

Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment

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.

Agenda

Tuesday 12 September, 13.00 – 14.00, Committee Room 3, Scottish Parliament

1. Welcome and introductions.
2. Apologies.
3. AGM and Election of Office Bearers.
4. Minutes of the meeting, held on 7 February 2017.
5. Report of the last meeting (non-quorate), held on 16 May 2017, with Convener's recommendations.
6. CPG topics (see report and list of topics appended).
7. Session on accessible voting
 - contributions from Ken Reid and Colette Walker on making voting more accessible; a paper from Terry Robinson is appended to the CPG papers.
 - Mary Pitcaithly, Electoral Commission Scotland.
8. Update on legislation to ban parking on pavements

- George Henry, Transport Scotland.

9. Matters arising

- Sandra Wilson wishes to raise the issue of accessible communications and the development of the new Scottish social security system.
- Gillian Mitchell of Sight Action wishes to raise issues relating to PIP assessments of low vision.

10. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 5 December, 18.00 – 19.30, Committee Room 3, Scottish Parliament. This will include a reception to mark both Christmas and the 100th anniversary of the Scottish Council on Visual Impairment (SCOVI).

Annex 1: CPG Topics

Since its reconstitution meeting in September 2016 the CPG has discussed the following topics:

13 September 2016

Inaugural meeting and election of office-bearers.
Priorities for next Parliamentary term.

Tuesday 7 February 2017

Certification Review - Professor Carrie MacEwen,
Ophthalmology specialist to the Scottish Government.

Access Vehicle Exclusion at Waverley Station – Miles
Briggs MSP.

Networking reception - introduced by Stuart McMillan MSP
to mark the 125th Anniversary of the Scottish Braille Press
with contributions from Jim McCafferty - Proof-reader, The
Scottish Braille Press and Richard Hellewell, Chief
Executive, Royal Blind, Scottish War Blinded.

16 May 2017

Session on 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People - Our
Delivery Plan to 2021 for the United Nations Convention
on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'
- Policy context set by Donnie Jack, Programme Co-
ordinator, Local Government & Communities Directorate,
Scottish Government with third sector reaction by Layla
Theiner of Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS).

Update from Haggeye, the forum for blind and partially
sighted young people in Scotland.

12 September 2017

AGM and election of office-bearers.

CPG topics (see report and list of topics appended).

Session on accessible voting with contributions from Ken Reid and Colette Walker on making voting more accessible and response from Mary Pitcaithly, Electoral Commission Scotland. A note on accessible voting from Terry Robinson is appended to the CPG papers.

Update on legislation to ban parking on pavements
- George Henry, Transport Scotland.

Under AOB

- Sandra Wilson wishes to raise the issue of accessible communications and the development of the new Scottish social security system.
- Gillian Mitchell of Sight Action wishes to raise issues relating to PIP assessments of low vision.

Annex 2

Future CPG topics

As Item 5 of its meeting on Tuesday 13 September 2016 the CPG considered:

5. Priorities for next Parliamentary term

The Chair is committed to working with the CPG to establish a plan of issues that should be tackled over the next period. Topics already highlighted include but aren't exclusive of:

- Health and Social Care Integration
- Hidden Sight Loss
- Eye health prevention
- Eye health digital review
- Accessibility of online services
- See Hear strategy
- Registration
- Ophthalmology services
- Low vision services
- Social Security Bill
- Transport Bill
- Educational attainment
- Brexit impact / EU legislation
- Accessible health information / appointment cancellations
- Accessible health screening
- Bus Charter / Street Charter
- Acute services e.g. injection therapy
- Mental Health

Annex 3

Email from Terry Robinson to Stuart McMillan MSP on improving access to voting

... I'm totally blind and my partner is severely vision impaired, so we arranged for postal votes.

Unfortunately, the material we've received has all been in standard print.

Yes, Anne can read it via her low vision aid and I can scan it to my PC.

This doesn't, however, assist us much with the actual deed of voting.

Anne has to sign a cover sheet, whilst I managed to claim and exemption to this. I still have to include my date of birth on the cover sheet, in a "box" that I can't find so, even if the recipient could read my writing, I've no idea where I should write. Again, because I can't find the "box" Anne has to write this in.

I can't help thinking that, in these days of finger print technology, a much better and more inclusive solution is waiting for us. Perhaps an instruction to press our thumb or finger near a designated corner of the page could be helpful?

Last night, though, I referred specifically to ballot papers, which would clearly benefit from a bit of inclusive design. We seem to have cracked this issue with postage stamps, we can tell the value of the stamps (second or first class) in a book and can even ensure that we place stamps the right way up, simply by locating one or two notches near the top right-hand corner of the back page. If you haven't spotted this, try examining the next stamp

book you find. It's a known attribute of inclusive design that many of its specific features go largely unnoticed by most people.

So, to the ballot paper:

- We need to know whether we have it the right way up, so how about we cut the top left-hand corner off?
- We need to know where the voting boxes are, so how about we either emboss horizontal lines at the top and bottom of each box?
- Perhaps even simpler and cheaper, how about we notch the right-hand side of the paper, with a notch at the top and bottom of each box.

Given these simple provisions, which shouldn't actually cost any more than what we already have, we then need to have a list of candidates, in the order they appear on the ballot paper, in whatever medium (audio, Braille ...) we prefer.

Throughout my life, I've seen many examples of products that with very simple adjustments could have been made so much easier to use. The modifications could have been included as standard and, given the technology by which goods are produced, the required mould or template would not incur any additional cost. Instead, for example, we're still waiting for the manufacturers to adapt a cooker which we bought four months ago! I couldn't guess at the additional cost this imposes on the company.

Sadly, those with special needs are tarred with a brush that smells of added cost and trouble, which with a bit of thought and consultation would not apply.

Terry Robinson (Convenor Inclusion Scotland)