

**Minutes of the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Dyslexia
held in the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday 1st March 2017.**

1. **Present:** Rosemary Bowe, Emma Martins, Julie Ross, Julia Trotter, Aileen Orr, Gillian Evans, Nita Redfearn, Diane Smith, Joe Moran, Oliver Mundell MSP, Hazel McPake, Rosemary Burke, Fran Ranaldi, Scott Winchester, Owen Ferry, Dinah Aitken, Katie Carmichael, Helen Fleming, Dean Smith, Liz Tangney, Robert Malcolm, Martin Allan, David Ward, Maureen Brown, Stewart Archibald, Jacqueline Cavanagh, Robert Heasley, Hamish Hunter, Ellen Doherty, Lynn Dobbie, Martin Davies, David Jones, Margaret Mitchell MSP, Tom Arthur MSP, MO Brown
2. **Apologies:** Donald Cameron MSP, Elaine Smith MSP, Clare Haughey MSP, Mike Gibson, Clare Slipper, Margaret Crombie, Jenni Guise, Cathy Magee, Jay Kirkland, Margaret Crankshaw
3. **Minutes of last meeting:**
Minutes approved by Rosemary Bowe, Seconded by Stuart Lucas
4. **Business arising from last meeting**
There was no business arising from the previous minutes.
5. **General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS)**
Presentation by Ellen Doherty, Director of Education, Registration and Professional Learning

The focus of the presentation was on:

- What is the role of the General Teaching Council Scotland?
- In what ways does and can the GTCS support the recommendations of the Making Sense Report?

Ellen informed the members of the purpose of the GTCS and the governance structure within which it operates. She highlighted the wide range of statutory functions and initiatives delivered including:

- Maintaining a register of teachers in Scotland
- Setting the professional standards expected of all teachers

- Accrediting programmes leading to the award of GTCS Standards, including Initial Teacher Education programmes at Scottish Universities
- Providing public protection and assuring the high quality of the teaching profession by investigating and adjudicating on the Fitness to Teach of registrants through robust and fair regulation processes
- Supporting the operation of the Teacher Induction Scheme
- Operating and promoting the Professional Recognition initiative which supports expertise and experience and which accredits professional learning.
- Operating and maintaining the Student Placement Scheme

Ellen highlight that in relation to the Making Sense Report, the GTCS has contributed to the work of the Scottish Government Working Group established to progress the recommendations within the report in particular around:

- Initial teacher training
- Standards and self- evaluation
- Professional Recognition in support of Career Long Learning opportunities including Additional Support Needs

6. Open Discussion

The Chair thanked Ellen for her presentation and asked members if they had any comments or questions.

There followed discussion about the inconsistencies in support and expertise within and across local authorities in relation to dyslexia. Ellen clarified the role of the GTCS in relation to local authorities and that the GTCS focus was on individual teachers and not on local authorities individually or collectively. She also highlighted that all teachers within independent schools required to be registered.

Concerns were expressed about the reduction in school inspections and that this could mean poor or bad practice as well as good practice were not being identified or addressed.

Members acknowledged that there had been an improvement at the initial teacher training stage around dyslexia but there was a danger this was not carried forward into practice because there was not the level of understanding or knowledge within many schools and that this highlighted a need for the GTCS to consider if all teachers were gaining that knowledge through appropriate professional updates.

The issue of the communication and interpersonal skills of school management and teachers when engaging with parents was referenced (given it was highlighted in the Making Sense Report) with the view that parents were not being treated with respect or their views valued and recognised.

The issue of challenging the professional competences of individual teachers was raised with examples given of complaints being made to the GTCS about the fact that some teachers are being asked to undertake assessments for dyslexia without any training and that this places individual teachers in a vulnerable position if legally challenged. Examples were given of changes within local authority areas whereby educational psychologists were no longer providing the same level of support and this was placing additional support needs staff in the position they were reluctant to commit to identifications and that generic terms such as 'dyslexic tendencies' were being used.

The suggestion was made that the GTCS should develop a helpline for teachers who find themselves in positions where they could place themselves at risk in terms of professional competences to practice.

A number of further comments were made in relation to the financial reductions being made across Scottish local authorities and the impact on professional learning opportunities. It was noted that there had been an increase in attendance by teachers at some Dyslexia Scotland branch events as they were seeking to develop their knowledge about dyslexia because of a lack of support or opportunity through their school or authority.

Ellen acknowledged the comments made by members and agreed to further consider the aspects which fell within the remit of the GTCS and to raise them at the Scottish Government/Education Scotland Working Group on Dyslexia.

7. Any other business

It was noted that the focus of the last meetings of the Cross Party Group had been on young people and that the other priority areas of Health, Behaviours and Employment/ Training had not been discussed for some time. The Group acknowledged that because of the importance and significance of the Making Sense Report, this had been the case. It was therefore suggested that the issue of Dyslexia and Employment could be the focus of the next meeting. This would include a discussion adult assessments. It was agreed that the next meeting would be devoted to this issue.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting to take place take in May 2017. Exact date to be confirmed.