

**Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee
Thursday 18 September 2025
15th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)**

Consideration of a change of purpose request for the Cross-Party Group on Deafness

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 16 June 2025, the Committee considered a request from the Cross-Party Group (CPG) on Deafness to change its purpose to include Deafblindness.
2. The Committee in principle was not opposed to the addition of Deafblindness to the purpose of this CPG, but agreed to write to the Convener of the CPG to seek further information about the change, particularly in relation to potential overlap with the CPG on Visual Impairment.
3. A response has been received from Colin Beattie MSP, Convener of the CPG Deafness. Correspondence has also been received from Stuart McMillan MSP, Convener of the CPG Visual Impairment. These letters can be found at the annexe to this note.

Committee consideration

4. The Committee is asked to decide whether, based on the information before it, is it content with the proposed change to the CPG Deafness purpose .

Clerks to the Committee

September 2025

Annexe

Letter from Colin Beattie MSP, Convener of the CPG Deafness 19 August 2025

I am writing to you on behalf of the Cross-party Group on Deafness. Thank you for your letter of 27th June 2025 regarding our request to change the stated purpose of the CPG on Deafness from that [currently listed on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

Following your letter, the Conveners and Secretariats of the CPG on Deafness and CPG on Visual Impairment have met separately to discuss the working of the two groups. We agree on the merits of the two groups continuing to exist as separate and supportive entities, to ensure that Deafness, Deafblindness and Visual Impairment remain priorities for the Scottish Parliament.

There are long-standing and close working relationships between the two CPGs, across multiple parliamentary terms. At present, two of the CPG on Deafness' short life working groups (on Deafblindness and on dementia and sensory care) are supported by members across both CPGs, and we report regularly to all members on progress. We intend to continue working together on issues of Deafblindness, and other topics of mutual interest (at present, the [consultation on qualified teachers of children and young people who are blind, partially sighted, deaf or deafblind](#) is important to the members of both groups). We are happy to hold joint meetings of the two CPGs where it is relevant to members.

While both CPGs fully intend to continue to work closely together on areas of mutual interest, we feel that we are most effective as allies rather than a combined group. In part, this is due to the accessibility needs of our members (the communication support requirements of BSL users are very different from people who use screen readers). Historically, the CPG on Deafness has also been more involved in supporting people with Deafblindness than the CPG on Visual Impairment, due to the specialisms and expertise of our members. There also remain areas of key interest to the members of the CPGs which are very distinct – such as the recent enquiry into the impact of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

With the recent acceptance of a definition of Deafblindness for Scotland, we are keen to amend our purpose to reflect our work more accurately and respect the preferred language of all our members. As such, we ask the SPPA Committee to approve the following revised purpose for the CPG on Deafness:

“To act as a channel of communication between the Scottish Parliament, individuals with deafness / hearing loss / deafblindness and organisations working or supporting individuals with deafness / hearing loss / deafblindness.”

We will be seeking to re-register the CPG on Deafness as a CPG in the next parliamentary session, and continue to support people who are Deaf and Deafblind in Scotland.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Letter from Stuart McMillan MSP, Convener of the CPG

21 August 2025

At its meeting on 26 June 2025, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee considered a request for approval of a change to the purpose of the CPG on Deafness to include Deafblindness. As Convener, you informed the CPG on Deafness that “The Committee in principle is not opposed to the addition of Deafblindness to the purpose of this CPG but agreed to write to you to seek further information about the change, particularly in relation to potential overlap with the CPG on Visual Impairment. The Committee were keen to understand if any discussions had taken place with the CPG on Visual Impairment about the possibility of these CPGs working together on issues of Deafblindness or indeed has a merger of the two CPGs been considered.”

As the Convener of the Cross-Party Group on Visual Impairment (CPGVI), I am now writing to let you know that the Conveners and Secretariats of the two CPGs have separately met to discuss the working of the two groups. We agree on the merits of the two groups continuing to exist enabling a meaningful focus on deafness, Deafblindness and sight loss.

As we understand it, the CPG on Deafness wishes to change its purpose to acknowledge adoption of the recent definition of Deafblindness. The group will continue to be known as the CPG on Deafness. The CPG on Visual Impairment has no objection to the CPG on Deafness changing its purpose to include Deafblindness. We also affirm that the two groups collaborate on issues of mutual interest. For example, CPGVI members sit on the current Cross-party Group on Deafness Short Life Working Group on sensory care and dementia leading to their report on dementia assessments for people with Deafness, Deafblindness or Visual Impairment. We are open to holding joint meetings of the two CPGs where there is a pressing topic of mutual concern for discussion. For information, Deafblindness per se is handled by Deafblind Scotland or by joint sensory services rather than by sight loss charities, so it is appropriate that the CPG on Deafness reflects this in its statement of purpose.

We will be seeking to re-register the CPGVI as a CPG in the next parliamentary session, following our established practice of balloting members on the range of topics to be discussed relating to sight loss. For information, our purpose statement is below:

Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Visual Impairment

CPGVI

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.

I hope that this answers your query on how the two groups work together.