

Cross-Party Group Annual Return

Name of Cross-Party Group
Cross-Party Group on Visual Impairment
Date Group Established (the date of establishment is the date in this parliamentary session that the Group held its initial meeting, where the office bearers were elected and not the date that the Group was accorded recognition. All Groups should hold their AGMs on, or before, the anniversary of this date.)
Wednesday 8 September 2021
Date of Most Recent Annual General Meeting (AGM)
Wednesday 20 September 2023
Date Annual Return Submitted
Friday 20 October 2023
Date of Preceding AGM [this date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 11 to 13 months of the previous AGM]
Wednesday 5 October 2022
Group Meetings and Activities Please provide details of each meeting of the Group including the date of the meeting, a brief description of the main subjects discussed and the MSP and non-MSP attendance figures. Details of any other activities, such as visits undertaken by the Group or papers/report published by the Group should also be provided.
Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment #CPGVI

Purpose of the group:

The Cross-Party Group on Visual Impairment draws together the blind and partially sighted sector in Scotland to identify issues competent to the Scottish Parliament and seeks, in a reasonable fashion, to influence policy, legislation and decision makers to better reflect the needs of blind and partially sighted people.

The Cross-Party Group on Visual Impairment (CPGVI) held meetings on:

- 1 February 2023
- 16 May 2023
- 20 September 2023 (AGM)

The meeting on 1 February was held via Teams; the meetings on 16 May and 20 September were hybrid meetings, taking place in the Scottish Parliament and via Teams.

Wednesday 1 February 2023

MSPs present: Two

Non-MSP members present: 42

Speakers: Two

Observers: Three

Two key items were on the agenda:

- See Hear Strategy 2024: Progress and Future Plans
- Older people with visual impairment and the safe and effective use of medicines

Susan Shippey, Senior Sensory Loss Policy Manager|Support for Sensory Loss and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Team, Scottish Government presented on the See Hear Strategy refresh 2024.

She issued an invitation to individuals with lived and living experience, or organisations to join the See Hear Strategy advisory group, and/or respond to any other aspect of this work to contact her directly.

Margaret (Mags) Watson, GTAP Professor of Health Services Research and Pharmacy Practice, University of Strathclyde, presented on her research on managing the safe use of medicines in older people with visual impairments.

The Secretary circulated the full presentation transcript and contact details - margaret.watson@strath.ac.uk - to the CPGVI mailing list.

The meeting also agreed that registration details for the upcoming Scottish Vision Strategy (SVS) conference in Edinburgh at Dynamic Earth on 8 March 2023 should be circulated.

Tuesday 16 May 2023

MSPs present: Three (two in person; one online)

Non-MSP members present: 40 (11 in person; 29 online)

Speakers: Two (one a CPG member)

Observers: Three (one in person; two online)

Two key items were on the agenda:

- National Care Service Scotland activities and how people can become involved in co-design
- Domestic abuse and violence experienced by visually impaired people – “The Unseen Report” and future Scottish research

Anna Kynaston, of the National Care Service Division, Scottish Government, provided an update on the National Care Service (NCS) and what is going to be happening over the coming months. The National Care Service (NCS) Bill remains at Stage 1 following a request from Scottish Government for additional time to consider it further. This includes considering improvements and what new legislation may be required as part of the process of establishing a National Care Service (NCS). An example of new legislation is whether the NCS Bill will include an explicit clause so that Inclusive Communication is embedded within it.

It was agreed to write to the responsible minister Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, about recognising the importance of accessible information, the possibility of national statistics being published from CVI data, and in general ensuring the NCS offers a fresh opportunity to consider sharing data across health, social care and other independent providers. It was also agreed to seek a further NCS update in several months time.

Carla Marchbank, Statutory Services Manager, North East Sensory Services (NESS), spoke on the theme of domestic abuse and violence

experienced by visually impaired people. She cited the findings of “The Unseen Report”.

The Unseen Report focussed on the unique experiences of people affected by visual impairment affected by domestic violence and abuse.

It published information at a UK level. However, it was unable to disaggregate information across different geographies, including those from Scotland. The report highlighted that people with visual impairment are three times more likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled people and that having a visual impairment adds a unique dimension to abuse. This last includes coercive control and lack of confidentiality when contacting services.

A working group has been set up to scope whether further research can be carried out which may help inform service provision in Scotland, for those affected by VI and experiencing domestic abuse.

Under AOB, Deirdre Aitken of Sight Action raised the issue of a gap in service provision, specifically, home eye tests when someone is unable to leave their home. There seems to be no provision of this service in Caithness and the surrounding area, and she asked if this a common issue/gap felt elsewhere in Scotland, for example in rural locations. She agreed to investigate further and to send on information on home eye tests in Highland to the Secretariat of CPGVI for circulation to members.

Wednesday 20 September 2023 (AGM)

MSPs present: Two (in person)

Non-MSP members present: 40 (13 in person; 27 online)

Speakers: Six (five in person; one online)

Observers: One (online)

The meeting was quorate, and the AGM was taken ahead of other business.

Election of Office Bearers.

- Convener - Stuart McMillan MSP

- Vice-Convener - Neil Bibby MSP

- Secretariat & Treasurer - RNIB Scotland (Dr Catriona Burness)

The AGM was followed by a panel discussion on education in Scotland for children and young people with visual impairment. There were four contributions, taken together, providing valuable insights into Visual Impairment education in Scotland today.

Panel

- Rosaleen Dempsey and Jane Sharp, Children, Young People and Families, RNIB – “Key findings and recommendations from RNIB’s FOI reports on VI Education Services across Scotland”
- Michelle Cleasby, Depute Head Teacher, Royal Blind School – “A QTVI’s perspective: The importance of specialist support in education for children and young people with vision impairment”
- Lucinda Fass, Supporting Learners Team, Directorate for Learning, Scottish Government – “Refreshing the 2007 Guidance on Qualifications and Teacher Competences for teachers who work with children and young people who are blind/visually impaired, deaf/hearing impaired and deafblind”
- Professor John Ravenscroft, Scottish Sensory Centre, University of Edinburgh and Dr Margot Campbell, Visual Impairment Network for Children and Young People (VINCYP) Lead Clinician, NHS National Services Scotland - “The need for provision of eye care in special/additional support need schools in Scotland”

Following discussion, the meeting agreed that James Adams and the CPGVI Secretary should follow up with Stuart McMillan MSP to draft a letter to the NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) in collaboration with Professor Ravenscroft and Dr Campbell on the need for provision of eye care in special/additional support need schools in Scotland.

Under AOB, it was noted that Deirdre Aitken of Sight Action had provided information on the lack of home sight tests in Highland. The meeting also agreed that the Secretary would circulate a survey exploring loneliness, isolation and sight loss being run by the University of Abertay.

The Secretary confirmed that the CPG mailing list will be refreshed to remain GDPR-compliant and to update the CPG mailing list. The Secretary will email asking all on the mailing list if they wish to continue to receive mailing by replying to either “opt in” or to “opt out.” All opting in will remain on the mailing list.

MSP Members of The Group

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

1. Jeremy Balfour MSP (Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party)
2. Neil Bibby MSP (Scottish Labour)
3. Miles Briggs MSP (Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party)
4. Stuart McMillan MSP (Scottish National Party)
5. Colin Smyth MSP (Scottish Labour)

Non-MSP Members of The Group

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals

1. Jordon Anderson
2. Matthew Clark
3. Amanda Foster
4. Tom Heald
5. Thelma Ingram
6. Joan Kerr
7. Anne MacLean
8. Maureen McAllister
9. David McKerral
10. Terry Moody
11. Councillor Robert Mooney
12. Rod Murchison
13. Hussein Patwa
14. Mary Rasmussen
15. Ken Reid
16. Terry Robinson
17. Kirin Saeed
18. Alan Stewart
19. Steven Sutherland
20. Colette Walker
21. Sandra Wilson

Organisations

1. RNIB Scotland – Secretary and treasurer

2. Allergan
3. Angus Council
4. Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ASDO)
5. Associated Optical
6. Blind Veterans UK
7. Dundee Blind & Partially Sighted Society
8. Eyecare Scotland
9. Family Fund
10. Glaucoma UK
11. Guide Dogs Scotland
12. Haggeye
13. Linking Education and Disability (LEAD) Scotland
14. Macular Society
15. Microphthalmia, Anophthalmia & Coloboma Support (MACS)
16. Newsdirect
17. NHS Education for Scotland
18. NHS Forth Valley
19. NHS Lothian Princess Alexandra Eye Pavilion
20. NHS Tayside Disability Equality Network
21. North East Sensory Services (NESS)
22. North Ayrshire Council
23. Optelec UK
24. Optometry Scotland
25. Police Scotland
26. RNIB Connect Radio
27. Scottish Association for Visual Impairment Education (SAVIE)
28. Scottish Government
29. Scottish Sensory Hub (ALLIANCE)
30. seescape
31. Sight Action
32. Sight Scotland
33. Sight Scotland Veterans
34. The Royal Blind School Sight Scotland
35. University of Edinburgh, Moray House School of Education and Sport
36. University of Edinburgh, Scottish Sensory Centre

	37. VI Charity Sector Partnership Mental Health Committee 38. Visibility 39. Visionary 40. Vision PK 41. Vision Support Service Aberdeen City Council
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Group Office Bearers

Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	Stuart McMillan MSP
Deputy Convener	Neil Bibby MSP
Secretary	RNIB Scotland - Dr Catriona Burness
Treasurer	RNIB Scotland - Dr Catriona Burness

Financial Benefits or Other Benefits

Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) the Group anticipates receiving from a single source in a calendar year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

The CPG has received the support outlined below from RNIB Scotland, October 2022 – October 2023

Secretariat

C Burness (12 days) & M Jackson & K Henderson (3 days)
 Total: £2345

Other costs

The February meeting was held online and incurred no other costs.

Catering:

May meeting - £40 plus VAT (£48)

September meeting - £50 plus VAT (£60)

Total: £108

Transcription costs:

May meeting - £65.37 plus VAT (£78.44)

September meeting - £45.03 plus VAT (£54.04)

Total: £132.48

OVERALL TOTAL: £2585.48

The CPGVI does not have a member subscription charge.

Convener Contact Details

Name	Stuart McMillan MSP
Parliamentary address	The Scottish Parliament Edinburgh EH99 1SP
Telephone number	01475 720930