

Cross Party Group on Deafness

Meeting, Wednesday 10 December 2025 at 6pm.

Via Zoom (an online video conferencing platform)

Minutes – Present

MSPs

Convenor – Colin Beattie MSP (Scottish National Party)

Roz McCall MSP (Conservative)

Karen Adam MSP (Scottish National Party)

Invited Guests

Emma Swift (Electoral Commission)

Brian Shannan (University of Edinburgh)

Mercy Cherono Too (SignPort)

Scott Steele (Scottish Government)

Individual Members

Janis McDonald

Donald Richards

Danny Sweeney

Group Members

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

Nicholas Orpin (Hearing Link)

Allan Graham (Scotland Audiology Heads of Service)

Teri Devine (RNID)

Elaine Campbell (SRLPDC)

Matthew King (SLI)

Philip Gerrard (Deaf Action)

Lois Drake (NDCS)

Tori Bishop-Rowe (AVUK)

Avril Hepner (BDA)

Carla Marchbank (NESS)

Deirdre Aitken (Highland Sensory)

Rachel Mapson (QMU)

Christine Johnson (QMU)

Kirsten Abioye (Lothian Children's Deaf Club)
Deborah Innes (Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf People)
Adele Goman (Edinburgh Napier University)
Jacquie Winning (FVSC)
Julie Ferguson (EIS)
Brogan Ferguson (AA Scottish Cochlear Implant Programme)
Lucy Sherwood (Lothian Children's Deaf Club)
PC Katie Edwards (Policy Scotland)

Language Service Professionals

Linda Joyce, Mark Cross, and Tessa Slaughter (BSL/English Interpreters)
Gail Richardson and Mel Coulter (ENT)

Apologies

Douglas Bryce (Disability Equality Scotland)
Alana Harper (Deaf Links)
Denise McClung (SISG)
Beth MacLean (Health in Mind)
Jane Gallacher (Scottish Cochlear Implant Programme)
Stephanie Rose (Police Scotland)
Mags Greig (SRLPDC "The Scottish Register")
Kevin McGowan (SG BSL team)
Andrew Godfrey-Meers (SG BSL team)
Annabelle Ewing MSP
Jill Bradshaw (Lipread Scotland)

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 Sept 2025 were approved.

Agreed to welcome two new members: the British Academy of Audiology (BAA) and the Scottish Cochlear Implant Programme (SCIP).

Agenda item 2 - Improving accessibility in the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections (Emma Swift, Electoral Commission)

Emma Swift presented on the Electoral Commission's work to improve accessibility in elections. This included discussion of the updated [Guidance for Returning Officers - Assistance with voting for disabled voters | Electoral Commission](#). Members raised a variety of priorities for Deaf and Deafblind people, including considerations around suitable venues and staff training.

Emma Swift also outlined an invitation for organisations and individuals to share Electoral Commission content, to help them target those under-registered groups. Further material is available here: [Democratic engagement resources | Electoral Commission](#).

Emma Swift indicated that if anyone has any questions or would like to reach out for more information about the Electoral Commission's public awareness activities, they can do by contacting infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk.

Agenda item 3 - Assistive Technology Hub (Dr Brian Shannan, Scottish Sensory Centre, University of Edinburgh)

Brian Shannan introduced the Assistive Technology Hub, and the support they can offer to organisations and individuals in Scotland. He outlined some of the key challenges of assistive listening technology, and the evidence on the gaps within the current system. A positive discussion followed, including invitations for collaborative working between the Assistive Technology Hub, Deaf Action, NHS audiology, and EIS. Members also discussed support for Deafblind people, and options for integration with Braille displays.

All interested members were invited to contact Brian at brian.shannan@ed.ac.uk for more information.

Agenda item 4 - BSL updates

Launch of SignPort

Philip Gerrard (Deaf Action) presented an introduction to the newly launched [SignPort app](#), designed to aid in making and managing BSL bookings. Following the presentation, Philip and Mercy Cherono Too (SignPort) responded to questions from the CPGD.

Questions included concerns about the inclusion of interpreters on the Scottish Register, systems for conflict resolution, queries on uptake and funding models among public bodies, and concerns about the secure sharing of information on the app (among other topics). Due to time constraints the convenor closed the discussion, with an invitation to members to contact Philip Gerrard and Mercy Cherono Too with further questions.

Subsequent BSL items were then skipped due to time, with updates to follow with CPGD papers.

Action: ALLIANCE SSH to share updates on items on the launch of a [BSL network for listed authorities](#) and on Contact Scotland BSL by email.

Agenda item 5 – Audiology: letter to Jenni Minto MSP (Amy White, ALLIANCE Scottish Sensory Hub)

Following the last meeting of the CPGD, a group of volunteers drafted a letter to Jenni Minto on audiology. This has been dispatched – with thanks for contributions – and we are currently awaiting a response and will share with members once received.

Agenda item 6 – Updates from working groups

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

Consultation on guide communicator job description is nearly complete. Jenni Minto has also confirmed that the definition of Deafblindness will sit in the new SG policy home for sensory and healthcare. That team will

be well placed to progress guidance for HSCPs. The SLWG will meet in January to discuss next steps.

Action: ALLIANCE SSH to share SLWG written update with meeting papers.

6.2. Dementia and sensory care (Roz McCall MSP)

Roz McCall updated on positive progress on the dementia and sensory care work, with a Health Improvement Scotland evidence review now underway around dementia assessments. We expect to receive a report in February 2026 (approx.) and will share with the CPGD once complete.

Action: ALLIANCE SSH to share evidence review with CPGD once complete, and update on findings in more detail at the March 2026 CPGD meeting.

Agenda Item 7 – AOB

Deaf Access to Work campaign (Teri Devine, RNID)

On the back of the green paper on “Pathways to Work” there was a UK-wide consultation on Access to Work. RNID are launching a campaign in collaboration with Deaf Access to Work group, highlighting the priorities for Deaf people. The survey will go out next week – we would welcome input and support from CPGD members.

Action: Teri Devine to share survey with SSH. SSH to share with CPGD members for completion and sharing.

Meetings for 2026:

- Wed 4th March 2026 (6-7.30pm)
- June 10th June 2026 (6-7.30pm) (pending reformation of CPGD)

The meeting ended with thanks to communication support professionals, and with best wishes for the festive period and 2026.

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