

# CROSS PARTY GROUP ON DEAFNESS MEETING

## Committee Room 2, Scottish Parliament

**Present:** Mark Griffin MSP (Convenor)  
Graeme Dey MSP (Vice Convenor)  
Miles Briggs MSP  
Alison Johnstone MSP  
Alan Dalziel – Action on Hearing Loss  
Cathie Finestone – BATOD  
Helen Morgans-Wenhold – BDA Scotland  
Aidan McCorry – Deaf Action  
John Whitfield – Deafblind Scotland  
Suzanne Abbatte – Deafblind Scotland  
Alana Harper – Deaf Links  
Angela Bonomy – NDCS Scotland  
Graham Findlay – NESS  
Liz Kraft – RCSLT  
Andy Irvine - SCoD  
Denise McClung – SISG  
Audrey Cameron – University of Edinburgh  
Janis McDonald – SCoD (Secretariat)

**In attendance:** Hilary Third (Scottish Government), Martin McDermott (Scottish Government), Donald Jack (Scottish Government), Frank McNally (Parliamentary Researcher for Mark Griffin MSP), Derek Todd (SCoD), Mandy Reid (SCoD), Ian Galloway (Lanarkshire Deaf Club), David Baxter (EIS), Sandra Howard (Aberdeen City Council), Christine Johnston (SCoD), Mary Watt (SCoD), Matthew King (SCoD), Sheila Gillies (SCoD),

**Communication Support Professionals:** Paula McGuire (Electronic Notetaker), Jacqui Donati (Electronic Notetaker), Michael McCourt (Guide/Communicator), Andrew Dewey (BSL/English Interpreter) and Mark Sherwin (BSL/English Interpreter)

- 1. Welcome and Introductions:** Mark Griffin MSP welcomed everyone to the first full meeting of the Cross Party Group on Deafness since the election.
- 2. Apologies:** Donald Richards (SCoD), Jill Bradshaw (ATLA), Carol Thomson (BATOD), Delia Henry (Action on Hearing

Loss), Carly Brownlie (SASLI), Sheila Mackenzie (Scottish Sensory Centre), Elizabeth Adam (Tayside Deaf Forum), Lindsay Foster (Signature), Hearing Link, Donaldsons' School, Heriot-Watt University, and Dumfries and Galloway Hard of Hearing Group.

3. **Minutes of the re-registering meeting:** proposed-Mark Griffin MSP; seconded- Graeme Dey MSP. Accepted as an accurate record.
4. **New members – SISG were welcomed:** Denise McClung gave some brief background to [SISG](#) and what services they provide across Ayrshire and Arran.
5. **BSL (Scotland) Act update:** Hilary Third from the Scottish Government Equality Unit spoke to this item and gave an update on the BSL National Advisory Group and progress on the first BSL National Plan. The National Advisory Group is in place; it has met 4 times and will meet again on 31st January 2017 to agree the actions it wants to recommend to the Minister to be included in the first BSL National Plan. The draft plan will be published in BSL and English and go out for consultation in March 2017. It needs to be published by 22nd October 2017.

Working with the National Advisory Group has been an exciting project. The Scottish Government made a commitment that they wanted the group to be comprised of a majority of BSL users. The group is made of 20 people: 11 are BSL representatives; 9 are public bodies, covered by the National Plan or public bodies that need to produce their own plan by 2018. In the group of BSL reps, 5 people are Deaf and 1 is a hearing parent of a deaf child; 2 are Deafblind, 1 uses visual frame interpreting, the other uses hands on BSL; and 3 are under 18 years of age. They all applied to be representatives of their communities. There are no deaf organisations represented; their role is to support the participation of the Deaf individuals. The Scottish Government has invested £500,000 in the Deaf Sector Partnership, working with Scottish Government and the Voluntary Action Fund. The National Advisory Group is co-chaired by Sarah Davidson, Scottish Government's Director General for Communities.

The BSL National Plan lays out the long-term vision for promoting the use of BSL in Scotland. The aims and

ambitions will take time to achieve, but the process is starting with the actions that sit under these.

The National Advisory Group, in drafting the BSL National Plan, has made recommendations to the Minister, who has responsibility to sign off the BSL National Plan following the consultation. A progress report has to be laid before Parliament in 2021, halfway through the six year cycle of the plan.

Education is a priority in the BSL National Plan. Lessons have been learned from the Gaelic (Scotland) Act. The government is not going to carry out a BSL audit; it will be up to individual public bodies if they want to audit their deaf/BSL services.

- 6. UNCRPD Disability Plan:** Hilary Third from the Scottish Government Equality Unit spoke to this item. The Disability Delivery Plan was published on the 2nd December, ahead of the International Day of People with Disability on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December; there was a debate last week in the Chamber which was largely consensual.

The final plan is ambitious and will help achieve transformational change for Scotland's disabled people, including deaf people and Deaf BSL users. The plan sets out 5 long term ambitions and 93 actions that will be taken forward during the current parliamentary term. There is strong focus on employment, support services, health and social care, and there is a section around accessibility, culture and sport, rights and justice and active participation.

The review of the UK Disability Delivery Plan will take place in March 2017; the UN will review it in Geneva in September 2017.

- 7. Social Security in Scotland Update:** Martin McDermott from the Scottish Government Social Security Agency Implementation Division spoke to this item. The slides will be shared with members after the meeting. The UK Government will transfer a number of powers to the Scottish Government as a result of the Smith Commission and the Scotland Act from 2016. The Scottish Government has taken forward changes to Social Security in Scotland. They published in March this year their Vision paper on Social Security in Scotland - A New Future for Social Security in Scotland. Reserved benefits are Universal Credit, which replaces job seekers allowance, the pension system, contributory employment support allowance, child benefit and maternity and paternity pay. Devolved benefits are DLA, PIP,

Attendance Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Carers Allowance, Sure Start Maternity Grants, Funeral Payments, Cold Weather Payments, and Discretionary Housing Payments.

What that means is of the £18 billion spent in Scotland by the UK Government, £2.7 billion or 15% is transferred to the Scottish Government. Martin gave the timetable for the Scottish Social Security Bill to be laid before Parliament – by the start of the summer recess in 2017. Ministers have made a number of commitments to changes to the current system. There are 5 principles that underpin the vision that:

- Social Security is an investment in the people of Scotland
- Respect of the dignity of individuals is at the heart of everything we do.
- Our processes will be an evidence based system and designed with the people of Scotland.
- We will strive for continuous improvement in all our policies, processes and systems, putting the user experience first.
- We will demonstrate that our services are efficient and value for money.

The Scottish Government had 120 consultation events across Scotland in all 32 local authority areas and in addition, had 500 written responses submitted.

It has not yet been decided what the Social Security system in Scotland will look like – there are six proposals on the table. A decision will be taken early next year on this. Then the Scottish Government will set up the Experience Panels with 2,500 members with lived experience of the devolved benefits. Deaf people will have the chance to apply to join a panel. Beyond the consultation, the Scottish Government will put in regulations and will develop and publish guidance, start up a social security agency and then will have a devolved Social Security system.

The Scottish Government, the UK Government and the DWP are looking at ways to minimise any problems that could arise between the Scottish system and that used for reserved benefits. It should be as easy as possible for claimants to be in both systems. Any changes in payments also need to benefit claimants not put them at a disadvantage or cost them money. It will take about five years to get the Scottish system

up and running, but it also has to last into the future. Access to Work will remain with the DWP at the present time.

The Scottish Government is reviewing current DWP systems, including assessment and appeal, and communications. The Experience Panels should also help to ensure the new Scottish system is fully accessible for claimants.

- 8. Joint Cross Party Group meetings with CPG on Mental Health and CPG on Children and Young People:** Janis McDonald (Secretariat) spoke to this item. It had been suggested during the last Parliamentary session that the CPGD hold a joint meeting with the CPGMH and with the CPGCYP to raise the profile of deaf children and the need for a Deaf Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service in Scotland. Is this still required? Are there any other outstanding issues? And what areas should the CPGD be looking at over the next meetings?

**It was agreed there was no immediate priority to hold joint meetings at this time and they may be more relevant in a year or so.** The secretariat would discuss with other groups around timing and agenda for joint meetings.

Suggestions put forward on the day: Access to public services by deaf people, including health; Attainment of deaf children; uptake of employability and modern apprenticeship.

**It was agreed to continue to try and theme the meetings and the next agenda will include input from the See Hear Strategy.**

If anyone has a suggestion, please contact Mark Griffin and Janis McDonald - [Mark.Griffin.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:Mark.Griffin.msp@parliament.scot) and [admin@scod.org.uk](mailto:admin@scod.org.uk)

- 9. Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 15th March at 1.00 pm in the Scottish Parliament.
- 10. Mark Griffin MSP closed the meeting** and wished everyone a Happy Christmas.