

Cross Party Group on Deafness

Meeting, Wednesday 5 February at 6pm.

Via Zoom (an online video conferencing platform)

Minutes – Present

MSPs

Convenor – Colin Beattie MSP (Scottish National Party)

Roz McCall MSP (Conservative)

Invited Guests

Paula Spiers (NHS Scotland)

Jenny Gray (PA for Colin Beattie)

Janis McDonald, Emma Jones (the ALLIANCE)

Individual Member

Donald Richards

Danny Sweeney

Group Members

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

John Whitfield, Jonathan Reid (Deafblind Scotland)

Carla Marchbank (NESS)

Nicholas Orpin (Hearing Link)

Amanda McNamara (BATOD)

Katie Edwards, Stephanie Rose (Police Scotland)

Kirsten Abioye (Lothian Deaf Children's Club/FLAAG)

Matthew King, (Sorenson)

Avril Hepner (BDA)

Mark Ballard (NDCS)

Lucy Vasiliou (AVUK)

Jill Bradshaw (ATLA Scotland)

Julie Ferguson (EIS)

Adele Goman (Edinburgh Napier University)

Rachel Mapson (QMU)

Linda Sharkey (NHS Audiology Services)

John Ravenscroft (Scottish Sensory Centre)

Alana Harper (Deaf Links)

Deborah Innes (Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf People)

Philip Gerrard (Deaf Action)

Denise McClung (SISG)

Brogan Ferguson (RCSLT)

Language Service Professionals

Teresa Bowden and Mark Cross (BSL/English Interpreter)

Gail Richardson and Mel Coulter (ENT)

Apologies

Annabelle Ewing MSP

Isabella Goldie (Deafblind Scotland)

Deirdre Aitken (Highland Blindcraft)

Douglas Bryce (Disability Equality Scotland)

Agenda item 1 – Welcome, apologies and members

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.

The group approved a proposal to add Sorenson/SLI and Police Scotland to the CPGD.

Agenda item 2 – Approve the minutes from the last meeting

Minutes of meeting on 11 December 2024 were approved.

Agenda item 3 – Discuss matters arising

Matthew King provided an update on Contact Scotland BSL service continuation. Hannah Tweed wrote to the Deputy First Minister enquiring about timelines and process for consultation and inviting her to next CPGD meeting; awaiting response. Colin Beattie relayed that the EHRCJ Committee also interested in progress. Group agreed need to ensure 24/7 provision of service, with Deaf people at heart of consultation.

Mark Ballard provided an update on the inclusion of BSL in the Education (Scotland) Bill amendments.

Actions: Hannah Tweed to circulate any responses and further updates received.

Agenda item 4 – See Hear Strategy

Hannah Tweed provided update on letters of concern sent from CPGD to Neil Gray, Maree Todd, and the EHRCJ and HSCS Committees. Ongoing concerns raised by members about decision to cut new See Hear Strategy.

Actions: Hannah Tweed to circulate any responses and further updates received.

Agenda item 5 – Audiology update

Paula Spiers, NHS Scotland, provided update on progress on audiology and the recommendations of the *Independent Review of Audiology Services in Scotland* (IRASS). Written update also available and will be circulated with minutes. Report currently being reviewed by Jenni Minto prior to sharing with HSCH Committee. Paula Speirs stated that of the 55 recommendations in IRASS, 23 are marked completed, 15 have transitioned into operational work plans, and the remaining 17 have been closed. Expect to be able to share full report shortly, and to present update again once published.

Questions raised by members concerning the limited impact of this work for front-line audiology, and a continuing lack of infrastructure change and training pathways for audiologists. Members also raised concerns about waiting times, parental trust of Boards, transparency regarding IRASS recommendations being “closed”, the lack of national level training for ABR testing, and a national peer review scheme.

Action: Hannah Tweed to share written and verbal questions with Paula Spiers for email responses and then share with CPGD. Hannah Tweed also to follow up with Jenni Minto re: invitation to attend meeting on 28 May.

Agenda item 6 – Update from working group on Dementia and Sensory Care

Roz McCall MSP summarised group progress, including completion of first report (on sensory assessments). Amy White then shared key findings from the report, based on data from four surveys. Findings discussed and edits and further considerations suggested. Report will be shared with CPGD for comment by email prior to publication in March (alongside executive summary and BSL summary). Next area of work for SLWG is development of sensory care standards.

Action: Hannah Tweed to share report with minutes of CPGD. Members to share comments with Amy White and Hannah Tweed by Friday 28th February. Amy White to share comms material once report ready for launch.

Agenda item 7 – Update from working group on Definition of Deafblindness

Julia Ferguson and Jonathan Reid shared that the Definition of Deafblindness now has new policy contact (Sean Maher from Health Improvement Scotland). Isabella Goldie and team progressing work to see definition embedded. Discussed options for widening scope of the SLWG on Definition of Deafblindness to engage with wider issues around workforce planning and assessment tools.

Agenda item 7 – Update from working group on attainment

Mark Ballard updated that public launch of QToD report planned for late February/early March. Also note [pending news item](#) on Deaf pupil winning right for BSL interpretation in school.

Action: Mark Ballard to share report and comms pack once launch confirmed. CPGD members to assist in promotion where possible.

Agenda item 8 – AOCB

CPGD discussed topics for 2025 work. Suggestions included:

- Guide Communicator workforce planning
- Deafblind assessment tool
- Access to justice
- Audiology and workforce/training pathways
- National guidance/regulation for communication support workers in schools
- Ongoing work on attainment figures for Deaf children
- Access to CAHMS/Deaf children and young people's mental health
- Pending SG consultation on definition of ToD (expected March)
- Access to language/communication (BSL, lipreading, ENTs)

Action: Members to share further suggestions by email. Colin Beattie and Hannah Tweed to consider list of suggestions and follow up by email.

The next scheduled meetings are:

- Wednesday 28 May (6-7.30pm)
- Wednesday 10 September (6-7.30pm) – **AGM and meeting**
- Wednesday 10 December (6-7.30pm).

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