

Draft minutes of the Annual Review, the 59th SAIF meeting, held on Thursday 28th February and Friday 29th February 2008 in the Marriott Hotel, Edinburgh

Present

Ben Forsyth (Chair), Jean Alcock (Thursday only), David Armstrong, Claire Brennan, Marie Burns (Thursday only), Mary Evans, Andy Groves, Margaret Hurcombe, Lucie McAnespie (Friday only), Robert Sneddon and Sandra Wilson

Also present: Joanne Martin and Steve Harvey (Project Workers)

Apologies

Grant Carson, Jean Dunlop, Lionel Long, Mike McCarron, Linda Miller, Nicola Noon, Marilyn Slavin, and Carolyn Wyper

Steve reported that:

- Mike McCarron has decided to resign from SAIF. One of the founding members and chairman for 9 years, Mike has made a considerable contribution to SAIF. It has been increasingly difficult for Mike to find the time to get involved. He has emailed SAIF best wishes but regretfully offers his resignation. It was agreed that a letter should be written to Mike thanking him for his work with SAIF.
- Jean Dunlop has finally had a successful operation on her broken elbow. She hopes to be back soon.
- Project staff have had no contact from Nikki Cameron for about a year.

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

Ben acknowledged that it had been another busy and successful year for SAIF; in particular he noted the new edition of the Standards and the A5 booklet, the seminars and training, the three research projects and the user-led review pilot. The success of SAIF is due in no small part to the working groups achieving their targets and the impressive commitment people have shown.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting on 21st November 2007

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

- ❑ Sandra reported that the Fife Traumatic Brain Service is keen to do a user-led review pilot. Margaret offered to discuss the experience of FAIR with them.
- ❑ The A5 Standards Booklet (and BSL DVD) was sent out in December and subsequent demand has already exceeded 3000 copies.
- ❑ The easy-to-understand booklet is currently being amended – the art work is being done by Mary’s husband. Draft copies were distributed and members asked for their comments by the end of the meeting – see agenda item 10.
- ❑ The Beyond the Web seminar was very successful and has been followed up this year by four short training courses (E-communication: accessibility in practice). However due to unforeseen circumstances the courses which were due to be delivered in March have had to be postponed until June.

The possibility of these courses being delivered in the north of Scotland and at further education establishments will be considered by the local accessible information strategy working group.

- ❑ The SAIF information brochure targeting the NHS is currently at the printers. An email introducing SAIF and an electronic copy of the brochure has been issued to a comprehensive list of contacts across the Scottish Health Boards.
- ❑ The E-communication working group has produced its fourth e-communication poster ‘converting Word documents into pdfs’.
- ❑ Ben and Margaret have not had time to send a letter to the Department of Work and Pensions. Assurances have been given that the quality of service will not be affected by the closure of the office in Edinburgh. Ben will liaise with the Child Poverty Action Group about a possible joint initiative with SAIF if necessary.

4. SAIF Funding

Project staff reported:

The Scottish Government Section 10 grant offer to the SCC for SAIF for the period 2008-2011 is at the same level as the previous six years, despite our application for more.

It is possible for SAIF to continue to operate on this budget. However it would not be possible for the project to deliver on all the work plan targets, in particular some of the recommendations made by the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee.

The requested budget has been revisited and a reduced budget option which would allow the project to deliver on the recommendations made by the Equal Opportunities Committee and most of the SAIF work plan has been produced.

The Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) Chairman, Douglas Sinclair has written a letter to Nicola Sturgeon MSP to ask that they reconsider the offer of grant. The letter makes a strong case for the revised and reduced budget option.

The breakdown of the original budget, the offered budget and the new revised budget was explained. The meeting was supportive of the revised budget and are hopeful that the SCC Chairman's letter has a positive outcome.

It was also suggested that alternative funding routes should be investigated for specific pieces of work or specific publications. Suggestions included sponsorship and advertising, and that the issue of trying to raise more money from training will need to be revisited. It was agreed that during this year consideration of the fund raising issue will need to be a priority and that we cannot continue to rely on additional funding from the SCC.

Concern was expressed for UPDATE. Its offer of grant means a considerable cut in funding and in the very near future the organisation will have to re-locate and consider a range of service cuts. It was agreed that we should offer what support we can but would need to know the intentions of the UPDATE board first.

5. Draft annual report and work plans

Steve introduced the draft annual report which highlighted a successful year with a number of very positive outcomes for SAIF.

It was suggested that the SAIF annual report should become a shorter and more formal document that could be used to promote the work of the organisation and market its services more widely.

It was agreed that the report will be updated and produced for consideration at the next SAIF meeting on 9th April. Work plan details will be in a separate document.

a) Suggested Standards Work Plan 2008

- Promote and meet ongoing demand for the SAIF Standards – target 300 copies.**

There are very few copies of Standards left – will need to do a reprint to meet the 300 target. It was agreed this should be a priority even if the budget is very tight.

- Promote and meet ongoing demand for 4 Standards support publications – target 200 of each = 800 copies.**

If no increase in funding is received from the Scottish Government it is doubtful that we can reprint any support publications – SAIF may need to rely on people obtaining copies from our website.

- Follow up on the 2007 SCC funded research project and negotiate with key quality assurance systems for inclusion of SAIF Standards – target 3 systems.**

No direct costs implications.

- Send out Standards questionnaires. Target sample of 800 questionnaires to go out – target of 300 responses. Produce report of the results and consider response to resulting support requests.**

It was suggested that an on-line survey could be used in part, therefore reducing photocopying and postage costs.

- Carry out further user-led service review pilots, publish on the website and further promote issue – target two pilots.**

No direct cost implications.

- Reprint the easy-to-understand version of the above A5 booklet. Target initial publication 2000 copies, initial mailing 800 copies.**

This does have cost implications but it was agreed it is another priority and we should try to secure the funding from within the budget offered.

Publish social model of disability booklet, and press launch.

Again there are cost implications and again it was agreed as a priority which we should try to meet within the original offer of grant.

Promote and meet ongoing demand for the Scottish Formats Resource – target 100 copies.

This could be met within the original offer of grant.

Work with UPDATE to develop and produce updated Scottish Formats Resource – target 1200 copies.

This could not be delivered within the original offer of grant.

The research follow-up work, the questionnaire responses and the user-led review pilots could all have training implications and will be looked at by the Local Accessible Information Strategy Working Group.

SAIF should be able to deliver most of the above work plan targets within the original grant offer. However, this would mean cutting back on reprints and may involve looking at more creative printing options. David offered to help the working group look for other potential print providers.

A new Formats Resource could not be delivered within the existing budget but could perhaps be updated on the database only. This will need to be discussed with UPDATE. In any case it was agreed that in the event of money being available the CD Rom resource should be evaluated before any updated version was produced.

b) Suggested Local Strategies Work Plan 2008

Develop a strategy for training, to include a marketing strategy, targeted training and a varied training programme – target publication and distribution of 1000 training information packs.

Continue to deliver training on varied accessible information issues and to appropriate target audiences such as the NHS – target 3 training courses.

- Follow up on the 2007 SCC funded research project looking at the progress of local authorities in implementing local accessible information strategies, produce report, offer appropriate support, promote good practice – target 32 authorities and 22 health boards.**
- Increase promotion of SAIF within the NHS – target 3 key partnerships.**
- Work with health boards to improve accessibility of their information materials – target 3 health boards.**

The only target which requires specific funding is the first one for publishing and this would be slightly reduced if the current offer of grant stays the same.

It was agreed that a strategy for the development of SAIF training is a priority. The training strategy should address the barriers to producing accessible information highlighted in the research report.

Margaret suggested that we need to “beef up” our targeting of the NHS and our partnerships in that field. The Scottish Government has made significant funding available to health boards to produce Carer’s Information Strategies and to work with voluntary organisations, particularly in respect of people affected by long term illnesses. SAIF should be involved and could ask the SCC to assist with liaison with the Scottish Government. We should consider writing to Nicola Sturgeon and other appropriate Ministers. Claire will investigate who at the Scottish Government it is most appropriate to contact.

c) Suggested E-communication Work Plan 2008

- Fund consultant to support website development, maintain it as an example of good practice, keep it up-to-date, add new publications and incorporate new technology – target 6 hours per week.**

The importance of maintaining an accessible website which is an example of good practice was acknowledged by everyone, but this target could not be met on the budget offered.

- ❑ Redesign, expand and update the website, add functions – target March 2009.**
 Because of the extensive use of the website in terms of visits and downloads it was agreed that any additional funding offered by the Scottish Government would have to be committed to achieving website maintenance as a priority and redesign and expansion if possible.
- ❑ Begin development of the website as a social networking tool – progress assessment March 2009.**
 This objective would be dropped should SAIF have to continue on the budget offered by the Scottish Government. Even if our revised budget is accepted by the Scottish Government it is unlikely that funds would be available for this objective.
- ❑ Increase visits and links to the website and maintain detailed website statistics – target 14,000 visits per month and 50% increase in links - and quarterly statistical reports.**
 This has no direct cost implications.
- ❑ Promote and meet demand for SAIF publication Making E-communication Accessible – target 200 copies.**
 Promotion continues through our website, SAIF information and training programmes. Future reprints or editions would not be available under the current grant offer.
- ❑ Complete development of pack of A4 posters to accompany publication Making E-communication Accessible – target 1500 each of 6 posters. Initial mailing 800 copies.**
 The working group have now produced 4 e-communication posters. The current grant offer would not allow for producing more.
- ❑ Produce regular e-newsletters – target quarterly.**
 No direct cost implications.
- ❑ Provide training in e-communication accessibility – see organisational objective 2**
 This is on-going. To date all SAIF training covers costs only. A strategy for SAIF training is planned by the Local Accessible Information Strategy Working Group.

Unless an improved funding offer is made, the E-communication Working Group meeting on 7th April will consider maintaining accessibility and redesign of the website on the current budget offer and will feed back to the Forum meeting on the 9th April. The possibility of utilising SCC staff in support of SAIF staff resources to maintain the site (including accessibility) and pursuing alternative funding for re-design of the website were suggested as possible options.

d) Suggested Promotional Strategy Work Plan 2008

- Establish with UPDATE a website and support materials dedicated to promoting good practice and alternative formats, particularly to the private sector – target March 2009.**

This relates to the recommendations made by the Equal Opportunities Committee. The current offer of grant means that SAIF would not be able to deliver this.

- Work with UPDATE and other partners to update, reprint and distribute The Access Guide poster – target March 2009.**

Again SAIF would not be able to offer a contribution to the access guide poster.

- Work with the SCC press officer to gain press coverage for SAIF publications and other initiatives – target 2 scenarios.**

Press releases have not been successful with the major newspapers to date. It was agreed SAIF needs to do more in order to obtain press coverage for our publications, training, events and services.

- Continue liaison work with key national agencies – targets DWP and HMRC.**

Ben will continue to liaise. This has no direct cost implications.

- Follow up on 2007 SCC funded research project into organisations promoting accessible information in England and Europe with a view to establishing links and promoting good practice – target 2 good practice examples.**

The follow up on the research has no particular cost implications at this stage.

e) Other SAIF strategic objectives

- Feedback to the Scottish Executive about matters to which accessible information is relevant**
- Organise SAIF and the working groups in pursuit of the strategic objectives**
- Represent the interests of disabled people and carers in the promotion of accessible information & user-led services**

These are ongoing and have no direct cost implications other than those noted in the individual work plans.

6. Working Group Memberships

- John Whitfield has resigned from the Standards Working Group and been replaced by Jim McIntyre from Deaf Blind Scotland.
- David Armstrong was invited to attend the Local Accessible Information Strategy Working Group as and when. He will be copied in on all of the minutes.
- Mary Evans would like to attend the E-communication Working Group but would not be able to commit to every meeting at this stage. Mary will be copied in on the E-communication group's minutes.
- Marie Burns may want to be involved in the Standards Working Group to progress the Quality Assurance Systems Research. Marie will be kept informed of progress so she can get involved as it suits.

7. Research reports

Copies of the research reports had been sent to all members and Jo gave a presentation on each.

a) Local Accessible Information Strategies

A brief out line of the main points from the research was given.

Next steps:

- Respond to those organisations who asked for more information.
- Develop a strategy and or action plan for promoting good practice. Suggestions for pursuing this work included creating a depository of good practice examples, contacting CEHR for examples and creating a good practice checklist on a poster and the website. If we are to promote examples it was agreed we would need to check them out or alternatively get the agency concerned to verify the good practice in writing.
- Consider how to contact Scottish Ministers to encourage public sector organisations to include accessible information in strategies/policies/practices.
- Incorporate identified barriers into Local Accessible Information Strategy Working Group work plan 2008.
- Ask public sector organisations to help us – how can we make information more relevant to them. One suggestion was that, funding permitting, we could produce the SAIF Standards in a way which could be more suitable for local authorities and other public sector bodies.

b) Quality Assurance Systems

A brief out line of the main points from the research was given.

Next steps:

- From appendix A select 6 standards systems which are relevant to SAIF. Investigate whether or not SAIF standards can be incorporated.
- Work with the two organisations which have tailored quality assurance systems and investigate whether or not SAIF standards can in some way be incorporated.
- Respond to the letter from British Standards.
- Work to be directed by the Standards Working Group.

c) Accessible Information – the European Context

A brief out line of the main points from the research was given.

Next steps:

It was agreed this is not a priority area of work for 2008 but we should:

- Contact the Office of Disability Issues to:
 - get a copy of their Standards for Information Provision in order to check that our Standards are compatible,
 - offer to liaise with them on accessible information issues.

8. SAIF Membership

- With Mike McCarron resigning there are now two vacancies on SAIF.
- Steve will try to contact Nikki Cameron to clarify if she intends to continue as a member.
- SAIF can co-opt to fill individual vacancies rather than advertise. Claire told the meeting that Paul Belmonte (of Deaf Action in Edinburgh) may be interested, she will ask him and report back.

9. Dates and venues for SAIF 2008 meetings

Dates were agreed as follows:

- Wednesday 9th April – Marriott Hotel, Edinburgh.
- Wednesday 18th June (please ignore previous email suggesting the 11th)
- Wednesday 10th September
- Wednesday 19th November.

All meetings will start at 10.30am.

It was agreed that whilst the meeting on the 9th April can be held at the Marriot as usual, alternative cheaper venues may have to be investigated for other SAIF meetings. Premises at UPDATE will no longer be available however; we have used the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living in the past.

Other possible venues were suggested and project staff agreed to follow them up if necessary.

10. Any other business

Feedback on the easy-to-understand A5 booklet was discussed.

- David suggested an alternative front cover layout and pointed out a number of small improvements.

- ❑ Marie suggested we needed to check the accuracy and appropriateness of the ethnic minority characters and that she could arrange it.
- ❑ Lucie questioned whether there is really an audience for this particular approach to easy-to-understand publishing and questioned whether we had enough user involvement.
- ❑ Margaret agreed that at the final draft stage FAIR will organise user feedback.

All the suggestions, comments and questions will be implemented or followed up by project staff and the Standards working group prior to publication.

11. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting is the SAIF Forum meeting on Wednesday 9th April at 10.30am in the Marriot Hotel in Edinburgh.