

MINUTES

Cross-Party Group on Deaf Issues

Thursday 12 December 2024

10.00 – 11.30 AM

Meeting Held in Zoom – Online meeting.

Meeting sponsored by Mark Isherwood MS

Meeting chaired by: Mark Isherwood MS (Chair)

Secretary: Martin Griffiths & Tom Lichy (BDA)

BSL Interpreter: Kim Wyers

BSL Interpreter: Robyn Harris

Captioner: Julia Jacobie

Attendees: Mark Isherwood MS (Chair)

- Martin Griffiths (BDA Cymru – Secretary)
- Tom Lichy (BDA – Secretary)
- Polly Winn
- Sarah Angove
- Hazel Badjie
- Alison Bryan
- Rob Wilks
- Ant Evans
- Mike Hobday
- Lucy Vasiliou
- Paula Williams

Apologies:

- Llyr Gruffydd MS
- Stephen Brattan-Wilson
- Cath Booth

Welcome & Introductions

- Mark Isherwood MS opened the meeting and noted the apologies listed above. He requested attendees indicate their attendance for the record and moved to approve the minutes from the meeting on **13 September 2024**.

Approve minutes of Group meeting on 13th September 2024

- **Approval** proposed by **Polly Winn**
- **Seconded** by **Sarah Angove**

Action: Secretary to send minutes to Table Office.

Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting:

Updates on Letters:

1. **Auditory Verbal UK (AVUK):** Letter sent to the Minister regarding AVUK's presentation.
2. **Independent Providers in Audiology:** Letter sent to the new Cabinet Secretary for Health, Jeremy Miles, exploring primary care provision by independent providers (Specsavers).
3. **WITS Representation:** Martin Griffiths (BDA) provided an update on his inclusion in the Welsh Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) advisory board. Issues raised included:
 - Quality and appropriateness of interpreters.
 - Transparency in procurement processes.
 - Responsibility for communication services.

Cardiff Council Disability Equality Strategy:

Martin Griffiths (BDA) highlighted:

- Cardiff Council's failure to meet BSL Charter pledges.
- Continued inaccessibility of surveys and strategies for BSL users.
- Need for follow-up letters to Cardiff Council, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

Action: *Draft letters to Cardiff Council, WLGA, and EHRC, inviting representatives to future meetings. Share the letters re AVUK and Specsavers with the members.*

British Sign Language (BSL) Wales Bill Update

Mark Isherwood MS shared:

- The Welsh Government has yet to support the Bill.

- Concerns were raised regarding the proposed BSL stakeholder group's scope and effectiveness.
- Emphasis on securing statutory rights through legislation.

Key Points Discussed:

- The stakeholder group must:
 - Have co-chairs from the Deaf community.
 - Be majority-led by BSL users from Wales.
 - Include a remit beyond access, focusing on language rights and Deaf leadership.
- Timing is crucial to ensure the Bill progresses before the 2026 elections.

GCSE BSL Decision

Qualifications Wales' suspension of the made-for-Wales BSL GCSE was discussed. Key points included:

- Workforce shortages and practical challenges were cited as reasons for the delay.
- The decision was met with disappointment across the Deaf community.
- Advocacy groups emphasised the cultural and educational significance of BSL as a recognised language.

Actions:

1. *Draft a letter to Qualifications Wales advocating for reconsideration of the suspension.*
2. *Convey the desire of advocacy groups to support the development of a BSL GCSE, and request the Welsh Government to integrate BSL into the education system as part of a continuum from early years.*

Welsh BSL Consortium

Rob Wilks provided an update on the Welsh BSL Consortium:

- The group held a meeting on 11th December 2024 to discuss progress and next steps for supporting the BSL (Wales) Bill.
- Actions agreed upon included:
 - Building grassroots support for the Bill within the Deaf community in Wales.
 - Engaging with Members of the Senedd (MSs) to strengthen advocacy efforts.
 - Drafting a shared statement outlining the group's expectations for the proposed stakeholder group, including:
 - Co-chairs from the Deaf community.
 - A majority of members being BSL users from Wales.
 - A remit extending beyond access to focus on language rights and Deaf leadership.

- The importance of the statutory element of the Bill was emphasised to ensure long-term commitments to BSL rights.

Action: *Contact Welsh Government officials to raise awareness of the Welsh BSL Consortium's expectations for the proposed BSL stakeholder group.*

Any other business

- **Accessibility of BSL Bill Consultation:**
 - Issues with Microsoft Forms and lack of embedded BSL videos.
 - Advocacy for extending the consultation deadline to January 2025.
 - BDA Wales set up a Facebook page to facilitate community input.

Action: *Pass on recommendations to improve the consultation process to Senedd and request an extension.*

- **Lloyds Bank Foundation:**
 - Potential support for advocacy efforts noted.
 - Contact details for Kelly Huxley-Roberts shared with members. In case members want to contact Lloyds Bank Foundation – the email address: khuxleyroberts@lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk
- **Next Meeting:**
 - Date to be confirmed early in the New Year.
 - Members suggested scheduling 2025 dates before Christmas.

Mark Isherwood concluded the meeting by wishing attendees a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Action log

1. Draft letters to Cardiff Council, WLGA, and EHRC regarding BSL Charter compliance and invite to a future meeting.
2. Share the AVUK and Specsavers letters with the members.
3. Draft a letter to Qualifications Wales about the GCSE suspension.
4. Convey the desire of advocacy groups to support the development of a BSL GCSE, and request the Welsh Government to integrate BSL into the education system as part of a continuum from early years.
5. Contact Welsh Government officials to raise awareness of the Welsh BSL Consortium's expectations for the proposed BSL stakeholder group.
6. Pass on recommendations to the Senedd on improving the BSL Bill consultation process and request a deadline extension.

7. Confirm 2025 meeting dates.