

Cross Party Group on Deafness - Minutes

Meeting, Wednesday 4 March 2026 at 6pm.

Via Zoom (an online video conferencing platform)

Minutes – Present

MSPs

Convenor – Colin Beattie MSP (Scottish National Party)

Karen Adam MSP (Scottish National Party)

Invited Guests

Jemina Napier (Sign LOUD)

Claire Houghton (Sign LOUD)

Lucy Clark (Sign LOUD)

Tom Lichy (BDA)

Bethany Grieve (SG Sensory Loss unit)

Euan Geddes (SG Sensory Loss unit)

Scott Steele

Individual Members

Donald Richards

Group Members

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

Victoria Bishop-Rowe (AVUK)

Laura Turton (BAA)

Teresa Quail (BATOD)

Avril Hepner (BDA)

Isabella Goldie (Deafblind Scotland)

Alana Harper (Deaf Links)

Ashleigh Gray (Edinburgh Napier University)

Jacquie Winning (FVSC)

Allan Graham (Heads of Audiology Services)

Nicholas Orpin (Hearing Link)

Beth MacLean (Heath in Mind)

Gary Quinn (Heriot-Watt University)

Derek Todd (Lanarkshire Deaf Hub)

Michael Heggie (NDCS)
Carla Marchbank (NESS)
Rachel Mapson (QMU)
Brogan Thomson (RCSLT)
Teri Devine (RNID)
Jane Gallacher (SCIP)
Maureen Greig (SRLPDC)
Amanda Wilson (SSHLS)
Brian Shannan (University of Edinburgh)

Language Service Professionals

Gail Richardson and Mel Coulter (ENTs)
Nathan Imrie, Bruce Cameron and Stephanie Raper (BSL/English interpreters)

Apologies

Annabelle Ewing MSP
Deirdre Aitken (Highland Sensory)
Deborah Innes (Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf People)
Janis McDonald (individual member)
John Ravenscroft (University of Edinburgh)
Kevin McGowan (SG BSL unit)
Andrew Godfrey-Meers (SG BSL unit)

Agenda item 1 – Welcome, apologies, members and approval of minutes from the last meeting

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded people to say who they were and what organisation they represented before making contributions. Attendance and apologies noted in the minutes. Minutes of meeting on 10 Dec 2025 were approved.

Agreed to welcome two new members: John Whitfield (individual member) and Lanarkshire Deaf Hub (represented by Derek Todd).

Agenda item 2 - Introduction to Sensory Loss unit in Scottish Government (Bethany Grieve and Euan Geddes, Directorate of Primary Care).

Convenor introduced members of the new Sensory Loss policy team, Beth Grieve (Unit Head) and Euan Geddes (Senior Policy Adviser). Noted that it is particularly welcome to meet officials after lobbying from CPGD and many of our members for a policy home for sensory within Scottish Government, who will have audiology within their remit.

Beth Grieve introduced team, based within Primary Care Directorate of Scottish Government. Noted SG's commitment to develop community audiology services, which will now be within remit of team, alongside the implementation of the IRASS recommendations. Team will aim to connect partners to other policy units within Government to support cross-portfolio working. In response to questions, Beth indicated that the team is engaging with questions about the See Hear Strategy.

The team outlined work to meet stakeholders since inception in November 2025, and offered to meet with any members of the CPGD and respond to questions (including audiology Heads of Service and Deaf charities).

Members wishing to contact the team can email Beth Grieve at bethany.grieve@gov.scot.

Agenda item 3 – Sign LOUD project (Prof. Jemina Napier (Heriot Watt), Dr Claire Houghton (University of Edinburgh), and Lucy Clark)

Lucy Clark, Prof. Jemina Napier, and Dr Claire Houghton attended and presented on the work of [Sign LOUD](#), a British Academy-funded project highlighting the experiences and support needs of Deaf women of domestic abuse, and how to change current systems. The project has made key asks of SG, including consideration of BSL users and families in strategies to prevent violence against women and girls.

Audience questions highlighted the role of Deaf grandparents in support children and young people, and inequalities across the sensory sector for women and girls experiencing domestic abuse.

Action: CPGD to write to the Deputy First Minister (BSL portfolio) and the Minister for Victims and Community Safety, supporting key asks from Sign LOUD project. **[Note: action complete]**

Agenda item 4 - BSL updates

RAND report on investment impact of BSL (BDA).

Tom Lichy, Head of Policy and Research at BDA, presented findings from two recent research reports, which demonstrate the long-term economic and social value of investing in early years BSL education.

In 2025, RAND Corporation were commissioned by the BDA to carry out [an economic analysis of the value of British Sign Language](#). In the same period, the University of Manchester and UCL carried out a [partnership evidence review](#) into the impact of access to sign languages in early years. These reports assess the long-term impact of delays to language acquisition and make a clear case for the value of sign language to Deaf and Deafblind children and young people and their families.

Audience questions highlighted the importance of Qualified Teachers of the Deaf in supporting Deaf children and young people in education to access BSL, and a need for SG to support access to BSL.

Action: Tom Lichy to share presentation PowerPoint with CPGD secretariat, who will share with members.

Action: CPGD to write to the Deputy First Minister (BSL portfolio), supporting key asks from the RAND report. **[Note: action complete]**

Agenda item 5 – Audiology

Letter to Jenni Minto MSP and roundtable on audiology and Deafblindness (Isabella Goldie, Deafblind Scotland, and Hannah Tweed, ALLIANCE Scottish Sensory Hub)

Jenni Minto MSP, Minister for Public Health and Women’s Health, invited CPGD to facilitate and attend a Parliamentary roundtable on audiology and Deafblindness, before the start of the pre-election period.

Colin Beattie to chair as Convenor of CPGD. Roundtable scheduled for 10th March 2026. Due to limited capacity of available room in Parliament, agreed that ALLIANCE would write a short report on discussion, questions and recommendations, and share with CPGD and SG officials.

National Community Hearing Association (Karen Adam MSP)

Karen Adam highlighted recent meeting with National Community Hearing Association, and the need for people to access community audiology services in their local area – particularly with aging population. Members discussed models of private and public support.

Action: ALLIANCE SSH to draft short report on roundtable and circulate to CPGD members and SG officials in draft format before 26 March 2026 to ensure transparency. Final report will be published in April/May 2026, and shared with incoming Ministers, with a request that community audiology and the implementation of the definition of Deafblindness are key priorities for the incoming government.

Agenda item 6 – Updates from working groups

6.1. Deafblindness and workforce (Isabella Goldie, Deafblind Scotland)

Updates on roundtable work, calls for guidance to support Deafblind children and young people, and the need for reviewed job descriptions and registration models for Guide Communicators. Work will continue later this year on these topics.

6.2. Dementia and sensory care (Amy White, ALLIANCE Scottish Sensory Hub)

Amy White updated on positive progress on the dementia and sensory care work, with a Health Improvement Scotland evidence review on dementia assessments nearing completion, and early results positive. We expect to receive a report in March 2026 and will share with the CPGD once complete.

Action: ALLIANCE Scottish Sensory Hub to share evidence review with CPGD once complete.

Agenda Item 7 – AOB

Consultation on School Premises Regulation (acoustics for Deaf pupils) (Brian Shannan, Scottish Sensory Centre). Highlighted SG consultation (deadline 24 March) looking at the regulation of two aspects of school buildings with relevance for Deaf and Deafblind children and young people – assistive technology and the acoustic properties of school buildings. Scottish Sensory Centre are responding, highlighting need to consider Deaf and Deafblind children and young people. If you would like to support the response, or to read the draft, please email Brian Shannan at brian.shannan@ed.ac.uk.

Protect Deaf Services Edinburgh (Hannah Tweed, ALLIANCE Scottish Sensory Hub). Deaf Action currently leading campaign work to challenge cuts to Deaf services in Edinburgh. To learn more and to support this work, visit: <https://deafaction.org/protect-deaf-services-edinburgh/>

Consultation on QToD/VIs (Colin Beattie). Consultation on teachers of children and young people who are blind or partially sighted, deaf, or deafblind [closed in May 2025](#). Since then, no publication of analysis of results, or a SG response. No reply to CPGD enquiry to supported learners team in SG asking for update (January 2026). No CPGD members had further information on progress.

Action: CPGD to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, asking for an update and to consider this work as a priority for the incoming administration after the election. **[Note: action complete]**

Reformation of CPGD after election (Colin Beattie). Convenor provided a summary of process for the reformation of the CPG on Deafness after the election.

Action: ALLIANCE Scottish Sensory Hub to update members once SPPA Committee review request for reformation after the election.

Finally, Hannah Tweed formally thanked the convenor for his significant work and support of the CPGD through this Parliamentary session (seconded by range of members).

The meeting ended with thanks to communication support professionals.

Meetings for 2026:

- June 10th June 2026 (6-7.30pm) (pending reformation of CPGD)

End of document.