as I will now discuss this matter may not be so straightforward. This is because Jacquie Forde is also the Director of a lobbying firm called Quorate Public Affairs (Date of incorporation 11 October 2012 – some two weeks before the incorporation date of the Wellbeing Alliance) which is registered at Companies House to the same Glasgow address as the Wellbeing Alliance.⁷ Quorate does not as yet have a functioning website, is not a member of any of the lobbyists trade associations and does not disclose its clients. It can be noted that Jacquie Forde is a former lobbyist for the pharma company Sanofi-Aventis.⁸ The LinkedIn page for Quorate did, however, until recently note its specialism in lobbying for the pharmaceutical industry:

Quorate Public Affairs are the only health professional public affairs agency in Scotland providing clients with specialist public affairs, PR, monitoring, Project management and Training Solutions. Our team members have particular expertise in Market Access ,Pharma, Medical Devices, NHS and Health Economics. We are based within Scotland but we work for our clients across the UK. Due to the nature of our base we have particular experience in the Scottish Healthcare market this includes Market Access involving Scottish Medicines Consortium, Health Boards,

⁶ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/57292.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.linkedin.com/company/quorate-public-affairs>

⁸ <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/jacquie-forde/22/683/bb9>

Scottish Government and Parliament. We provide high quality public relations and political lobbying services.⁹

I note that since I started investigating this issue the word 'lobbying' has been removed from Quorate Public Affairs publicity material. I attach a screengrab of the page as it was before the change.

On the face of it, it seems there is a possibility that the activities of Quorate and the Wellbeing Alliance might in some way be related to each other. If they were, then presumably **the committee might want to inquire about both the question of donations to the Wellbeing Alliance, about any clients retained by Quorate Public Affairs and about the precise relations between them and any third party.**

There is a further piece of information that might or might not be relevant. This is that the Wellbeing Alliance sponsored a meeting in Parliament on 'Alcohol dependence – in Scotland' which was billed as covering 'current opinions, impact, services and treatments for those affected by alcohol dependence in Scotland'. The meeting convened by Jackie Baillie MSP took place on 15 May 2013. It was sponsored by a second organization as can be seen from the invite (attached to this letter). This was Lundbeck, the pharmaceutical company. Lundbeck, amongst other things, produces a drug called Nalmefene (Selincro) which is used to aid in the reduction of alcohol consumption for those with particular kinds of alcohol dependence. Nalmefene was approved for the Scottish market by the Scottish Medicines Consortium on 7 October 2013 some 4-5 months after the meeting in the Scottish Parliament.¹⁰

The committee might like to ask the Cross Party Groups, the Wellbeing Alliance/Jacqui Forde for more details about the nature of any relationship with Lundbeck.

Looking back at the committee enquiry on Cross Party Groups the following comment from NHS Scotland, now appears prescient:

⁹ <http://www.linkedin.com/company/quorate-public-affairs>

¹⁰ http://www.scottishmedicines.org.uk/SMC_Advice/Advice/917_13_nalmefene_Selincro/nalmefene_Selincro

The limit of donations of £5000 should be reduced to include all donations to avoid any back door lobbying. One danger is that a commercial lobby company or interest group might fund a Cross-Party Group, perhaps through a voluntary organisation or community enterprise. Hence the need for complete transparency and openness around funding and support for Cross-Party Groups.¹¹

Finally, in the interests of transparency I would like to invite the committee to publish any information that they might receive as a result of their enquiries. Indeed it might be that the committee would like to consider revising the rules so that all corporations, lobbying firms, or non-profit groups are required to reveal their clients or significant donations as a matter of course – perhaps in the annual Cross Party Group reports..

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks very much.

Yours sincerely,

David Miller
Professor of Sociology

¹¹ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/57292.aspx>