

Minutes of the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Dyslexia held in the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday 11th March 2020.

1. Present:

Margaret Mitchell MSP, Tom Mason MSP, Maurice Corry MSP, Stewart McMillan MSP

David Jones, Gillian Evans, Jennie Guise, Cathy Mcgee, Joe Moran, Owen Ferry, Gilda Westermann, Paul Nisbet, Hamish Hunter, Stuart Lucas, David Ward, Gemma Robertson, Alison Smith, Mags Glasgow, Vivien Clark, Jeremy Law, Jacqueline Turnbull, Heather Stanes, Tessa Coupar, Anne Warden, Mike Gibson, Janene Brodie, Kate McKechnie, Lynn Dobbie, Michael Sinclair, Margaret Crombie

2. Minutes of last meeting:

The minutes were approved by Cathy Mcgee and seconded by Margaret Crombie

3. Business arising from last meeting

Martin Davies had requested an amendment to the minute regarding his presentation. This was approved and adopted.

4. Presentation: Fran Ranaldi, Education Scotland Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice: Making Sense Programme Final Report, January 2020

The presentation focused on the final report by the Making Sense of Dyslexia Working Group established by the Scottish Government and Education Scotland to take forward the recommendations of the Making Sense: Education for Children and Young People with Dyslexia in Scotland Report 2014.

The presentation followed the key recommendations and provided information and examples of the activities and actions taken around the themes of:

Information and guidance

Professional learning

Initial teacher education

Inclusive practice

Data

The Working Group had adopted a collaborative approach in response to the issues raised in the original report and agreed a focus of supporting practitioners, schools and local authorities to improve support for dyslexic learners within an inclusion school community through a range of activities including:

- Engagement with learners, students, practitioners, local authorities, parents and carers;
- The development and publication of guidance and information;
- Publication of collaboratively developed free professional learning resources – set within a Scottish context; and
- Support to learners, Initial Teacher Education (ITE), Early Learning Centres (ELC), schools, local authorities and parent/carer groups

Activities against each theme included:

Information and guidance – Further development of the toolkit, publications, support networks and events

Professional learning - Amendments to the Dyslexia toolkit, Route Map, free online modules, Masterclasses, conferences, Inset sessions and a National Improvement Hub, GTCS Professional Recognition Pilot (supporting the recognition of specialist knowledge and understanding of Scottish teachers) and a free Dyslexia and inclusive education pack for all probationer teachers.

Initial Teacher Education – Modules, events and publications

Inclusive practice – Development of a Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice Learning Resource in partnership with schools and practitioners to improve support for dyslexic learners.

Data – The issue of the data collected and published on the identification of pupils with dyslexia was also addressed by the Working Group with the recognition of the complexities of gathering meaningful information specifically around dyslexia.

Extensive discussions were held with the Scottish Qualifications Authority and representatives from local authorities to explore how information gathering and publication could be improved with a commitment to continue to explore how to achieve better processes.

It was noted that practices developed through this work was now influencing other approaches to inclusive practice across Education Scotland.

Next Steps and Stakeholders

The report stressed the importance and responsibilities of a range of stakeholders, including local authorities to use the Dyslexia Toolkit and to promote and maximise the use of the range of dyslexia learning resources developed through the programme.

Key issues requiring further exploration included:

- Continued discussions/ developments to facilitate effective and equitable post school transition;
- Migrating the Professional Recognition Pilot Scheme to an accredited programme;
- The ongoing maintenance and updating of the Dyslexia Toolkit
- Working with Dyslexia Scotland to support the Regional Improvement Collaboratives through Professional Learning events in 2020/21

5. Open Discussion

The Cross Party Group acknowledged the significant work that had been undertaken in the development and delivery of the Programme especially in relation to support for teachers through new professional learning and recognition opportunities.

A number of questions were asked in relation to the resources needed at both local and national levels to maintain the momentum from the report, and to consistently rollout the good practice which had been developed across all local authorities.

The Cross Party Group expressed continued concerns regarding the accuracy of the data collected from local authorities and the evidence from the 2018 schools survey that although the number of secondary school pupils being identified by schools had increased since the last report in 2013, the percentage of pupils remains significantly underestimated with the gap between local authorities with the highest number of identified pupils and the lowest level wider than in 2013.

6. Date of next meeting: to be confirmed