



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Colin Beattie MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament
For Midlothian North and Musselburgh Constituency

Neil Gray MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
Health and Social Care
Maree Todd
Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport
Scottish Government, St Andrew`s House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: JG/CB10190
5 February 2025

Dear Neil and Maree

Subject: Cancellation of See Hear Strategy Refresh

I am writing as Convenor of the Cross-party Group on Deafness.

Our members were deeply concerned to be informed on 6th December 2024 that the Scottish Government has decided to cancel the See Hear Strategy refresh. The previous strategy was published in 2014; more than ten years after its publication, it is out of date and does not reflect the needs and priorities of the people it should support (specifically, people who are Deaf, Deafblind, or who have Visual Impairments).

To give some key examples, the current Strategy contains one paragraph on supporting children and young people, relies on dated and inaccurate data and projections for incidence rates, and does not reflect the changes in Scottish policy and practice around sensory. It cannot – as it was published in 2014 – respond to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, and the two rounds of national and local plans published since that date. Similarly, it cannot reference or support the vital work progressed across 2023-2024 to establish a definition of Deafblindness for Scotland, to better respond to the needs of people who are Deafblind. It is no longer fit for purpose.

The decision to cancel the Strategy refresh followed two years of lived experience engagement work, including work undertaken by many of the members of the CPG on Deafness and the CPG on Visual Impairment. There has been no public acknowledgement of the cancellation of the new Strategy, beyond a letter to some stakeholders in December 2024. Neither the decision, nor the poor communication therein, is reflective of the time, energy and expertise shared by many people across Scotland, in the belief that it would aid progress in policy and practice.

The CPG on Deafness urges the reconsideration of this decision, and full and transparent

communication with all stakeholders – including those who gave their time as part of extensive engagement work. To do otherwise is to disrespect their contributions, both to the work of Scottish Government, and to their role in the civil life of Scotland.

Our members understand that delays in the National Care Service and changing plans with that Bill may render a full Strategy refresh difficult; but even a partial Strategy, concentrating on areas outwith social care, would provide some support for the sensory sector and people who are Deaf, Deafblind, and who have Visual Impairments. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. If there is any support that the CPG on Deafness can offer in unpacking the key concerns of our members, the sensory sector, and people who are Deaf, Deafblind, or who have Visual Impairments, please let me know.

We also intend to write to the Equalities, Human Rights, and Civil Justice Committee, and to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on this topic.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Beattie MSP
Midlothian North & Musselburgh