

Cross Party Group on Deafness

Meeting, Wednesday 11 December 2024 at 6pm.

Via Zoom (an online video conferencing platform)

Minutes - Present

MSPs

Convenor – Colin Beattie MSP (Scottish National Party)

Roz McCall MSP (Conservative)

Karen Adam MSP (SNP)

Annabelle Ewing MSP (SNP)

Carol Mochan MSP (Labour)

Invited Guests

Kevin McGowan, Andrew Godfrey-Meers (Scottish Government)

Individual Member

Donald Richards

Group Members

Secretariat and Assistant: Hannah Tweed, Amy White (The ALLIANCE)

Janis McDonald (the ALLIANCE)

Victoria Bishop-Rowe (AVUK)

Philip Gerard (Deaf Action)

Jacquie Winning (Forth Valley Sensory Centre)

Avril Hepner (BDA Scotland)

Rachel Mapson (Queen Margaret University)

Isabella Goldie (Deafblind Scotland)

Mark Ballard (NDCS Scotland)

Teri Devine (RNID)

Linda Sharkey (NHS Audiology Scotland, Heads of Service)

Deirdre Aitken (Highland Blindcraft Sensory Services)

John Ravenscroft (Scottish Sensory Centre)

Gary Quinn (Heriot Watt University)

Julie Ferguson (Education Institute for Scotland)

Brogan Ferguson (RCSLT)

Deborah Innes (Scottish Deaf Mental Health Service)

Carla Marchbank, (North East Sensory Services)

Language Service Professionals

Linda Joyce and Niamh Cochrane (BSL/English Interpreters)

Gail Richardson and Carol Shedden (Electronic Notetakers)

Apologies

Mark Griffen MSP (Scottish Labour)

Jeremy Balfour MSP (Conservative)

Joanne O'Donnell (Sense Scotland)

Adele Goman (Edinburgh Napier University)

Danny Sweeney (Individual member)

Invited Observers

Matthew King (Sorenson)

Andrew Dewey (Sorenson)

Helga McGilp (Sorenson)

Mark Hobday (BDA)

Tom Lichy (BDA)

Brian Shannan (Scottish Sensory Centre)

Rachel O'Neill (University of Edinburgh)

Amanda McNamara (BATOD)

Sue Denny (BATOD UK)

Teresa Quail (BATOD)

Kirsten Abioye (Lothian Deaf Children's Club)

Agenda item 1 - Welcome and Introductions

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded people to say who they were and what organisation they represented before making contributions.

He asked Amy White to check accessibility and ensured everyone could access the meeting effectively.

Agenda item 2 – Attendance, Apologies and Members

Attendance and apologies noted in the minutes.

The group approved a proposal to add Lothian Deaf Children's Club, and to welcome a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament to future meetings.

Agenda item 3 – Approve the minutes from last meeting and discuss matters arising

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 11 September and 1 October (AGM) were approved. Matters arising are substantive on the agenda.

The convenor noted actions the re-election of convenor and vice convenors, and the appointment of new secretariat. Finally, the Convenor shared sincere thanks to Janis McDonald, stepping down as secretariat, who has given tremendous service.

Under matters arising, Hannah Tweed highlighted the news from Scottish Government officials that there will no longer be a refreshed See Hear Strategy. Group expressed considerable disquiet at news and possible responses.

Actions: Hannah Tweed to circulate stakeholder letter with minutes, and to reach out to CPGD on Visual Impairment about a joint letter of concern to Ministers (Maree Todd, Neil Gray) and the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee.

Group also discussed audiology update.

Action: CPGD to write to Jenni Minto in January requesting a Parliamentary update on progress, and to invite her to speak to the CPGD on 5 February or 28 May.

Group discussed Education (Scotland) Bill and inclusion of BSL.

Action: CPGD to write to Jenny Gilruth in support of proposals to include BSL.

Agenda item 4 – updates from working groups

Definition of Deafblindness

As Annabelle Ewing MSP could only stay for first part of meeting, Isabella Goldie talked through the updates circulated prior to the meeting and progress that had been made since September 2024.

Civil servants have stated that even with the cancellation of the See Hear Strategy refresh, the definition of deafblindness work and guidance will have a new policy home and continue. We hope to see guidance and clarity on new contact soon.

Qualified Teachers of the Deaf/Attainment

Karen Adams MSP noted the work done by the working group, planned steps to raise the issue with Jenny Gilruth, and summarised the final version of the report circulated to the CPGD. Mark Ballard invited final

comments on report and for approval to publish and launch in 2025. Group discussed final edits, and approval given.

Action: The working group will finalise report and commission a BSL summary, for launch in 2025. Mark Ballard will share launch details and comms plan with CPGD members in January.

Sensory Care and Dementia

Roz McCall MSP noted that the working group has completed four surveys about referral pathways, with good response rates, and a draft report has been shared with the working group. The final report should be ready to be shared with CPGD at next meeting on 5 February. Amy White noted that we now have wider lived experience representation on working group.

Action: Working group to provide longer summary of full report for comment and approval at next CPGD meeting on 5 February.

Agenda item 4

BSL Plan Implementation. See attach PowerPoint for detailed information.

Kevin McGowan, Unit Head for the Equality Division, including responsibility for BSL within Scottish Government, and Andrew Godfrey-Meers, BSL Policy Manager attended. Kevin McGowan summarised progress on the BSL national and local plans, and priorities for 2025.

Action: Kevin McGowan committed to responding to any questions in writing after the CPGD.

Agenda Item 5

AOCB

Termination notice for Contact Scotland BSL

The CPGD have been informed that Sorenson/SLI have received a termination notice for the Contact Scotland BSL service from March 2025. We understand that there is no intention that the contract will be continued in another form or open to tender. Service will end in March 2025 under current plans. Group expressed considerable concern at this news. Kevin McGowan shared that procurement rules mean that the contract has been renewed the maximum number of times allowed, and noted calls for an impact assessment. Karen Adam suggested writing to

the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee about the issue, in advance of next meeting on 17 December.

Actions: CPGD to draft letter of concern on decision to terminate Contact Scotland BSL service, without consultation. Letter to be sent to Equalities and Human Rights Committee by 16 December, and drafted by subgroup of members who volunteered to be involved (BDA, Deaf Action, RNID, NESS, Deafblind Scotland, the ALLIANCE). Kevin McGowan to discuss CPGD response with colleagues.

Agenda Item 10

Date of next meeting and closing remarks

The next scheduled meetings are:

- Wednesday 5 February (6-7.30pm)
- Wednesday 28 May (6-7.30pm)
- Wednesday 10 September (6-7.30pm) – **AGM and meeting**
- Wednesday 10 December (6-7.30pm).

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