

The Scottish Parliament

CROSS PARTY GROUP ON DEAFNESS

*Meeting Notes of the Cross Party Group on Deafness
held in the Scottish Parliament, Holyrood, Edinburgh
on Wednesday 11th June 2014 at 1.15 pm*

PRESENT: Jenny Marra MSP (Convenor)
Mark Griffin MSP
Aidan McCorry (Deaf Action)
Heather Gray (NDCS)
Graham Duff (BDA Scotland)
Bert Smale (Individual member)
Alison McNair (RCSLT)
Carol Thomson (BATOD)
Drena O'Malley (Deafblind Scotland)
Tricia Mill (attending as proxy for Deaf Links)
Elizabeth Adam (Tayside Deaf Forum)
Delia Henry (AoHL)
Carly Brownlie (SASLI)
Rachel O'Neill (University of Edinburgh)
Alan Dalziel (AoHL)
Rebecca Norton (Hearing Link)
John Whitfield (Deafblind Scotland)
Mandy Reid (SCoD)
Janis McDonald (SCoD & CPGD Secretariat)

Also in attendance: Frances (Dennis Robertson's Assistant), Joanna Hardy (Non Governmental Bill Unit), Andrew Dewey, Eddie Foley (BSL/English Interpreters) and Leah Thom (Guide/Communicator).

CPGD/414 **WELCOME REMARKS:** The Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

CPGD/415 **APOLOGIES:** Apologies for non-attendance had been received from Dennis Robertson MSP, Annabelle Ewing MSP, Janis Sugden (SSC), Donald Richards (Donaldson's), John Denerley (Deaf Connections), Alana Trusty (Deaf Links) and Graham Findlay (NESS) .

CPGD/416 **MEETING NOTES FROM 12th MARCH 2014:** proposed – Bert Smale; seconded – Mark Griffin MSP. Accepted as an accurate record.

CPGD/417 **MATTERS ARISING:**

a. DWP answers to questions raised at the March meeting: Jenny Marra will follow this up.

b. ATLA: The letter from Annabelle Ewing MSP. As Annabelle has put in her apologies, this item will be held over to the next meeting. A letter

was received from ATLA stating their position on membership of the group (they are looking for a new rep and want to retain their membership) and thanking Bert Smale for all his work over the years.

c. **Teachers of the Deaf PQs**: deferred to the next meeting.

CPGD/418 **BSL BILL UPDATE**: Mark Griffin MSP and Joanna Hardy from the Non Governmental Bills Unit (NGBU) gave an update on the BSL (Scotland) Bill. The Bill and its accompanying guidance are still being checked for technical accuracy and legality. The timetable for lodging the Bill has slipped a bit due to this but Mark hopes that the Bill will be lodged after the second summer recess – in late September.

There have been some changes made to the content of the Bill. The list of public bodies that will be asked to put together language plans has grown to 81 organisations, including the health boards, councils, colleges, universities, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body, The Scottish Court Service, the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the Scottish Ambulance Service. There are several other public bodies that may be added to the list, for example, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Scottish Prison Service, Scottish Tribunal Service and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. If anyone has any other public body that they think should be included, please contact Mark Griffin directly. The bill also now includes a duty on the Minister to add any further public bodies as and when the need arises.

The main body of the bill is to raise awareness of BSL, increase opportunities to learn BSL (to grow the language) and to increase the numbers of BSL Interpreters. Rachel O'Neill asked that the SQA be included in the list as they will be involved in the awarding of BSL qualifications. The Voluntary/Third Sector is not included in the provision of language plans as there are financial implications to producing language plans.

It will not be possible to see the Bill at the August meeting as it will only be available as a paper version. The translation will not have been completed by then. Mark Griffin suggested that the sub group be convened in August to read the Bill. He will contact people with a date.

CPGD/419 **NDCS – CLOSE THE GAP REPORT**: Heather Gray spoke to this item. NDCS commissioned this piece of work as there is a lack of understanding about the post-school experiences of deaf young people and to bring together scattered data and information about the experiences of deaf young people.

The research involved a comparative secondary analysis of official statistics in wide number of areas relating to deaf young people; and interviews with 30 deaf young people aged 18 – 24 years. There are a

number of gaps in post-school outcomes for deaf young people in Scotland today:

Academic attainment –

Deaf school leavers who received support for learning:

- Were more likely to leave school with no qualifications (8.9% v 1%)
- Were more likely to leave school at standard grade level (14.4% v 7.5%)
- Less likely to obtain Highers or Advanced Highers (36.4% v 60.2%)

Access to post-16 destination and Employability –

- Deaf school leavers are less likely to enter HE (26% v 39%)
- More likely to enter FE –this is positive, yet research raised concerns about consistency of support in FE settings.
- Less likely to gain employment upon leaving school (15.2% v 24.6%).

What factors contribute to these outcomes?

- Consistency of support at school and post-school destinations and lack of accessible information and advocacy
- The lack of transitional planning for deaf young people
- Emotional health and wellbeing – lack of confidence & impact of social isolation
- Socio-economic status – a double disadvantage for deaf young people.

Several things need to happen at a national and a local level. Nationally, the Scottish Government has recognised and formally committed to closing the gap for deaf young people. A review will be conducted by Education Scotland into education provision for deaf learners in Scotland. And the Scottish Government will take steps to improve incomplete data sets – this is included in the See Hear Strategy. Legislation and accompanying guidance needs to be used to improve transitional practices for deaf young people.

NDCS is committed to supporting local authorities to strengthen how they support and prepare deaf young people to move on from school. The NDCS Statement of Intent will be used in partnership with councils to promote positive emotional health and wellbeing, support effective transitional planning and to facilitate effective partnership working

through local transition forums. It is being piloted in Ayrshire with the local councils.

The report was launched in the Parliament on 30th April. The young people involved got a chance to speak directly to the Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, Alasdair Allan, and a number of other MSPs. Fraser Gunn, one young person, was able to speak to the Minister about his experience of the government's apprenticeship scheme and what improvements would make it easier for other deaf young people to take up apprenticeships.

NDCS has met with a number of MSPs over the spring party conferences, including Cabinet Secretary for Education Mike Russell. A number of MSPs have written to the Minister supporting NDCS' calls for action to the Close the Gap for deaf children. NDCS has met with Education Scotland and have been encouraged by their positive commitment to work in partnership with them. And they have a meeting with the Minister for Learning in early August to discuss next steps.

Heather will circulate copies of the DVD that NDCS has made on the Close the Gap report and can send out hard copies of the report.

Jenny reported that the report launch was a superb event and that she was able to give one young person information and a contact in Standard Life that could lead to employment. Rachel O'Neill backed up what was in the report and added that one of the reasons for the gap is that deaf children do not have age appropriate language skill at the age of 5 and that this should be part of the review. Jenny asked about what monitoring and evaluation is built in to the process. Heather explained that this is very much part of the process and the Statement of Intent and that NDCS will work with the local authorities to build capacity in the local Transitions Forums. Heather and Delia are to meet to look at sharing good practice.

Rachel mentioned the BRITE/Education Scotland conference for colleges and universities that took place earlier this year. The main purpose of the conference was to look at how deaf students should be supported throughout their courses and what can be put in place to ensure good practice throughout Scotland.

Jenny and Mark agreed that PQs could be submitted to check on progress made by the government.

CPGD/420 AOCB:

a) Access to Work: Drena O'Malley raised the issue of Deaf and Deafblind people and cuts to their Access to Work – the 30-hour ruling. This rule has been in place for a number of years but has not been implemented until recently. There have been mixed messages coming from Access to Work staff – some people have been told that they will have to employ an interpreter on a full-time basis as this will be

cheaper than having language/communication support as and when required. There seems to be a lack of understanding in the DWP on what the language/communication support needs of deaf people are and what is good practice, according to need. There is also a lack of understanding about how interpreters work and what the rate of pay should be. Access to Work does not always pay for travel, for example, and pays different rates per hour for interpreter time.

Carly Brownlie told the meeting that SASLI are writing to MSPs and MPs and encouraging their members to do the same using a template letter. Jenny suggested that since this is a reserved matter that only MPs should get the letter and that it will get more notice if it is sent by email as well. Tricia Mill gave an employer example – Access to Work used to pay for language/communication support for interviews but this has been withdrawn and now potential employers are being asked to pay for this. The DWP has told her that there is no point in putting in written complaints as there is such a backlog and that they would rather speak to the people involved. Carly told the meeting that there is a concern among Deaf people that they will be turned down for promotion if they cannot access enough Access to Work funds. Tricia pointed out that delays in being assessed for Access to Work is becoming a health and safety issue in some workplaces as deaf people cannot access the specialist equipment needed to keep them safe – vibrating fire alarms for example.

Drena told the meeting that Access to Work staff are being made redundant and that calls are being taken at non DWP call centres not directly by Access to Work staff. Delia Henry told the meeting about the AoHL/UKCoD campaign on a UK level and that the issue has been raised with Mike Penning, the Minister for Disabled People.

Jenny told the meeting that she and Janis would meet and put together a letter on the issues from the Cross Party Group.

b) Captioning in theatres, cinemas and on TV: Bert Smale raised the issue of the lack of subtitles/captioning in theatres and at the cinema, and the fact that when performances/films are subtitled/captioned, this is often at times when deaf people cannot attend or are only shown once or twice. Where there is little attendance, theatres are withdrawing the service since they can show there is no demand. This is not necessarily the full picture as Deaf people who work cannot go to the cinema for a weekday showing at 1.00pm. Jenny is aware of the issue as deaf young people in Dundee have raised the issue – films they want to see are on at 9.00am on a Saturday morning when they do not want to go to the cinema. Delia Henry told the meeting about the AoHL campaign on increasing the number of hearing loops available at Scottish visitor attractions. Rebecca Norton told the meeting that there is a cinema in Gateshead that uses an integrated captioning system – this is the only cinema in the UK with this system.

Jenny and Janis to look at the possibility of inviting cinema chain managers to a future Cross Party Group meeting.

Another issue that Bert Smale raised is whether or not the opening ceremony at the Commonwealth Games will be captioned. Jenny said she would raise the matter with Games organisers.

CPGD/421 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING: The meeting in September cannot take place as the Parliament will be in the second summer recess – purdah for the referendum. It was decided that Jenny would try to book a room for August. The time and date will be circulated as soon as possible.

Jenny thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.