

Cross Party Group on Deafness

Wednesday 12 January 2022 at 6.00pm to 7.30pm

Via Zoom (an online video conferencing platform)

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Convenor – Colin Beattie (Scottish National Party)

Annabelle Ewing (Scottish National Party)

Invited guests

Deafblind Scotland (DbS) – John Whitfield

National Deaf Children's Society Scotland (NDCS Scotland) – John Downie

Scottish Register of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community (SRLPDC) – Maureen Greig

The Scottish Sensory Hub, The ALLIANCE – Hazel McFarlane

Non-MSP Group Members

Secretariat – Janis McDonald (The ALLIANCE)

Assistant Secretariat – Derek Todd (The Scottish Sensory Hub, The ALLIANCE)

Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults Scotland (ATLA Scotland) – Jill Bradshaw

British Association of Teachers of the Deaf Scotland (BATOD Scotland) – Jean McAllister

British Deaf Association Scotland (BDA Scotland) – Avril Hepner

Deaf Equality and Accessibility Forum South Lanarkshire (D.E.A.F. South Lanarkshire) – Enrique Canton

Deafblind Scotland (DbS) – Isabella Goldie

Hearing and Sight Care – Deirdre Aitken

Highland Sensory – Gillian Mitchell

National Deaf Children's Society Scotland (NDCS Scotland) – Lois Drake

North East Sensory Services (NESS) – Ann Robertson

Queen Margaret University (QMU) – Rachel Mapson

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Scotland (RCSLT Scotland) – Glenn Carter

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) – Teri Devine

Scottish Register of Language Professionals with the Deaf Community (SRLPDC) – Leona Glennie
Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC) – Teresa Quail
University of Edinburgh – Rachel O'Neill
West Scotland Deaf Children's Society (WSDCS) – Charlene Dolan

Language Service Professionals

BSL / English Interpreter – Bruce Cameron
BSL / English Interpreter – Gill Wood
Electronic Notetaker – Gail Richardson
Electronic Notetaker – Melanie Coulter

Apologies

MSPs

Vice Convenor – Mark Griffin (Scottish Labour Party)
Douglas Lumsden (Scottish Conservative Party)
Karen Adam (Scottish National Party)
Paul O'Kane (Scottish Labour Party)

Invited guests

Scottish Government – Gussie White
Scottish Government – Maxwell Barber

Non-MSP Group Members

Individual – Donald Richards
Individual – John Mitchell
British Association of Teachers of the Deaf Scotland (BATOD Scotland)
– Catherine Finestone
Deaf Links – Alana Harper
Forth Valley Sensory Centre – Jacquie Winning
Hearing Link – Lorna Armstrong
NHS Highland Deaf Services – Lynda Campbell
Scottish Sensory Centre – Sheila Mackenzie
The Scottish Sensory Hub, The ALLIANCE – Jonathan Reid

Agenda item 1

Welcome and Introductions.

The meeting protocols for inclusion were advised by Derek Todd. The Convenor, Colin Beattie MSP welcomed attendees to this first meeting of the new Scottish Parliamentary cycle. Attendees were asked to give their name and organisation prior to speaking.

Agenda item 2

Attendance and Apologies.

Noted and listed in separate note as well as on this record.

Agenda item 3

3a.) Children, Young People and Families:

NHS Lothian Audiology Education

John Downie and Lois Drake, NDCS Scotland

John Downie, Interim Head of Policy and Influencing from NDCS Scotland was invited to speak to the content of the briefing paper circulated prior to the meeting. He noted the historical background leading up to the recent events regarding a report on paediatric audiology in the NHS Lothian area. Key issues were noted including preventable, repeated, and catastrophic failures. Not all the families involved are yet fully aware of the problems. This is seen to be a failure of candour. There is a need to look at national issues and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Humza Yousaf MSP has announced a review. The review contents are still to be finalised. Registration standards for all audiologists are inconsistent and it is indicated that although qualified some if not all are inadequately regulated. It is critical that our deaf children and young people get the best start in life. His colleague, Lois Drake then highlighted several issues regarding education and attainment more generally. Evidence indicates that additional supports are inconsistent, if available and the attainment gap is widening quickly. Several attendees spoke: Rachel O'Neill, University of Edinburgh and Rachel Mapson, Queen Margaret University providing further evidence of problems. Problems included failure of positive, early intervention and prevention, good quality joint working with other communication and language service professionals and a lack of cross family support covering communication and language too. Language must include English and BSL (British Sign

Language). Annabelle Ewing MSP made several suggestions and after discussion the group agreed to the following actions:

- 1.) **Ask NDCS Scotland to provide an updated briefing covering attainment issues.**
- 2.) **Ask the Convenor, Colin Beattie MSP to write to Calum Campbell, NHS Lothian Chief Executive to ask about the remedial plan to address the issues raised including any quality standard issues.**
- 3.) **Ask the Convenor to write to Humza Yousaf MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care regarding plans for the review, press for speedy timetable and inclusion of Cross Party Group on Deafness in the process.**
- 4.) **Ask the Convenor to write to Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to seek initiatives to specifically tackling the widening attainment gap as part of a recovery programme ensuring the privations are addressed**
- 5.) **The Convenor undertook to investigate further what intervention might be required to address the issue for the adequate registration and regulation of all audiologists. He will also look at adopting the International Benchmarks mentioned for paediatric audiology. They are often simply known as the one, two three approaches comprising of a target to screen within one month, diagnosis within two months and an appropriate children's plan in place by three months.**

3b.) BSL (British Sign Language) update:

BSL National Plan – Deafblind update

Isabella Goldie and John Whitfield, Deafblind Scotland

Isabella Goldie and John Whitfield gave a brief overview of the BSL (British Sign Language) National Plan Progress Report and provided comprehensive detail regarding deafblindness, work of Deafblind Scotland and some issues in Scotland.

They covered issues in access and support prior to COVID-19, the impact of the pandemic and key recovery issues: accessible information, participatory processes, general awareness, and workforce training issues as well as tactile language development. From the Interim Report, three mains' areas of real success are noted. Those are education and the BSL aspect of education. Clearly there is more work to be done there in relation to the previous conversation. There was BSL

to English Interpreter work that happened and the publication of the Landscape Review. The third area is around public life and accessible services.

Isabella noted a case example where a bed bound woman is left most of the day without any social stimulation although her immediate practical needs are met. Many, if not all are faced with this partial support as the social and emotional needs do not seem to be covered in any assessment processes. John noted that over 4,500 people had been trained via Deafblind Scotland resources. He noted a workplace example of enabling worker confidence and improve knowledge and intervention skills.

Avril Hepner from British Deaf Association Scotland (BDA Scotland) noted that the continuing BSL work was targeting Councils and Health Board areas. A new BSL Helpline has been established. It is linked to the Scottish Ethnic Minority Deaf Club (SEMDC) too. There is also a focus on empowerment training. She noted a lot of deaf people welcomed having interpretation at First Minister business. BDA Scotland also provided a summary to Deaf Communities' members thinking about adapted language choice linked to COVID briefings and other public information.

The group are encouraged to read the [BSL \(British Sign Language\) - National Plan: Progress Report.](#)

Discussion noted that access to information in BSL had been problematic in the earlier period of COVID-19, but the briefings had improved this. Access in other tactile, formats has also improved.

Actions:

- 1.) Max Barber, BSL Policy Officer at the Scottish Government should be available for the next meeting in April 2022 and discussion on (Non-tactile) BSL matters to be on agenda then.**
- 2.) The Convenor, Colin Beattie MSP to consider actions regarding a definition of deafblindness, diagnosis issues and age related dual sensory loss issues.**
- 3.) The group were reminded that Max Barber will take direct approaches via his email address, provided at the end of his briefing.**
- 4.) Avril Hepner, BDA Scotland to send the links for the accessible information in BSL on the Facebook Channel.**

- 5.) **Isabella Goldie, Deafblind Scotland to source information on deafblindness definition and diagnosis for the Convenor to consider how the Cross Party Group on Deafness can assist improvements.**
- 6.) **Hazel McFarlane, The Scottish Sensory Hub, The ALLIANCE to link in with Isabella Goldie, Deafblind Scotland regarding the involvement of people with no or low vision to assist development of training materials for tactile language skills.**

Agenda item 4

Items from attendees

Future topics / from previous term:

Transport

Access to Democracy

Additional items submitted were:

Age related Deafblindness / Dual Sensory Loss

Hard of Hearing people and Lip-reading

Continue with Early Diagnosis discussions

People are asked to submit other topics to Janis McDonald, Secretariat by email: janis.mcdonald@alliance-scotland.org.uk.

Agenda item 5

AOCB

There were no items for discussion.

Agenda item 6

Date of next meetings

Wednesday 20 April 2022 at 6.00pm

Notice: Including AGM on Wednesday 14 September 2022

Wednesday 07 December 2022 at 6.00pm

Agenda item 7

Closing remarks

The Convenor, Colin Beattie MSP thanked everyone for their attendance and participation in a very enjoyable and action-based meeting.