

**Cross Party Group on Dyslexia in the Scottish Parliament**  
**Minutes of the Cross Party Group Meeting on Tuesday**  
**31<sup>st</sup> January 2012 at 12 noon.**

**1. Welcome and Apologies.**

Elaine Smith MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting while awaiting Convenor Margaret Mitchell MSP who had been delayed. She asked for members to introduce themselves, and give a little background about their reason for attending. At this point a copy of the Working Definition of Dyslexia was circulated.

**2. Apologies**

Noted

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (already circulated)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2011 were accepted as a correct record. The adoption of the minutes was proposed by Cathy Magee and seconded by Aileen Orr.

**4. Matters arising from the Minutes.**

David Jones reported on the success of the Cross Party Group reception held in the Scottish Parliament on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November. There had been positive feedback, especially about the talk by Jane Edwards.

**5. Presentation.**

The Convenor Margaret Mitchell MSP introduced Dr Fiona Lyon, Head of Additional Support Needs at Our Lady of the Mission Primary School in East Renfrewshire. Dr Lyon shared the findings of her research in using adapted software in her groups from P3 – P7. Dr Lyons highlighted the importance of getting it right for all children with integrated mixed programmes, and support packages which are attractive to both boys and girls. The results concluded that these packages were especially useful for dyslexia but had a much wider application, so schools could buy a variety of software for a range of pupils, not specifically dyslexia.

She found that good IT software could be tailored to specific needs and that she had observed the more proficient the pupil became, the greater the self esteem. Small details were important like the use of coloured backgrounds and multisensory functions. This was especially useful with boys. The most important factor being that the children enjoyed their lesson, and looked forward to the next, which in itself, was a breakthrough.

Details of the software and conclusions by Dr Lyons are available on application.

The Convenor thanked Dr Lyon for her presentation and invited members of the group to contribute any questions. The discussion centred on how the research findings could be shared across Scotland.

#### **6. Additional Scottish Government Funding to support the further development of the Online Toolkit for Teachers.**

Cathy Magee reported that Dyslexia Scotland had been given the figure of £40,000 to extend the online Toolkit for Dyslexia. The current Toolkit will be extended to offer more advice and materials on support and specialist teaching with in-depth information on the latter stages of assessment in addition to added sections for Parents and Local Authorities to tap into. The revised toolkit working group includes local authority staff who are currently embedding the toolkit into their local practice. The anticipated launch of the revised Toolkit for Dyslexia is September 2012.

#### **7. Adoption of the Working Definition of Dyslexia by local authorities.**

Mike Gibson explained the background to the development of the working definition and this was followed by some discussion about the importance of encouraging local authorities to adopt the definition, which is also on the online toolkit. It was noted there are some very good examples of local authorities where the definition has been adopted as part of the authority's dyslexia policy.

There were concerns expressed about consistency across Scotland and it was noted that CoSLA had been very positive in raising this issue and were keen to work further with Dyslexia Scotland to promote the use of the working definition. It was agreed that every opportunity should be taken to encourage professional associations such as the Association of Directors of Education and others to promote the adoption of the working definition when developing their own policies.

The discussion concluded with agreement that the current working definition remained acceptable but could be reviewed in the future if required.

#### **8. Availability of qualifications in Scotland in relation to competence to undertake assessments.**

The issue of the qualifications available to teachers in relation to assessments was raised. The view was expressed that there was inconsistency in the availability and ability to access specific accredited training in Scotland. An appropriate qualification obtained in England would cost approximately £1,800 or above, which put many who were interested in a difficult position. It was noted that discussions were currently taking place with Scottish

Universities and Dyslexia Scotland about this issue and that a report would be brought back to a future meeting.

#### **9. Any other business.**

Following the presentation by Dr Fiona Lyon, it was agreed that early intervention and the earliest identification of dyslexia were critical and that this should be a key message from the Cross Party Group.

It was noted that the local government elections in May 2012 provided an opportunity to raise awareness of dyslexia.

David Jones explained that it was within the remit of a Cross Party Group to apply a charge of £5.00 per annum for membership. This would cover the cost of administration, refreshments and the expenses of speakers etc. It was agreed that members would pay this at the next meeting in March.

It was agreed that the focus of the next meeting would be around the Employment and the Workplace theme with an emphasis on the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy. It was suggested that an approach be made to the new Youth Employment Minister.

#### **10. Date of next meeting.**

Provisional date set for Tuesday 27th March in the Scottish Parliament at 12 noon. This was a provisional date subject to availability of venue and speakers.

**Attendees:**

Rosemary Bowe	Dyslexia Scotland Borders
Fiona Dickinson	Dyslexia Scotland
Mary Evans	Dyslexia Scotland
Linda Kerr	Dyslexia Lanarkshire
Joe Moran	Army
Scott Douglas	Office of John Lamont MSP
Stuart Lucas	Loretto School/ Parent
Cathy Magee	Dyslexia Scotland
Mairi MacIntosh	South Lanarkshire Council
Julie Trotter	Dyslexia Scotland
Susan Agnew	Dyslexia Scotland
Hamish Hunter	Lomond School
Dianne Smith	Balfron High School
Susan Rodger	Dyslexia Scotland
Linda McCaig	Dyslexia Lanarkshire/ Parent
Gill Earl	NHS Lothian
Jeff Sladden	Parent
Jan Halfpenny	Dyslexia Lanarkshire
Kathleen Clark	Formerly University of Strathclyde
Mike Gibson	Formerly HMle/ Dyslexia Scotland
Elaine Smith MSP	
David Jones	Dyslexia Lanarkshire
Margaret Mitchell MSP	
Kathryn Wane	Office of Margaret Mitchell MSP

Apologies:

Dr Catriona Collins

Dr Margaret Crombie

Moira Thomson

Bill Sadler

Duncan Cumming

Mig Coupe

Stuart McMillan MSP

Clauia Beamish MSP

Adam Hannay

Rosemary Hannah

Glenda Hannah

Colin Williamson