

# **CROSS PARTY GROUP ON DEAFNESS (CPGD)**

**Meeting Notes of the Cross Party Group on Deafness held in the Scottish Parliament, Holyrood, Edinburgh in Committee Room 5 on Wednesday 6 December 2017 at 1.00pm**

**PRESENT:** Mark Griffin MSP (Convenor)  
Graeme Dey MSP (Vice Convenor)  
Annie Wells MSP  
Minister Maree Todd MSP (Lead Minister for BSL)  
Janis McDonald – SCoD (Secretariat)  
Stephanie Shanks – Action on Hearing Loss Scotland  
Catherine Finestone – BATOD Scotland  
Philip Gerrard – Deaf Action  
John Whitfield – Deafblind Scotland  
Lynda Campbell – Deaf Services Highland  
Alana Harper – Deaf Links  
Alasdair O’Hara – NDCS Scotland  
Christine Johnston – Queen Margaret University  
Donald Richards – SCoD  
Meriel Sweetnam – Scottish Sensory Centre  
Denise McClung – SISG

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Carol Thomson (BATOD), Jean McAllister (BATOD), Derek Todd (SCoD), John Gill (SCoD Board Member), Kristine Ferguson (SCoD Board Member), Matthew King (SCoD Board Member), Sheila Gillies (SCoD Board Member), Deborah Walker (Scottish Government), Hilary Third (Scottish Government), Laura Meikle (Scottish Government), Deborah Walker (Scottish Government) and Marta Discepoli (Individual Guest).

## **LANGUAGE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS:**

Andrew Dewey (BSL / English Interpreter),  
Paula Marshall (BSL / English Interpreter),  
Paula McGuire (Electronic Note-taker) and Gail Richardson (Electronic Note-taker).

### **1. WELCOME:**

Mark Griffin MSP, the Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Deafness.

## 2. **APOLOGIES:**

Jenny Mara MSP, Monica Lennon MSP, Delia Henry (AoHL Scotland), Avril Hepner (BDA Scotland), Ruth Dorman (Deafblind Scotland), Annmarie Tracey (Deaf Connections), Lucy Cole (Deaf Connections), Angela Bonomy (NDCS Scotland), Graham Findlay (NESS), Ann Robertson (NESS), Carly Brownlie (SASLI) and Kimberley Curry (Signature). We have also received apologies from Adrian Carragher, our speaker for Audiology Update. Adrian works for NHS Ayrshire & Arran and seconded to The Scottish Government. He will be rescheduled to the agenda for the next meeting.

Due to unforeseen circumstances there were some last minute changes in the order of the agenda and the Maree Todd MSP the Minister for Childcare and Early Years and responsible for BSL planning will be taken before the rest of the meeting.

## 3. **BSL NATIONAL PLAN:**

Minister Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Childcare and Early years explained she is lead Minister for BSL. The Minister made it clear her responsibilities and comments relate to British Sign Language (BSL) rather than deaf people and deafness in general. Ministerial colleagues Maureen Watt MSP and Jeane Freeman OBE, MSP, have responsibilities around deafness – Ms Watt in relation to the See Hear Strategy and Ms Freeman in relation to equality for all people. The Minister explained that she has a close interest in BSL as her children go to Dingwall Academy which offers BSL as a language option to their students. The academy recognises that deaf students need to study their own language in the same way English speaking students do theirs. The Minister is delighted to be asked to take on a role in relation to BSL and believes we should recognise the cultural and linguistic importance of language. She comes from a part of the world where a lot of people's first language is Gaelic. She stated that the first BSL National Plan and the Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work, visit **and learn**. She pointed out that we need to add 'learn' to the formal statement. This means that Deaf and Deafblind BSL users are fully involved in daily public life, as active healthy citizens. The BSL National

Plan sets out 10 long term goals, covering education, culture and the arts, justice, democracy and so on. The plan covers 6 years but we are ambitious and impatient for change. The plan sets out 70 actions for the next 3 years. In 2020 a report will be published and set out the next goals. Future plans will be published every 6 years. The plan covers all public bodies that are answerable to the Scottish Government. Other public bodies included local authorities, NHS Boards and universities will have to publish their own plans next year. (please contact Derek Todd at SCoD for further information – [derek@scod.org.uk](mailto:derek@scod.org.uk) ).

#### **4. EDUCATION ATTAINMENT UPDATE:**

Laura Meikle, Scottish Government spoke to this item with a presentation covering the inquiry into Attainment of sensory impaired pupils from last Parliamentary session – papers were given out. Please see attached a copy of the PowerPoint Presentation and information.

Laura discussed where her unit and Government are on their journey following those recommendations and what their next steps are on their response to those.

The education committee published the report in September 2015 and had gathered a lot of evidence. They made 17 recommendations across several themes. Those 7 themes are limitations of attainment data, models of educational provision, number of qualified teachers and qualifications of teachers, technology and access to the curriculum, classroom environment and leaver destinations. They tie in with learning being part of the aspirations for all young people in Scotland as mentioned by the Minister previously. It gets in to the strands of what needs to be done enable all children and young people to reach their full potential.

Responding to the recommendations, key strands are either under way or completed, but 3 areas need more development. The work on data collection falls within the remit of the advisory group for additional support for learning. The data which the committee referred to in terms of sensory impairment is part of that broader issue. A vast amount of information is collected in the pupil census but there are concerns that the information collected varies between authorities. Information is currently collated for pupils with a hearing impairment, a visual impairment and those who are Deafblind. This is linked to data about leaver destinations and attendance, etc., to establish outcome information and this

data will be improved through the guidance produced. There is a recommendation about habilitation training the effect of which may change responsibility for delivery of habilitation training and needs being careful consideration. That work has just begun and SG will work with Education Scotland to bring together stakeholders to consider what is needed for the delivery of habilitation training going forward. The Committee recommend that education authorities provide it. There needs to be a more in depth understanding of the different ways habilitation training is used to support learning and life skills. For example, is it in transition, after a child leaves school and goes in to the next steps, or is it learning for life and should happen at a much earlier stage? It is not as straightforward as it looks on the surface so it will take time to ensure it is carried out carefully. Laura touched on the survey for teacher numbers and qualifications. There is work related to this in terms of the BSL action plan. Laura's team has commitments to deliver part of the BSL National Plan.

There was some sensitive discussions regarding terminology and implications for "Teachers of the Deaf", Teachers for the Deaf, etc. This will be followed up in future discussions / meeting(s) by Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD). It was noted that Teacher of the Deaf is currently a specific and challenging qualification that teachers can get. (See attached Documents)

#### **5. APPROVAL of PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Approved: proposed by Mark Griffin, seconded by Graeme Dey MSP and Alana Harper (Deaf Links)

#### **6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS:**

Suggestions put forward: 1.) sportscotland and their plans around BSL and changes for the future – this would include coaching, funding, etc. 2.) Prevention – 2 aspects, the first regarding preventable deafness and likely links with technology including mobile phones, earphones, bluetooth gadgets and transmitters; the second being the prevention of social isolation and; 3.) Mental Health.

The secretariat would discuss with other groups around timing and agenda for possible joint meetings over the course of the next two years.

If anyone has another suggestion, please contact Janis McDonald (Secretariat) [admin@scod.org.uk](mailto:admin@scod.org.uk) and/or Mark Griffin MSP [Mark.Griffin.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:Mark.Griffin.msp@parliament.scot).

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

Wednesday 14 March 2018 at 1.00pm in the Scottish Parliament.

- 8.** Janis McDonald **closed the meeting** for Mark Griffin MSP as he had to return to the chamber, thanking everyone for coming and wished everyone a lovely Christmas and wonderful New Year, all the best for 2018, and hoped it would be a great year for everyone.

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