

Cross Party Group on Deaf Issues | Minutes

Thursday, 10:00, 28th April 2022 – Via Zoom

Attendees

Mark Isherwood MS – 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

Emma Lliffe – ABSLTA

Helen Faulkes – BSL Translator

Jacqui Bond – Social Worker

Jill Hipson - ABSLTA

John Day – BC UHB Audiology

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

Louise Sweeney – CEO, Wales Council for Deaf People

Mark Davies – Trustee, COS / NWDA

Nigel Williams – South Wales Cochlear Implant Support Group

Rhun Ap Iowerth - MS

Rob Wilks – Lecturer, University of South Wales

Sarah Angove – BATOD Cymru

Sheila Squire – BATOD Cymru

Stuart Parkinson - Researcher and Development Officer, ABSLTA

Apologies

Altaf Hussain MS

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS

Russel George MS

Cathie Robins-Talbot

Eleri Griffiths

Julia Terry

Lyndsey Stringer

Martin Griffiths

Naila Noori

Nicola George

Robin Ash

Stephen Brattan-Wilson

Communication Support

Hilary Maclean – Speech to Text Reporter

Julie Doyle – BSL Interpreter

Rachel Williams – BSL interpreter

Introduction & Apologies

Chair Welcomed everyone to the meeting, and read the apologies. The possibility that the next meeting could take place in a hybrid form if suitable for everyone in the group was also mentioned.

BSL Act (Wales)

Rob introduced himself, and noted that The BSL act had recently passed in Parliament, which covers England, Wales & Scotland, but does not include matters that have been devolved, such as education and health. The **Chair** noted that he had recently spoke in the chamber regarding a BSL bill in Wales, to which the Minister for Social Justice replied stating that the British Deaf Association were commissioned to undertake an audit of the Welsh Government's BSL policies and service provision. The **Chair** had recently contacted the Chair of the BDA, who are currently in the process of re submitting the BSL audit (due to the Welsh Government adding some comments, which needed correcting for a final draft) This will then be passed to the Welsh Government's Disability Rights Taskforce in order to ensure appropriate scope to any Welsh legislation.

Stuart added his frustrations due to the delays and lack of communication from the Welsh Government in regards to the audit and its publication.

Louise added that Wales Council for Deaf People have been approached to provide a representative for the Taskforce in question, which has yet to meet, but will be engaging with, and involving the Deaf community. The Deaf Consortium of Wales include WCDP, NDCS and the BDA, and they are due to meet after this Cross Party meeting. The **Chair** added that they had reminded members in the chamber recently that the proposed bill would ensure the Deaf community and people with hearing loss would have a voice in the design and delivery of the service.

Actions from agenda item:

- *Contact the Disability Taskforce to confirm all involved members*
- *Contact the BDA ensuring they keep the CPGDI up to date*
- *Letter to the Minister showing the support from the CPGDI, and ensuring the Taskforce includes voices from the Deaf community itself*

BSL Interpreters Update

Anthony began firstly with an update from the previous meeting regarding qualified BSL tutors in schools and colleges, specifically the college that was mentioned at the time who were using an unqualified tutor, have since employed a qualified tutor after their initial job advertisement had attracted some social media attention discussing BSL qualifications not being a requirement for the position. He then suggested that we send a letter to the Education Minister noting the group's concerns in ensuring appropriate guidance and resources for schools and colleges are used when using BSL tutors, ensuring appropriately qualified ones are used.

The second point raised, was that of BSL interpreter fees/payments per booking, which have not increased for years through many agencies, and the lack of new interpreters whilst the need for BSL interpreters has increased.

The third issue raised, was that of registered Sign Language Translators being used for translating Government documents & videos. In the last meeting, the tendering process of this was discussed, which did not stipulate that the translators had to be registered/ fully qualified

The Chair asked who sets the pay rates for the interpreters, to which Anthony replied noting that the interpreters technically set their own rates, however as most of their work comes from agencies;

their pay is usually decided by said agencies rather than the individual freelancer's rates. The Chair then suggested a letter be drafted and sent to the NRCPD regarding Anthony's points around registration and pay, as well as the Minister Jane Hutt, who is the minister responsible for such issues, as she was also one of the ministers who helped establish the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) to begin with. (WITS themselves were invited to this meeting but no response was given)

Actions from agenda item

- *Letter to Education Minister regarding guidance around qualified BSL Tutors*

ABSLTA Presentation

Stuart presented a video to the group, which highlighted the want of an independent registration body for BSL Teachers, similar to the NRCPD for Interpreters & Translators. They also discussed the possible cultural appropriation that up and coming tutors may be using where they themselves may have no experience within the Deaf community itself. The video then continued detailing the pathway and becoming a BSL teacher.

The group agreed that all agenda items today, from BSL Interpreters, to teachers and Deaf children in education, that the minimum standards and all else must begin with grassroots BSL education for children. As currently there are not many fluent BSL children, which would then grow into adults in which the general BSL Deaf community would not have as strong of connections as they could.

Stuart added, that they would like a UK wide national registration body, as currently each region in the UK has their own with their own standards and practices.

Actions from agenda item

- *Letter to UK Minister for Disabled People regarding a UK body so that all communication & education providers can work collaboratively.*

NDCS General Update

Debbie began by mentioning it would be Deaf Awareness Week beginning next week, and that the NDCS's Youth Advisory Board, comprised of young Deaf people would be raising Deaf awareness amongst teachers and the teaching workforce with their UK wide campaign. She added there is a 'Change.org.' petition with fifty thousand signatures for this issue.

She then thanked the Chair for putting forward a statement highlighting the petition to encourage more teachers to learn Deaf awareness.

It was also added that the Additional Learning Need reforms are still in the process of being phased in, and that the NDCS website has resources to help young Deaf people understand the reforms themselves.

She then updated the group on an Audiology related group started by the Welsh Government in response to the Scottish Lothian report which reported on failings of Audiology services there. The group in Wales was set up to ensure the same thing does not occur in Wales and that any needed changes are made. Both Debbie and John Day are on said group, and Debbie highlighted the group's existence and the positive work they do. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the NDCS are speaking with health boards urging them to increase funding to address paediatric Audiology waiting times built up due to the Covid pandemic.

John suggested speaking with patients/ families regarding their experiences, and that audiologists themselves can provide data which can be used to challenge the health boards which could be beneficial in the search for further funding/ resources.

Sarah added that as a part of the children's cochlear implant team in South Wales, she would say that the assessment process for it in particular is very robust and goes hand in hand with Audiology.

The meeting was then concluded. It was mentioned that the next meeting could be conducted in a hybrid form if feasible, and appropriate for those with communication support requirements.