

## **Cross Party Group on Deaf Issues | Minutes**

*Thursday, 09:00, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – Via Zoom*

### **Attendees**

**Mark Isherwood AM** – Chair

**Callum Mclean** – Secretariat, Wales Council for Deaf People

**Alison Bryan**

**Anthony Evans** – BSL Interpreter / member of NRCPD

**Debbie Thomas** – Head of Policy & Influencing in Wales, National Deaf Children's Society

**Jacqui Bond** – Social Worker

**John Day** – BC UHB Audiology

**Karen Robson** – Director, Wales Royal National Institute for Deaf People

**Lee Gonzales** – on behalf of Joel James MS

**Lisa Wilcox** – BATOD Cymru

**Louise Sweeney** – CEO, Wales Council for Deaf People

**Lyndsey Stringer** – BATOD Cymru

**Martin Griffiths** – Senior Employment Advisor, JobSense

**Naila Noori** – Policy Adviser, RCSLT Wales

**Nicola George** – Audiologist, Cardiff & Vale UHB

**Nigel Williams** – South Wales Cochlear Implant Support Group

**Robin Ash** – Line Manager, British Deaf Association

**Stuart Parkinson** - Researcher and Development Officer, ABSLTA

### **Communication Support**

**Hilary Maclean** – Speech to Text Reporter

**Julie Doyle** – BSL Interpreter

**Hannah Wilson** – BSL interpreter

### **Apologies**

**Mike Wycherley** – Head of Regional Services, DeafBlind UK

**Peredur Owen Griffiths** – AM

**Rhun Ap Iwerth** – AM

**Stephen Brattan-Wilson** – ASLI Member / BSL Interpreter

**Llyr Gruffydd**

**Altaf Hussain**

**Paul Redfern**

**Michelle Fowler-Powe**

**Joel James**

### **Introduction & Apologies**

**Chair** Welcomed everyone to the meeting, and read the apologies. Matters arising were then discussed in which the chair noted that they had secured a short debate slot regarding the All Wales Deaf Mental Health and Wellbeing. As well as waiting to be selected in the ballot to discuss the BSL Bill. The chair also highlighted that every person in Wales has five members equal in law and practice if they cannot get a hold of their regional MS for issues to be brought forward.

**Tony** questioned, in relation to the BSL bill. What would happen in UK parliament on 28<sup>th</sup> January if the bill was passed, and how it would affect Wales. The chair responded stating that it would depend on how the UK legislation would be applied, as it may require additional legislation for public services in Wales and so on, depending on how it was drafted, in order to incorporate elements within it to devolved powers.

### Update on BSL Act (Wales)

**Tony** discussed the importance of communication support being booked beforehand for all types of appointments, as well as translators for such things as Senedd debates, First Minister's Questions, and not used as an 'afterthought', ensuring the services are well planned, and that the interpreters/translators are well prepared. Tony also added that WITS (Wales Interpreter & Translation Service) should be involved in these meetings so they would be made aware of these concerns/ issues made by the Deaf community. Tony added an example, where they would be speaking with a police officer, in which a bail date may be given, *and then* an interpreter will be requested and searched for, causing disruption if none are available.

The Procurement of translators, as well as their qualifications and registration were then discussed. It was mentioned that the amount of registered translators was low, as well as explaining the key differences between BSL translators and BSL interpreters.

**Robin** added that the BDA has been doing a chartered audit for the Welsh Government. It was noted said report has been sent to the Welsh Government which include recommendations representative of the Deaf community. Robin is happy to share the report to the group in English & BSL formats, and note that at the next meeting they should be able to report on the findings.

**Lee** added that Joel James AM raised a question to the health minister last week regarding the points made above and that they will look into the All Wales Information on Sensory Loss and how to introduce mandatory training for all NHS staff, in which Eluned Morgan has responded positively to. Tony added some GPs have very good provisions for Deaf patients, whilst others do not (such as use of video/ deaf relay facilities rather than calling to book an appointment being the only option available) as well as the feasibility of online appointments.

Karen added that they have anecdotal evidence supporting the barriers Deaf people have in relation to accessing NHS services but they have put a call out on social media for testimonials and to raise awareness. Various notes and examples were quoted which are to be used in a letter to the Welsh Government.

### Recognition of Communication Access Symbol

**Naila** showed a presentation to the group, and introduced the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists. They shared statistics which included 1 in 10 children have a communication difficulty or disability that would require speech and language therapy. They then discussed a new communication access symbol, to be recognised alongside wheelchair access, and loop system symbols. The symbol was officially launched in November 2020, and over three thousand organisations have signed up to its use and training. Naila noted she would get in touch with Debbie to give further details on the staff training and if Makaton and BSL / other communications needs are discussed as being separate/ requiring variations in removing the communication barriers. Callum also shared Naila's contact information if anyone else in the group had any further questions as further agenda items needed to be discussed.

### BSL & Teaching Standards

**Tony** discussed the new curriculum in Wales in which many schools are interested in teaching BSL, as well as the raised interest in BSL & Deaf awareness due to the recent winner of “Strictly Come Dancing” however the provision of BSL tutors are now being shown as too low in number. They then gave examples where an unqualified tutor would be visiting primary schools to do interpretations of songs, in which signs were incorrect or misused. A college was also mentioned in which they had advertised a post for a BSL Tutor, in which having a BSL level 1 qualification was not mandatory. It was highlighted that this is one example in which the problem is becoming more widespread. A letter will be drafted to the Education Minister regarding this.

### ALN Reforms update & Audiology Waiting Times

**Debbie** began by noting the ALN reforms are going live, in which the system will change the way some children with additional learning needs can get support plans. The NDCS has also received clarifications regarding the misinterpretations around the new eligibility and IDP’s. Debbie then highlighted to the group that if anyone is aware of young Deaf people or families who struggle with an IDP that there are resources and information on the NRCPD website as well as their helpline.

Audiology waiting times were then discussed – it was noted that whilst audiology services have been under a lot of strain, due to being understaffed, this creates exceptionally long waiting times; some that they had been made aware of, were over a year. Which is a significant amount of time for a child to be waiting to receive support and can have a big impact on their education. The NDCS has raised this to the Welsh Government and they hope to have a meeting in March.

A letter will be written to the chair of the committee highlighting the concerns of the cross party group regarding the waiting times, and that the committee’s support would be welcomed in regards to prioritising paediatric audiology. Debbie provided links in the online chat referencing the ALN page.

### All Wales Mental Health & Wellbeing Group Update

Firstly, Jacqui passed on thanks from the group for raising the mental health act in the plenary two weeks prior. They also found it timely, and wished to inform the group that the Welsh Government is launching a mental health inequality consultation in which calls for evidence are being invited. Jacqui stated whilst this call notes a video can be provided as a response, she is unsure as to if that would be accepting responses in BSL as it otherwise would in English and Welsh. Jacqui added Julia Terry could be contacted for the calls to evidence information which can be shared via the organisations in the group.

The chair invited any questions or closing remarks, which had to do with some clarifications on previous agenda items but these were to be discussed with individuals after the meeting.

*The meeting was then concluded*