

Minutes of the second meeting of the National Support Services Committee (NSSC) will be held at 11am on 27th October 2004 at Alliance House, 12 Caxton Street, London SW1H 0QS

Present:

Mrs Elizabeth Boyd, Chair of the NSSC
Mr Stuart Gregg
Mr Peter Stevens, Chair of the Macfarlane Trust
Mr Roger Tyrell

In attendance:

Ms Jude Cohen, Head of Support Services (HSS)
Mr Martin Harvey, Chief Executive (CE)

8.04 To elect a chairman

It was unanimously agreed that Mrs Elizabeth Boyd be elected Chair of the NSSC.

9.04 Minutes of meeting 23rd September 2004

These were agreed as a correct record.

10.04 Matters arising

(3.05) There was a discussion on the membership of the NSSC. It was agreed that:

- a. Members should be appointed for a period of two years.
- b. Half of the members should stand down every year.
- c. As this is the first year of the NSSC, in order to comply with a. and b. above, half the members should stand down after one year.

(3.08) Mrs Pat Latimer has declined the invitation to join the NSSC.

12.04 Financial report

The HSS explained that the new financial reports requested are being set up on the system, and will be available from the next meeting.

13.04 One-off grant policies

The HSS presented her report.

a. There was a discussion on the underlying principles of the Trust's grant-making, as outlined in section 2. Following a wide-ranging discussion it was agreed that the HSS should amend this section and circulate it to NSSC members for approval. When this is obtained it will be tabled at the Partnership Group for comment. The ultimate aim is to agree the underlying principles of the Trust's grant-making for inclusion on the website.

b. Office guidelines for one-off grant policies were discussed in detail and approved. It was agreed that the HSS should incorporate these decisions in a new guidelines document and circulate it to NSSC members for confirmation.

c. It was agreed that the HSS investigate the possibility of:
paying independent financial advisors flat fees rather than an hourly rate

arranging that any commission due on policies or financial plans is channelled to reduce the cost of these policies
securing the services of IFAs in different parts of the country, to access local knowledge and expertise.

d. It was agreed that successful applicants be asked to return copies of receipts, to enable the Trust to maintain accurate and appropriate records of grants made for the charity's audit. If receipts are not returned, the grant will be treated as a loan and recovered by deductions from regular payments.

e. It was agreed that staff be delegated the following authority to approve grants:

Regional Support Workers and Office Manager

Where application is within office guidelines, £250

Head of Support Services

Where application is recommended by RSW or Office Manager and is within office guidelines, £2,500

Chief Executive

Where application is recommended by Head of Support Services and is within office guidelines, £5,000

f. It was agreed that the NSSC will consider any appeals against its decisions.

g. It was agreed that the NSSC will decide where an exceptional request, appeal or policy decision should be referred to the Board.

14.04 Applications and ongoing cases

The following cases were considered.

1104W Financial assistance with living costs

It was agreed that:

No grant be awarded

The HSS inform Susan Daniels of the reasons for this.

That, as a general policy, the Trust considers it has no obligations to widows where the registrant died over ten years ago.

1141 Complementary therapy

It was agreed that no grant be awarded as the applicant has already received £1,400 for this.

1250 Support for Masters Degree

It was agreed that £2,000 be awarded.

1406W Continued financial support for sons college expenses

It was agreed that:

The HSS check the regular pay and if necessary adjust to account for the fact her son is no longer living at home

The HSS be authorised to award a grant of up to £2,000 upon receipt of confirmation of the actual costs to be incurred.

1534W Financial assistance with living costs and house adaptations

It was agreed that no further support be offered as the applicant has received over £6,847 assistance in the past year.

1877 Assistance with roof repairs

As the Trust has a financial interest in the property it was agreed that a grant of £2,275 be awarded.

1111W HGV driving course

It was agreed that the HSS be authorised to award a grant of up to £740 subject to the applicant funding a driving assessment and being recommended for a three or five day training course.

1237D Legal costs incurred securing custody of grandchild

It was agreed that:

a grant of £3,150 be awarded.

the HSS inform Pat Latimer and Joanna Fenning of this decision.

1324W University costs for son

It was agreed that a grant of £3,125 be awarded.

1414 Complementary therapy

It was agreed that no grant be awarded as the applicant has already received £440 for this.

1493A Review of grant to minor

It was agreed that that no further action be taken

1524W Review of enhanced regular payment

It was agreed that three months notice be given of a reduction in payments to £100.

1629A Review of enhanced regular payment

It was agreed that:

The regular payment be immediately reduced to £150 as the charity is now paying this sum direct to the mortgagee

That the HSS review the history of these payments and report to the next meeting of the NSSC

2226 Balance of central heating costs

It was agreed that no grant be awarded

1986 Assistance with clearing credit card debt

It was agreed that the debt be cleared with a loan, paid direct to the credit card company, with repayments deducted from regular payments at £100 a month.

1131W Review of enhanced regular payment

It was agreed that, subject to the applicant agreeing to local debt counselling, the continuing rate of pay be continued for three months, followed by three months at £100 then regular pay discontinued. If the applicant does not agree, all regular payments cease with three months notice.

15.04 HSS' report on progress to date

The HSS gave a verbal report on progress to date. As shown by the number of cases for consideration at the meeting, considerable progress has been made in clearing the backlog of cases resulting from Claudette's absence. The HSS has also dealt with some benefit's enquiries. With the addition of work reviewing grant policies, no progress has been made on recruiting the new benefits advisor/debt counsellor or the regional support workers.

It was agreed that at its next meeting the NSSC will discuss the staffing requirements eg roles, persons specifications and skill requirements.

It was agreed that the HSS should recruit a temporary benefits advisor/debt counsellor for one day a week for the period until the new posts are filled.

16.04 Clarification of regular payment policy re dependents

It was agreed that the HSS should set down her interpretation of the current regulations and circulate these for ratification by members.

17.04 Future of grants working party

It was agreed that the grants working party be dissolved and its role absorbed by the NSSC.

18.04 Further discussion of policy on assisted conception

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the NSSC.

19.04 Initial discussion on assets policy

It was agreed that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the NSSC.

20.04 Dates of meetings 2005

It was agreed that the NSSC will meet on at 11 am at Alliance House on 1st December 2004 and 5th January 2005.

21.04 Any other business

It was agreed that three additional items, *the business case for widows, additional funding to cover issues related to longevity and review of regular pay* be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the NSSC.

It was agreed that 25th January 2005 be pencilled in for the Trustees' Away Day.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 5.20