

Minutes of the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Dyslexia held in the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday 2nd October 2019.

1. Present:

Margaret Mitchell MSP, Maurice Corry MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP,

Martin Davies, Jean Campbell, Drew Murray, Stuart Lucas, Lynn Dobbie, Jennie Guise, Hamish Hunter, Gail Harkins, Mary Evans, Claire Wilson, Joe Moran, Catherine Trotter, Julia Trotter, Vivien Clarke, Margaret Crombie, Lily Shaw, Helen Fleming,

2. Apologies: Cathy Mcgee, Susie Agnew, Diane Smith

3. Minutes of last meeting:

The minutes were approved by Stuart Lucas, Seconded by Margaret Crombie.

4. Business arising from last meeting

It was noted that at the May meeting it had been suggested that the Parliament be approached to host a reception during Dyslexia National Awareness Week in November. The chair had explored the possibility but that given the pressures of parliamentary business, including Brexit, it was not possible to arrange an event. The Chair agreed to invite a group of Dyslexia Scotland Young Ambassadors to the Parliament during Dyslexia Awareness Week.

5. Presentation:

James Morgan, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

James Morgan explained the role of the SQA including how it: devises, develops and validates qualifications; reviews qualifications to ensure they are up to date; arranges for, assists in and carries out the assessment of people taking SQA qualifications; quality assures education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications and issues certificates to candidates.

Given the specific interest of the CPG, James explained the assessment arrangements for pupils and students with additional support needs and the SQA's role in making reasonable adjustments in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

He gave an overview of the SQA's responsibilities with regards to maintaining the credibility of all awards; operating effective quality assurance procedures for assessment arrangements and providing guidance to centres.

James highlighted the key principles of assessment arrangements including that arrangements should be tailored to meet particular needs of candidates and subjects assessment demands and that arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's usual way of learning and producing work.

The School's responsibilities, in terms of the procedures to support candidates, were also explained including: identifying those candidates who need assessment arrangements; ensuring the most appropriate arrangements are requested to meet the candidate's needs; and ensuring centres have effective internal quality assurance systems in place.

The presentation concluded with information about data collection and that the SQA would publish in Spring 2020 data for 2018 and 2019 Assessment Arrangement data on the number of candidates requesting arrangements, number of requests and a breakdown of assessment arrangements requested. The CPG asked if this would include data for each local authority

It was noted that 33% of requests cited dyslexia as the main reason for the request.

6. Open Discussion

A wide ranging discussion followed the presentation raising issues in relation to:

- The impact of the introduction of Literacy Units within local authorities;
- Continuing difficulties experienced in some local authority areas of securing appropriate assessment arrangements;
- The ability for candidates to have enough experience and practice with technologies/ support prior to examines (This was in response to the key principle arrangements in the presentation that the assessment arrangement should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's usual way of learning and producing work);
- Concern was raised about the low numbers of candidates at secondary schools who were being identified as dyslexic by schools in the Schools Survey returns and whether the SQA were concerned that there was an issue in relation to the schools responsibilities as outlined in the presentation.

The point was raised that the data from the 2013 Schools Survey Report stated that, an average of only 3.72% of pupils in Scottish secondary schools had been identified as dyslexic with the highest being 8.8% and the lowest 0.6%. Although the 2018 comparative figures showed a slight increase to an average of 5.6% the gap had widened with the highest local authority identifying 11.8% of pupils and the lowest at 1.6% (In this particular local authority the figures stated that 327 pupils had been identified from a school population of over 20,600).

Concerns were expressed that given 'dyslexia' was cited by schools to the SQA as the reason for Assessment Arrangement requests, the apparent large numbers of pupils not being identified, through the schools survey and therefore not having requests made on their behalf for support meant that local authorities were not meeting their

responsibilities and therefore did this raise a quality assurance issue for the SQA.

7. Any other business

There was no further business

8. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 15th January 2020