

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON DEAFNESS (CPGD)

Meeting Notes of the Cross Party Group on Deafness held on Wednesday 28 October 2020 by Zoom online at 1.30pm.

DRAFT

PRESENT: Mark Griffin MSP (Convenor)

Colin Beattie MSP (Vice Convenor)

Derek Todd – (Secretariat support) deafscotland

Janis McDonald (from 1.35pm) – (Secretariat – deafscotland)

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

Teri Devine – Action on Hearing Loss Scotland

Lorna Armstrong – Hearing Link Scotland

John Whitfield – Deafblind Scotland

Donald Richards – COMMTACS Ltd

Breish Rowe – Deaf Action

Jean McAllister – BATOD Scotland

John Mitchell – Individual Member

Gillian Mitchell – Sight Action / NHS Highland Deaf Services

Sian Woolner – Dumfries & Galloway Hard of Hearing Group

Jill Bradshaw – ATLA Scotland

Sheila Mackenzie – Scottish Sensory Centre

Gillian Baxter – EIS / Dundee City Council

Carol Thomson – BATOD Scotland

Sally Shaw – Ideas for Ears

Rachel O’Neil – University of Edinburgh

Graham Findlay – N.E.S.S.

Denise McClung – S.I.S.G. Ayrshire

Alasdair O’Hara – NDCS Scotland (from 1.40pm)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Rae Cahill (Action on Hearing Loss Scotland)

LANGUAGE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS:

Andrew Dewey (BSL / English Interpreter)

Helen Dunipace (BSL / English Interpreter)

Gail Richardson (Electronic Note-taker)

Melanie Coulter (Electronic Note-taker)

1. WELCOME:

Mark Griffin MSP, the Convenor welcomed everyone to the general Meeting. As it continued from the AGM there was no need to cover introductions.

2. APOLOGIES:

Annabelle Ewing MSP; Alison Johnstone MSP; Cathie Finestone (BATOD Scotland); Isabella Goldie (Deafblind Scotland); Amanda Wilson (NHS Highland Deaf Services); Kim Hartley-Kean (RCSLT); Jacquie Winning (FVSC); Philip Gerrard (Deaf Action); Maureen Greig (SASLI); Jonathan Reid (The ALLIANCE); Alana Harper (Deaf Links); Rachel Mapson (QMU).

3. MINUTES of the LAST MEETING:

3.(i) The Minutes of the previous meeting (Wednesday 04 March 2020) was proposed by Colin Beattie MSP and seconded by Mark Griffin MSP.

3.(ii) Matters Arising:

Education

A number of items were noted under this heading whilst Alasdair O'Hara was detained at another meeting. BATOD remain concerned about the qualifications for teachers of deaf children (particularly BSL qualifications), resources for specialist teachers and funds to train new specialist teachers and Rachel O'Neill noted its concerns. She also noted discord between civil servants and others about levels approved for specialist teachers and steps taken to encourage more BSL users to gain teacher qualifications. It also notes the need to train more BSL tutors and teachers to introduce BSL to classes. Teachers still have to pay for self-development/BSL classes and many struggles to maintain proficiency.

Gillian Baxter noted that Inclusive Communication is specifically noted in the Programme for Government and has a meeting with Janis McDonald to arrange on the matter.

Jill Bradshaw noted Lip-reading concerns as did John Mitchell, Denise McClung and others. We need more tutors, more classes and better awareness of its impact.

Teri Devine noted that BSL level three should be the minimum for teachers of the Deaf and many have not achieved that yet. Breish Rowe echoed the discussion topics linking them to BSL and rights based planning.

It was noted that NDCS Scotland were concerned about our deaf children, the impact of the pandemic and ongoing challenges for deaf children. Sally Shaw informed of challenges with acoustics and building standards as well as access to equipment.

Mark suggested we revisit the discussions when looking at COVID-19 recovery and manifesto proprieties.

ACTION:

To keep sight of the various issues under the broad heading of education including: BSL qualifications for specialist teachers of deaf children and other communication access issues.

Deaflympics

Breish Rowe spoke for Deaf Action. She repeated Philip Gerrard's apologies and informed the group that the Coronavirus pandemic had cut across some of the Deaflympic planning. She noted there were some issues with the Deaflympics Board and that it was challenging to plan because of the pandemic but urged people to look longer term. Deaf Action proposed that Scotland still considered acting as host in 2029.

Enrique raised issues about sports funding and gave examples regarding Jodo.

ACTION:

deafscotland to follow up again with Events Scotland and also follow up with Deaf Action for joint collaboration approach. Deaf Action is meeting with Mark Griffin MSP in the coming week. Mark undertook to update the group at the next meeting.

4. NEW MEMBERS:

Queen Margaret University has asked to join the group. The request was unanimously agreed.

5. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY DISCUSSION:

Led by Enrique Canton, D.E.A.F. South Lanarkshire

Enrique spoke to the short paper he had prepared from the views of people affected by deafness in South Lanarkshire. The paper was circulated prior to the meeting and is attached.

The Scottish Government could not be represented as relevant officers were engaged in pandemic responses and an internal reorganisation is underway.

Enrique explained that the research was local and informed wholly by those with lived experience of deafness. Clearly there is difficulty accessing appropriate equipment in a flexible way. There is no national system or minimum standards and little in the way of access to training and development to ensure good knowledge of the various options for equipment and how equipment integrates with other conditions people may be managing as well as their deafness. Technology has come a long way yet equipment supplied is not very modern.

The research showed that mostly the supplies are not reviewed or altered due to customer feedback loops or even complaints. It seems people give up quite quickly.

Graham Findlay from NESS confirmed that it covers four local authority areas and each has its own system and processes. It would seem the self-directed support budgets may be used for specific requests but access is hard, systems challenging to navigate and many do not know about it.

Sally Shaw commented on the gap between equipment available and access to it. She felt that equipment was continually improving and the pandemic had pushed further development quite quickly. Whilst not where it needs to be the potential for equipment and the increased range of technical solutions was remarkable. The human knowledge and application needed to match it. Breish Rowe reinforced the need to be open and flexible. A lot needed to be done to ensure that communication, including language was owned by everyone as in the social model the problems were between parties (not the reliance on individual barriers). Everyone needed to invest in barriers and solutions too.

John Mitchell raised specific issues of informed consent and assistance through technology in legal and medical settings.

Alasdair O'Hara noted the Adult Care review suggesting deafscotland respond with Enrique's information and NDCS report: Deaf Works Everywhere through their work with The ALLIANCE. He also noted specific issues about technology for learning in schools and it being included in packages for transitions to colleges, universities and employment.

Enrique and Denise McClung stated that public sector expectations were too low, processes lengthy and tedious and there is a lack of opportunity to try and test equipment to see how it suits.

John Mitchell noted changes in legislation about fire and emergency home alarms changing. The introduction has been deferred and there is little about adjustments for those who are deaf.

ACTION:

Mark Griffin summarised and asked people to write / email or send BSL film clip to Janis at deafscotland about manifesto priorities, pandemic issues or next stage recovery issues. He noted deafscotland members meeting on Wednesday 11 November 2020 also looking at these matters.

The Convenor introduced the topic. He asked that it be the substantive item on the next agenda. Forward to the continued work of the committee however the pandemic will have an impact on its achievements and may affect issues for a Manifesto.

6. AOCB:

The meeting ran out of time for AOCB.

It was agreed that the Manifesto / Coronavirus Discussion would be the main item on the next agenda for the next meeting to be held **on Wednesday 02 December 2020 at 1.00pm via Zoom online.**