My wife and I attend the Heart Disease and Stroke CPG on behalf of our Cardiactive Exercise Group in Nairn. Unfortunately we have not had sufficient experience of the CPG to answer most of the questions laid down in the consultation, but we would like to make some comments under question 16 on the practical operation of the above CPG.

Attending the CPG has been a benefit to us and we do try to pass on information from the CPG to the rest of our Group.

Unfortunately, we are not always able to hear properly and miss a great deal of what is said at a meeting. People sometimes do not switch on their microphone at all. Others switch the microphone on, but do not speak into or near the microphone.

My wife Sheena has been hard of hearing for a few years and now wears two hearing aids. She is able to use the loop system provided, but that only works if the microphones are actually in use. Otherwise hearing quiet speakers is very difficult. I myself am a bit borderline as far as hearing is concerned. We find that straining constantly to hear what people are saying is very tiring and one tends to get exasperated and simply 'switch off'.

From experience we know that one can ask once, perhaps twice, for people to speak up or use a microphone. But, even asking once usually causes some resentment and one tends just to give up. Being hard of hearing is not a disability that gets much sympathy.

We thought that we were probably alone in finding difficulty hearing the speakers at the meeting, but at the end of the last meeting we were speaking to other people were also complaining about the difficulty of not seeing or hearing the speakers.

The layout of the committee rooms does create some problems as extra seating has to be provided at the back of the room. The seats around the table are usually occupied by the people who are organized to take an actual part in the proceedings and are in a better position to hear what is being said.

Power Point presentations on the television screen can be hard to read unless one is fairly close to the screen as the print is sometimes too small to read at any distance.

I appreciate that the layout of the Scottish Parliament committee rooms is designed for normal committee use and is not ideal for the CPG meeting,
where there are usually people sitting in rows at the back of the room. Recently I attended the AGM of the Crossroads Organisation in Glasgow. The layout of the room was different. About forty people were present sitting in rows. The speakers addressed us from the front and we had no problem in hearing what they had to say or seeing the presentation given.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on the practical running of the CPG we attend. We know that a lot of work goes into organising these meetings, and appreciate the benefit we gain from attending.

JOHN & SHEENA WAUGH
10 APRIL 2012