

**Motion S4M-06724: Elaine Smith**, Coatbridge and Chryston, Scottish Labour, Date Lodged: 23/05/2013

**Celebrating Singing Success in Coatbridge**

That the Parliament congratulates the singer, Catherine Doyle from Coatbridge, on defeating over 9,000 hopefuls to reach the final 15 of TeenStar, a competition searching for Britain's best musical talent; notes that the 12-year-old singer has had hearing problems from a young age and remains partially deaf; understands that Catherine has a passion for singing and dancing and has taken part in shows and pantomimes in venues such as the Kings Theatre and the SECC in Glasgow; applauds Catherine's achievements, and wishes her every success in the final of the competition.

Supported by: Nigel Don, Stuart McMillan, Stewart Stevenson, Jim Hume, Anne McTaggart, John Wilson, Bill Kidd, Kevin Stewart, Margaret McCulloch, Jackie Baillie, Jean Urquhart, Jamie Hepburn, Richard Lyle, Mike MacKenzie, Gil Paterson, Annabelle Ewing, Siobhan McMahon, Colin Beattie, Sandra White, Richard Simpson, Maureen Watt

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**Question S4W-14779: Dennis Robertson, Aberdeenshire West, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 09/05/2013**

To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, further to the answer to question S4W-13992 by Linda Fabiani on 8 May 2013 (see below), what provisions are put in place for BSL and other interpretation for formal business outwith the parliamentary complex and Edinburgh.

Answered by **David Stewart** (22/05/2013):

When members of the public book tickets to observe a formal committee meeting held outwith the Parliamentary complex and Edinburgh, they are asked whether they have any specific access requirements. Similarly, when witnesses are invited to give evidence to a committee, they are asked to contact the clerks to discuss any requirements they might have whether in relation to accessing the venue or participating in proceedings. If people request BSL or other interpretation provisions, we will accommodate any such requests where possible. If a committee holds an informal event where people are asked to book in advance to attend, they will also be asked if they have any specific requirements.

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**Question S4O-02088: David Torrance, Kirkcaldy, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 01/05/2013**

To ask the Scottish Government what action the NHS is taking to improve its services for users of British Sign Language.

Current Status: Taken in the Chamber on 08/05/2013:

**British Sign Language (National Health Service)**

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):

14. To ask the Scottish Government what action the NHS is taking to improve its services for users of British Sign Language. (S4O-02088)

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): The equality team in NHS Health Scotland is working to strengthen equality of access for all in NHS Scotland through its health inequalities impact assessment, which will include those who use British Sign Language. In addition, we are supporting NHS 24 to provide an in-house centralised resource of BSL interpreters for NHS Scotland by funding four places on the Heriot-Watt University BSL undergraduate degree for four years.

David Torrance: Although the interpreter service that NHS Fife uses for the deaf community is excellent, does the minister agree that improving the co-ordination of services is crucial for BSL users who need additional assistance to communicate, so that their medical needs are fully understood and addressed by medical staff and themselves?

Michael Matheson: I fully agree with David Torrance that good co-ordination of BSL services is crucial if we are to ensure that patients receive the person-centred care that they require. I am aware of the changes that were made in the NHS Fife area, where the BSL service was brought in-house, which allowed NHS Fife to enhance the quality of provision.

Our hospital staff have clear and easy-to-follow protocols for accessing an interpreter for BSL users when they go to hospital. Of course, I have no doubt that we can make further progress on ensuring that patients who are

BSL users get the necessary support. However, it is clear that the changes in the NHS Fife area will help to improve the quality of the services that are delivered there.

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**Question S4W-13992: Dennis Robertson, Aberdeenshire West, Scottish National Party, Date Lodged: 27/03/2013**

To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what it is doing to make (a) chamber and (b) committee business (i) in and (ii) outside of Parliament more accessible.

**Answered by Linda Fabiani (08/05/2013):**

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) is aware of its responsibility to ensure that the Parliament is accessible and that provision is put in place to enable everyone to engage in committee and chamber business. To meet this commitment both chamber and committee business is made accessible to people who attend parliamentary business and to those who wish to view business outside of the Parliament.

For people who are interested in attending chamber or committee business, the SPCB makes information available about making a visit to the building on the Parliament website, for example it provides detail on how to get to the building; the physical layout of the building; how to book tickets to observe chamber or committee meetings; and the type of facilities available. A wide range of information leaflets can be downloaded from the Parliament website and are also available in other languages and alternative formats including audio and BSL. In addition, the SPCB has produced an accessibility guide to assist disabled people with their visit to the Parliament. Disabled visitors are encouraged to advise staff of any additional assistance they might require when they wish to attend a meeting of the Parliament. There are also procedures in place to ensure that staff check whether there are any additional requirements so that provision can be made in advance of their visit to the Parliament.

People who wish to attend chamber business can watch from the gallery of the chamber. The gallery is accessible to everyone with seating for wheelchair users; an induction loop and infra red system for people who are hard of hearing; and TV screens for people who find it difficult to view the chamber from the gallery. Headsets and receivers are available from the front desk which enhances the level of sound when listening to proceedings and if someone prefers not to attend the gallery, there is the option to watch the proceedings from the main hall. Where business is specifically relevant to for example deaf people, provision is made by way of BSL interpreters.

Similarly, provision is made available for the committee rooms which have loop systems and TV screens and additional communication support can be provided where it is required.

For anyone who wishes to engage with chamber and committee business outside of the Parliament, the SPCB films and webcasts all chamber and committee business which is archived on the website, allowing viewers to watch and listen to past meetings for a month online. Since 2012 all videos are available on the Parliament's You Tube channel which allows viewers to subscribe and re-use the videos sharing them on other websites and social media channels. A daily business video round up of Parliament proceedings is produced on Parliament business days and a range of promotional videos are made throughout the year which provide viewers with information about the Parliament and its work.

The SPCB makes available information about current, forthcoming and previous chamber and committee business on the Parliament's website. This includes access to all key publications and reports from 1999 onwards. Each committee has a dedicated set of webpages which includes details of all current and previous business, and published reports. To enhance the accessibility of this information the home page is updated daily with news and details of forthcoming business, with links to more detailed information.

When a committee meets formally outside Parliament, accessibility is one of the most important features in deciding the choice of venue for the meeting. The venue must be suitable for wheelchair access to both the building and the room where the meeting is taking place, and there should be the availability of an induction loop, suitable lighting and accessible toilets. As with meetings held in the Parliament, the same procedures are applied when booking tickets for the meeting to check whether any access requirements need to be put in place for anyone who is attending the meeting.

When a committee is meeting outside Edinburgh, this is normally publicised through local media and promoted to specific groups as appropriate. External committee meetings are now also being used as a focus for the 'Parliament Day' initiative which includes engagement activities with local groups and organisations. In addition to formal, external committee meetings, many committees undertake fact-finding visits to engage directly with

people in a more informal manner. As part of this engagement activity, the SPCB is aware of those groups who are underrepresented in the Parliament and make every effort to ensure that these groups are directly targeted when organising public meetings.

The SPCB is constantly striving to ensure that the work of the Parliament and its members is as accessible as possible to the people of Scotland. We value feedback from service users and others that help us improve our processes in this regard.

Current Status: Answered by Linda Fabiani on 08/05/2013

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### **Personal Independence Payment**

**Caroline Lucas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make it his policy to allow people who have hearing loss and who are participating in the personal independence payment pilots to write to, email or text officials to request a paper form; what assessment he has made of the accessibility of the claim process for young people with hearing loss; and if he will make a statement. [156536]

**Esther McVey:** We provide a textphone facility for people with hearing loss who cannot make a PIP claim by telephone. We will also accept telephone claims from people acting on behalf of the claimant and where they have no one to provide this support, claimants can request a paper version of the PIP claim form in writing from a DWP PO Box address.

We are committed to enabling communication with claimants who are deaf or hard of hearing. We have standard processes in place to support deaf people, and a range of guidance to help staff to understand the help required and support available through alternative formats.

The introduction of PIP offers an opportunity to work towards redesigning business processes and facilitate a move to digital options in the future, including the ability for claimants to request a form by e-mail.