

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON DEAFNESS (CPGD)

Meeting Notes of the Cross-Party Group on Deafness (CPGD) held in the Scottish Parliament, Holyrood, Edinburgh in Committee Room 2 on Wednesday 20 March 2019 at 1.00pm.

PRESENT: Mark Griffin MSP (Convenor)

Colin Beattie MSP (Vice Convenor)

Janis McDonald – deafscotland (Secretariat)

Eileen Clarkson – Action on Hearing Loss Scotland

Catherine Finestone – BATOD Scotland

Philip Gerrard – Deaf Action

Enrique Canton – D.E.A.F. South Lanarkshire

Sheila Mackenzie – Scottish Sensory Centre

John Whitfield – Deafblind Scotland

Alana Harper – Deaf Links

Lorna Armstrong – Hearing Link Scotland

Alasdair O'Hara – NDCS Scotland

Ann Robertson – N.E.S.S.

Liz Kraft – RCSLT

Sheila McKenzie – Scottish Sensory Centre

Denise McClung – S.I.S.G. Ayrshire

John Mitchell – Individual member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Derek Todd (BSL Consultant, deafscotland)

Heather Duffy (Deafblind Scotland Guide Communicator)

LANGUAGE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS:

Andrew Dewey (BSL / English Interpreter)

David Milligan (BSL / English Interpreter)

Melanie Coulter (Electronic Note-taker)

Shona Glass (Electronic Note-taker)

1. WELCOME:

Mark Griffin MSP, the Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Deafness. Everyone introduced themselves for the purposes of communication support and information.

2. APOLOGIES:

Gillian Mitchell (See Hear Highland), Teri Devine (Action on Hearing Loss Scotland), Avril Hepburn (BDA Scotland), Jill Bradshaw (ATLA Scotland), Gillian Baxter (Dundee City Council), Donald Richards (deafscotland), Carol Thomson (BATOD), Suzanne Abbate (Deafblind Scotland), Rachel O'Neill (University of Edinburgh).

3. MINUTES of the LAST MEETING:

The Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 12 September 2018 were proposed as an accurate record by Mark Griffin MSP and seconded by Colin Beattie MSP.

The Minutes of the last meeting on Wednesday 5 December 2018 (not quorate meeting). Notes agreed as accurate and to be appended to these minutes.

Matters arising:

- a. Education / West Lothian Teacher for the Deaf** – no update available at this time. Alasdair O'Hara from NDCS Scotland reported they're meeting with the Council within the month and can report back. Alasdair O'Hara, NDCS Scotland raised similar concerns in other local authority areas. Mark Griffin MSP, Convenor will check for further actions.
- b. Access and Participation:** Janis McDonald, Secretariat noted discussion at December 2018 meeting was wide ranging but focussed on two key areas: access and engagement / participation, particularly in relation to non BSL users.

4. STRATEGY UPDATE:

BSL National / Authority (Local) Plans and See Hear update –

It was noted that the BSL Authority (Local) Plans was progressing, about 95% available now. Change of BSL Policy Officer at The Scottish Government also noted.

Janis McDonald, Secretariat noted there may be announcements about See Hear resources soon.

5. GUIDELINES FOR SPECIALIST SERVICE PROVISION FOR DEAF PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND: Liz Kraft, RCSLT

See attached PowerPoint Presentation slides and additional information. See also RCSLT website on the Scotland sub-page.

What RCSLT did is quite significant and pertinent for a lot of professionals working with deaf children.

Liz Kraft, RCSLT noted that BATOD Scotland has raised concerns about succession planning. It has become increasingly more difficult to make the case at local level for a specialist service for deaf children. She noted that is because we have become victims of our own success, offering such a good, successful service that people don't realise the specialists and experts behind it. We are looking at relatively small numbers on additional support need case-loads that require input.

Speech and language therapists in Scotland have a clinical network and it meets with support of NDCS Scotland. A few years ago, a paper was published again supported by around commissioning specialist speech and language therapy for deaf children. It was a heavily evidence-based document and was supported by RCSLT to put together a small working group. Based it on the paper that came out in England, we put together a paper for Scotland. We looked at the figures and statistics of deaf children and a big list of references. She would advise the teachers to do something similar and evidence base it. These children have potential to develop high level language in communication skills if they receive the right support at the right time with particular emphasis on Early Years. Early intervention is absolute key. We based it and it was underpinned by Government legislation and we had the See Hear strategy, the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and the individual National Plans. GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) Framework and Ready to Act which is a document around supporting children's services in relation to medicine.

We looked at current provision (which is very varied in different areas) and we still need to find out what areas don't have a specialist therapist. She was delighted at the last clinical network meeting that we had two therapists linking in for the first time thanks to technology from NDCS Scotland.

A lot of the information around that came from NDCS Scotland and things you already know: low attainment figures of children; the numbers we pick up in the service participants who have not acquired specialist education and not acquired appropriate communication and poor literacy skills and struggle with communication. We looked at the care pathways in the different localities and while each area is very different there was quite a lot of commonality among the care pathways. In most areas we have managed to maintain that when a deaf child is referred to speech and language service, they are fast tracked to a specialist therapist. We

don't use the term "referral" any more and use "request for assistance". What most areas now are doing is a telephone triage. Important that if a deaf child is involved the agent speaks to someone that knows about deafness. We put in pathways so the child is fast tracked to specialist team and we don't want a parent talking to someone with no understanding of deafness.

We also looked at what is a specialist service. What do we need to be specialist? We drew up a generic job specification which lists what is needed. The main thing is this is a therapist with quite a number of years of relevant experience in paediatric and Early Years work, has knowledge of speech and language therapy in hearing children and diagnosis of autism or any other disorder where a differential diagnosis may have to be made. Also, a requirement is to have undertaken is a post graduate short course. A bit of a debate in the group around the level of BSL and we decided that on the job spec that we have left that blank. Should be signing at least to Level 1. I argued strongly that in my area at least Level 2 is required. Some colleagues in more urban areas said they would just hire a BSL / English Interpreter. That has been left to individual area when employing someone to the specific level of BSL required for the post. The other things that are necessary to be a specialist are things like understanding the technology around hearing loss, having an in-depth knowledge of the multi-agency team which and who we are working. That includes audiologists, teachers of the deaf, Third Sector workers, social workers, anyone at the cochlear implant centre so whole wider team around children. Our recommendation was that specialist speech and language therapist should have a crucial and equal role within that team working with all lead professionals. Because we have the child's plan process any child with deafness should have a professional who is a lead professional: leading the child's plan process who understands about deafness. That could be the teacher of the deaf or speech and language therapist or Head Teacher, but they must have knowledge and understanding of the impact of deafness. We wrote this paper, we sent it out to consultation and went back to Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists. We are a UK professional body and we were supported by Kim in Scotland but it went back down to people in London and they rubber stamped it and it can now be found on their website.

We hope people / professionals can use the information to access help and support they need and hope other professions can follow suit and make the case for succession planning.

Questions raised covered the process being replicated by teachers and other professionals, creating guidance for authorities and parents to question current practices and achieve systematic improvements in the outcomes for young deaf people, improving GIRFEC planning to support this improvement process, working better across the third and public sectors and the role NDCS Scotland could play in supporting change.

Janis McDonald, Secretariat noted the partnership work with NDCS Scotland and supported a cooperative, co-produced approach, particularly for education, health, good mental health and citizenship.

Social work policy was noted and Mark Griffin MSP, Convenor asked for specific examples of SW policy being unhelpful.

Information on BREXIT in BSL regarding citizenship issues was raised. Alana Harper, Deaf Links indicated there was information available on the Tayside / Deaf Links Facebook page and/or to link in with her.

Alana Harper, Deaf Links asked about the future of SASLI – no one from SASLI able to attend. Hope to get update for next meeting. Philip Gerrard, Deaf Action mentioned an announcement about Landscape Review Funding to commission QMU (Queen Margaret University) to look at the future of BSL Interpreting in Scotland.

6. PAEDIATRIC AUDIOLOGY:

Unfortunately, the planned speaker was unable to attend the meeting.

7. AOCB / INFORMATION:

- a. A question was asked about laws and policy relating to privately trained assistance dogs.

ACTION: Mark Griffin MSP, Convenor will follow this up.

- b. BATOD Scotland looking for speaker for forthcoming conference on Saturday 11 May 2019. Potential to look at implications of open plan schools for deaf children. Others to link in with Catherine Finestone after the meeting.

ACTION: deafscotland to follow this up.

- c. Last week Amber Rudd MP, made an announcement around joint assessments for ESA and PIP. This will come in around same time as assessments for disability arrangement in Scotland. Alasdair O'Hara, NDCS Scotland asked Mark Griffin MSP, Convenor for thought / indication on what impact that will have the introduction of those new assessments. For example, if they are merging the assessment in England but Scotland keeping the process around ESA but moving to a new process for PIP it could be challenging.
ACTION: Mark Griffin MSP, Convenor to investigate further.
- d. Janis McDonald, Secretariat indicated the deafscotland annual conference gave substantial support to further develop campaigning for "Communication For All", working towards Scotland becoming an Inclusive Communication Nation. It was agreed to follow up next steps with Mark Griffin MSP, Convenor to get stronger political buy into the work.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday 5 June 2019 at 1.00pm in the Scottish Parliament in Committee Meeting Room 2. Date / time may change to accommodate Minister's availability.

Mark Griffin MSP, Convenor closed the meeting, thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a safe journey.