

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee
Thursday 30 January 2025
2nd Meeting 2025 (Session 6)

Cross-Party Groups – annual monitoring report

Introduction

1. The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee (the Committee) is responsible for overseeing the Cross-Party Group (CPG) system. As part of this role, it considers annual monitoring reports on Groups' compliance with the rules in Section 6 of the Code of Conduct for MSPs (the Code). The data in this report reflects the position as of 10 January 2025.

2. As of 10 January 2025, there were 119 CPGs which had been accorded recognition. During 2024 two CPGs were accorded recognition. These are:

- Brain Tumours
- Scottish Games Ecosystem.

3. Two CPGs – on Mental Health and on Nordic Countries – chose to wind-up in 2024. The CPG on Mental Health wound up following a request from the MSP office bearers and the CPG on Nordic Countries disbanded due to non-availability of MSP Members.

4. The Committee also agreed to a request from the CPG on Drug and Alcohol Misuse to change its name to the CPG on Substance Use.

5. The Committee considered three complaints about CPGs in 2024:

- Cross-Party Group on Drug and Alcohol Misuse. The Committee found that a breach of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct in respect of the accuracy of minutes of meetings had occurred.
- Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation. The Committee found that breaches of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct had occurred in respect of the failure to submit an Annual Return and to provide advance notification of a meeting to the timescales set out in the Code.
- Cross-Party Group on Human Trafficking. The Committee found that a breach of Section 6 of the Code of Conduct had occurred in respect of the failure to submit the minute of the meeting held on 6 September 2022.

6. The Committee wrote to each of the CPGs about which complaints had been received noting that:

“The Committee agreed not to impose sanctions on this occasion. However, the Committee highlights that it takes compliance with the Code of Conduct by Cross-Party Groups very seriously. It recognises the important role that CPGs play in connecting MSPs with the stakeholders who have interest in and experience of issues considered by the Group. Should any further instances of

non-compliance with the Code of Conduct occur, this may result in the Committee withdrawing recognition for this CPG.”

Compliance

7. CPGs are required to meet a number of rules in order to operate in compliance with the terms of the Code. In relation to membership and leadership, CPGs are required to have at least five MSP members, with at least one MSP from each of the parties or groups represented on the Parliamentary Bureau. This requirement can be modified or waived by the Committee either for individual CPGs or in general. In this Session, the Committee has agreed a general waiver and CPGs are required to have five MSPs from the majority of parties represented on the Parliamentary Bureau. In relation to leadership, at least 2 MSP members of a CPG must be office bearers and one of these must be the Convener. The Convener of each CPG is primarily responsible for ensuring that the Group complies with the Code. The Code also states “all other MSP members, and any secretariat, should also ensure that they are aware of the requirements in order to assist with the efficient operation of the Group.”

8. In respect of meetings and reporting, each CPG must:

- hold at least two formal (i.e. with at least 2 MPS members of the CPG present) meetings per year, one of which must be the AGM
- hold an AGM within 11-13 months of its initial meeting, and each 11-13 months thereafter
- submit an Annual Return within 30 calendar days of the AGM;
- provide Standards Clerks with 10 calendar days’ notice of all meetings; and
- provide minutes of all meetings (there is no timeframe in the Code within which minutes must be provided).

9. Annexe A gives a summary of CPGs compliance with the Code of Conduct Rules.

10. Annexe B gives further information on those Groups that have not complied with the rules.

Committee consideration

11. Having considered the information on compliance and membership, the Committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to take any action in relation to non-compliant groups and/or Groups who have failed to meet or hold an AGM. The Committee could, for example decide to write to the Conveners of Groups for an explanation, invite them in to give evidence to the Committee or remove recognition from CPGs who have consistently failed to comply with the rules.

**Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Clerks
January 2025**

SUMMARY OF CPG COMPLIANCE WITH CODE OF CONDUCT RULES

KEY

	CPG has complied with the rules in the Code of Conduct
	CPG has partly complied with the rules (i.e. in relation to up to 50% of meetings of each CPG)
	CPG has failed to comply with the rules most or all of the time (i.e. in relation to more than 50% of meetings of each CPG)
	Not applicable as Group has not been in operation long enough to have to comply with the rule OR information not due at time of report (Groups marked with an asterisk have been identified as being at risk of non-compliance)

CPG	Cross-Party Membership	Held two meetings	Hold an AGM	Annual return	Notice of meeting	Minutes of meetings
Accident Prevention and Safety Awareness						
Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse						
Animal Welfare						
Armed Forces and Veterans Communities						
Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions						
Autism						
Aviation						
Bangladesh						
Beer and Pubs						

CPG	Cross-Party Membership	Held two meetings	Hold an AGM	Annual return	Notice of meeting	Minutes of meetings
Brain Tumours*						
Building Bridges with Israel						
Cancer						
Care Leavers*						
Carers						
Challenging Racial and Religious prejudice						
Changing Places Toilets						
Children and Young People						
China						
Chronic Pain						
Circular Economy						
Civil Nuclear Industry						
Colleges and Universities						
Commercial Sexual Exploitation						
Construction						
Co-Operatives						
Creative Economy						
Credit Unions						
Crofting						
Cuba						
Culture and Communities						
Deafness						
Diabetes						

CPG	Cross-Party Membership	Held two meetings	Hold an AGM	Annual return	Notice of meeting	Minutes of meetings
Disability						
Dyslexia						
End of Life Choices						
Epilepsy						
Europe						
Fair Trade						
Families Supporting Children's Learning						
Fisheries and Coastal Communities						
Food						
Freedom of Religion and Belief						
Funerals and Bereavement						
Future of Football in Scotland						
Gaelic						
Gardening and Horticulture						
Germany						
Health Inequalities						
Heart and Circulatory Diseases						
Housing						
Human Trafficking						
Ice Sports						
Improving Scotland's Health						

Independent Convenience Stores						
CPG	Cross-Party Membership	Held two meetings	Hold an AGM	Annual return	Notice of meeting	Minutes of meetings
India						
Industrial Communities						
Inflammatory Bowel Disease						
International Development						
Islands*						
Japan						
Learning Disability						
LGBTI ¹						
Life Sciences						
Long COVID						
Lung Health						
Malawi						
Maritime and Shipbuilding						
Medicinal Cannabis						
Men's Violence Against Women and Children						
Migration						
MS						
Muscular Dystrophy						

¹ 2023/24 Compliance report highlighted LGBT+ CPG as red for meeting notifications. On review only one meeting wasn't notified in advance so the marker for receiving 10 days notice of meetings should have been yellow for partial compliance. Agreed with CPG Convener to note in 2024/25 monitoring report.

Music						
Nature and Climate						
Nuclear Disarmament						
CPG	Cross-Party Membership	Held two meetings	Hold an AGM	Annual return	Notice of meeting	Minutes of meetings
Oil and Gas						
Older People, Age and Ageing						
Outdoor Education						
Pakistan						
Palestine*						
Palliative Care						
Poland						
Poverty						
Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed Conditions						
Recreational Boating and Marine Tourism						
Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency						
Rugby Development in Scotland						
Rural Policy						
Science and Technology						
Scotch Whisky						
Scots Language						

Scottish Games Ecosystems						
Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Community						
Scottish Horseracing and Bloodstock Industries						
CPG	Cross-Party Membership	Held two meetings	Hold an AGM	Annual return	Notice of meeting	Minutes of meetings
Scottish Showmen's Guild						
Shared Parenting						
Skills						
Social Enterprise						
Social Work						
Space						
Sport						
St Andrew's Day						
Stroke*						
Substance Use						
Sustainable Transport						
Taiwan						
Tibet						
Tourism						
Towns and Town Centres						
Ukraine						
USA						
Visual Impairment						

Volunteering						
WASPI						
Wellbeing Economy						
Women in Enterprise						
Women, Families and Justice						
Women's Health						
Wood Panel Industry						

Further information on compliance with the code of conduct

CPGs that have fully complied with the Code

1. 57 of the CPGs in operation during 2024 have fully complied with the Code in the relevant period. This is an overall compliance rate of 47%. A number of CPGs have been non-compliant with one or more rule going back to the 2022/23 reporting year.

CPGs that have failed to comply with the rules most or all of the time

2. There are 18 Groups that have failed to comply with the Code most or all of the time during 2024 in at least 3 out of the 6 elements included in the table at Annex A. This equates to approximately 15% of the total number of CPGs. Of these 18 Groups, 8 have been non-compliant in all elements other than cross-party membership and 2 have been wholly non-compliant.

Non-compliant in 3 out of 6 elements	Changing Places Toilets	Did not submit an annual return in 2023/24 reporting year. So far it has not held an AGM in 2024/25 reporting year.
	Epilepsy	
	Improving Scotland's Health	In breach for MSP membership, not submitting an annual return and minutes of meetings
	Pakistan	Highlighted in the 2023/23 report for submitting an AGM return at the incorrect time. It is being highlighted in this report for failure to hold its AGM, submit an AGM return and minutes of meetings.
	Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Community	Has held one meeting in 2024 but it has not held an AGM or provided an AGM return. It was highlighted in the 2023/24 report to not giving the required notification period for meetings.
	Scottish Showmen's Guild	Failure to hold AGM, to submit Annual Return

		and to provide minutes.
	Taiwan	Does not meet cross-party membership requirements and failure to submit AR or meeting minutes in correct format.
	USA	Highlighted in the 2023/24 report for failure to hold an AGM at the correct time. It is being highlighted in this report for not having held at least 2 meetings and for not having held its AGM on time.
Non-compliant other than cross-party membership	Creative Economy	Has not held any meetings since September 2023. It was highlighted in the 2023/24 report for submitting a late AGM return.
	Future of Football in Scotland	Has not held any meetings since October 2023.
	Ice Sports	Group was accorded recognition in November 2022. It has not provided the AGM return for the 2023 AGM meeting, has not provided minutes of meetings for 2023 (nor its initial meeting) and has not held any meetings or AGM in 2024.
	Muscular Dystrophy	Has held no meetings since its AGM in November 2023. Its AGM for 2024 is therefore outstanding.
	Oil and Gas	Has not held any meetings since March 2023.
	Poland	Highlighted in the 2023/24 report for not holding meetings or an AGM. Clerks made contact with the Convener in November 2023 and then again with the Conveners office in

		May 2024. No further responses have been received and no meetings have been held in this reporting period.
	Scots Language	Group was accorded recognition in October 2022. It held one meeting in November 2022 and another in May 2023. No Minutes were received for the May meeting and no meetings have been held since.
	Shared Parenting	Did not submit an AGM return in 2021/22. The 2023/24 AGM was due to be held in November 2023 but No AGM for 2023 or 2024. No contact from Convener. Clerks met with Secretariat in October 2024 and explained requirements. No further response at the time of reporting.
Wholly non-compliant	Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed Conditions	Has been since 2022 . The Convener advised that in June 2023 he hoped the issues would be resolved at a future meeting but no further response has been received.
	Rugby Development in Scotland	In breach in all aspects of the Code of Conduct and has been since 2022 . No updates have been received from the Convener

CPGs which have partly complied with the rules

Insufficient MSP members and insufficient office bearers

- Section 6, paragraph 8 of the Code requires that each Group has at least 5 MSP members, with at least one MSP member from each of the parties or groups represented on the Parliamentary Bureau. The SPPA Committee agreed a waiver to

this rule for Session 6 and all CPGs are required to have at least 5 MSP members, with at least one MSP member from the three of the parties or groups represented on the Parliamentary Bureau.

4. A number of CPGs at present have not met the above criteria.
5. The following table shows those CPGs that are not compliant regarding MSP Membership and/or Office-Bearer roles—

CPG	Number of MSPS	Number of Parties	At least 2 Office-holders	Comments
Aviation				Only 4 MSP members on AGM return. Conveners office advised Ivan McKee MSP the 5 th Member but as Ivan is a Minister, this would not be acceptable. CPG progressing recruiting fifth member.
Adult Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse				Only one office holder
Cancer				Only Labour and Conservative represented.
Carers				Mark Griffin resigned as office holder leaving only one.
Gaelic				Only 4 MSPs. Kate Forbes resigned in May 2024 due to Cabinet Secretary appointment and Alasdair Allan resigned after becoming Minister in June 2024.
Improving Scotland's Health				Only 4 MSPs.
Lung Health				CPG highlighted in 23 report for length time to resolve membership issues. Issues reported as having been resolved with appointment of Jackie Dunbar in January 24 however Jackie subsequently emailed the Clerks in June 24 saying she was never a member. Membership issues finally resolved at AGM.
Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed Conditions				Only 3 Members and one office holder

Rugby Development in Scotland				Only one office holder
Taiwan				Only Conservatives and Labour represented

AGM not held or held within the specified timeframe

6. The following CPGs held their AGMs at the incorrect time. All Groups have all been reminded of the requirements in the Code to hold the AGM within 11-13 months of the initial meeting, or previous AGM—

CPG	Due From	Held	Comments
Changing Places Toilets	1/2/24	-	No AGM return for 23/24. No AGM or return for 24/25
Co-Operatives	13/12/24	29/10/24	Held too early.
Creative Economy	27/9/24	-	No meetings or contact from CPG since last AGM.
Epilepsy	26/10/24	-	Email from Convener 9/1/25 cc Clerks asking Secretariat to schedule AGM.
Europe	17/6/24	10/9/24	Initial AGM held in June 24 inquorate.
Future of Football in Scotland	4/10/24	-	No contact from CPG since AGM in October 2023
Ice Sports	1/11/23 1/11/24	1/11/23?	No AGM return or minutes received for 2023 AGM. No meetings or AGM held for 2024.
Medicinal Cannabis	28/9/24	13/11/24	Inquorate AGM held October 2024.
MS	25/10/24	-	No reason given.
Muscular Dystrophy	23/11/24	-	No contact with CPG since 2023.
Nature and Climate	13/10/24	7/11/24	No reason given.
Nuclear Disarmament	13/12/24	22/1/25	No reason given. Highlighted in 2023 report for same reason.
Oil and Gas	13/3/24	-	No contact with CPG since 2023.
Older People, Age and Ageing	20/3/24	6/3/24	Note from Convener to say unavoidable. Highlighted in 23 report for having AGM late.
Pakistan	29/11/24	-	Did hold a meeting on 2/10/24 but no mention if this was the AGM so no formal notification received.

Poland			AGM for 2023 due 8/11/23 not held. AGM scheduled for 18/6/24. Unclear if 2023 AGM> No AGM return or mins. No other meetings held.
Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed Conditions	8/9/23	-	No contact from CPG since 2022. No 23/24 or 24/25 AGMs
Rugby Development in Scotland	14/12/23	No	Not held AGMs for last 2 years. Last meeting was in 2022.
Scots Language	6/10/23	No	Accorded recognition in October 2022. Never held any AGMs. Last meeting was May 2023.
Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Community	22/11/24	No	No contact from CPG since October 2024.
Scottish Showmen's Guild	29/11/24	No	No contact from CPG.
Shared Parenting	8/11/23	No	No AGM for last 2 years. Convener reminded by Clerks. Secretariat met with Clerks October 2024 and was advised of requirements.
Social Enterprise	21/11/24	4/2/25	Have had short notice MSP membership changes due to Ministerial and First Minister appointments so unable to help AGM on time.
USA	3/10/24	14/1/25	Letter from Convener explaining change in secretariat led to delay in meetings and AGM.

Annual Return late

7. 20. The following CPGs have either submitted their annual returns late or not at all. All Groups have been reminded of the requirement in the Code to provide annual returns within 30 calendar days of the AGM—

CPG	Due	Submitted	Comments
Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions	4/10/24	19/12/24	Apologies from Secretariat, not submitted due to oversight.
Beer and Pubs	22/2/24	10/1/25	Letter of apology from Convener explaining staffing changes caused oversight
Children and Young People	29/11/24	6/1/25	Submitted by secretariat on 20 December 24 which was already late so returned and sent by Convener 6/1/25

Co-Operatives	29/11/24	13/12/24	Late
Dyslexia	4/1/25	9/1/25	Late due to staff illness
Epilepsy	26/10/24	-	AGM not scheduled until February 2025
Europe	10/9/24	No	No reason
Future of Football in Scotland	4/10/24	-	No contact from CPG since AGM in October 2023
Improving Scotland's Health	1/11/24	No	No reason
Ice Sports	1/11/23	No	2023 AGM return not received and no AGM held yet for 2024
Medicinal Cannabis	13/12/24	No	No reason
Muscular Dystrophy	23/11/24	-	No contact with CPG since 2023.
Palestine	27/3/24	19/12/24	Apologies received from Conveners office citing oversight
Poland	18/6/24	No	Clerks have sent more than 2 reminders of Code requirements. CPG was highlighted in 23 report as breach for meetings, AGM and AGM return.
Rare, Genetic and Undiagnosed Conditions	8/9/23	-	No contact from CPG since 2022. No 23/24 or 24/25 AGMs
Rugby Development in Scotland	14/12/23	No	Not held AGMs for last 2 years. Last meeting was in 2022.
Scots Language	6/10/23	No	Accorded recognition in October 2022. Never held any AGMs. Last meeting was May 2023.
Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Community	22/11/24	No	No contact from CPG since October 2024.
Scottish Showmen's Guild	29/11/24	No	No contact from CPG so no AGM held yet.
Shared Parenting	8/11/23	No	No AGM for last 2 years. Convener reminded by Clerks. Secretariat met with Clerks October 2024 and was advised of requirements.
Social Enterprise	21/11/24	4/2/25	Have had short notice MSP membership changes due to Ministerial and First Minister appointments so unable to help AGM on time.
Taiwan	25/10/24	28/10/24 (returned)	Not in template.
USA	3/10/24	14/1/25	Letter from Convener explaining change in secretariat led to delay in

			meetings and AGM.
WASPI	16/10/24	6/1/25	No reason given.
Women, Families and Justice	10/10/24	12/12/24	No reason given.

10 calendar days' notice of meeting

8. The following CPGs did not give the required notice period for meetings. All Groups have all been reminded of the requirements in the Code to provide 10 calendar days' notice for all meetings—

CPG	Meeting date	Notification date	Comments
Autism	23/9/24 20/11/24 (AGM)	None	Didn't notify Clerks of these meetings. Apologies from Secretariat due to staff changes.
Bangladesh	27/11/24	NA	Clerks were informed of this meeting within relevant timescale however no notice given that it was the AGM meeting.
Carers	23/9/24	22/9/24	Less than 24hours notice given
Challenging Racial and Religious prejudice	23/4/24 5/12/24	None	Same day notification Not notified
Commercial Sexual Exploitation	6/2/24	-	Not informed of this meeting
Co-Operatives	28/2/24	12/3/24	Minutes sent to Clerks but meeting not advised in advance
Diabetes	8/5/24	11/7/24	Minutes sent to Clerks but meeting not advised in advance
End of Life Choices	10/12/24	17/12/24	Not notified of this meeting. It was the AGM
Germany	28/2/24	27/2/24	Due to timing of last years report not picked up so highlighting this year
Housing	27/2/24	4/3/24	Apologies from Secretariat
Lung Health	26/1/24 29/5/24		Not notified of these meetings. 29/5/24 was the AGM
Music	10/12/24	6/12/24	No reason
Wood Panel Industry	11/3/24	-	Not informed of this meeting

Fewer than two quorate meetings per year

9. Those CPGs that did not hold at least two quorate meetings though out the year are highlighted in the table at Annex A.

Failure to provide minutes of meetings

10. Those CPGs that did not provide minutes of meetings are highlighted in the table at Annex A

Failure to provide information in required templates

11. The Scottish Parliament must comply with strict accessibility standards for all material that it publishes online. As a result, agendas, minutes and AGM returns must be submitted using the templates provided by the Clerks. Despite this, Clerks have seen an increase in the number of non-conforming documents being sent for publishing.
12. CPGs such as Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions, Aviation, Co-Operatives, Carers, Freedom of Religion and Belief, Taiwan and Palestine are amongst those who have repeatedly sent updates while not using the correct templates.

CPGs at risk

13. Whilst compiling this report, Clerks observed that the following CPGs are at risk of breaching Section 6 of the Code of Conduct should relevant action not be taken soon.
14. The CPG on Care Leavers AGM is due to be held on 21/2/25. At the time of this report, no date had been set.
15. The CPG on Brain Tumours AGM is due 29/4/25. No meetings have been held since the CPG was accorded recognition in April 2024.
16. The CPG on Islands AGM is due on 5/2/25. At the time of this report, no date had been set.
17. The CPG on Palestine AGM is due on 7/2/25. At the time of this report, no date had been set.
18. The CPG on Stroke AGM is due on 19/1/25. At the time of this report, no date had been set.

Examples of repeated non-compliance

19. The Committee may also wish to note the following examples of Groups that have been non-compliant with at least one of the rules in previous years and which are

again non-compliant with at least one rule in this reporting year. These examples are not exhaustive but are provided to assist the Committee in considering issues of compliance in the round.

20. The CPG Germany was highlighted in the 2023/24 report for non-compliance for submitting an annual return on time and minutes of meetings. This report, it is highlighted again for not providing minutes of meetings and notification of meetings.
21. The CPG on Lung Health is being highlighted due to issues with MSP membership. In September 2023, the CPG only had four MSP members. In January 2024 Clerks were informed by the CPG that Jackie Dunbar MSP had joined the CPG thus making the CPG complaint again. In June 2024 Jackie Dunbar MSP emailed to request her removal from the CPG stating she was never a member of it hence the reason for highlighting this CPG. Membership issues were subsequently sorted at the AGM in June 2024.
22. The CPG on Nuclear Disarmament was highlighted in the 2023/24 report for having a late AGM. It has also held a late AGM in 2024 and is in breach for provision of minutes of meetings (only 1 minute of 6 meetings received).
23. The CPG on Older People, Age and Ageing has highlighted in the 2023/24 report for holding a late AGM. It is now being highlighted in the 2024/25 report for holding an AGM too early.
24. The CPG Social Enterprise was highlighted in the 2023/24 report for MSP membership issues. It is being highlighted in this report for no AGM meeting or return.
25. The CPG Wood Panel Industry was highlighted in the 2023/24 report for failure to provide minutes of meetings. It is being highlighted in this report for failure to notify Clerks of meetings within required timeframe and for not providing minutes of meetings.