

# MINUTES

## **Cross-Party Group on Deaf Issues**

**Thursday 13 March 2025**

**2.30 – 4.00 PM**

**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:** Rachel Williams

**BSL Interpreter:** Robyn Harris

**Captioner:** Julia Jacobie

**Attendees:** Mark Isherwood MS (Chair)

- Mike Hedges MS
- Martin Griffiths (BDA Cymru – Secretary)
- Tom Lichy (BDA – Secretary)
- Ben Culleton (BDA Cymru)
- Mike Hobday (BDA)
- Alison Bryant
- Polly Winn (RNID)
- Kieran Sawdon (NDCS)
- Susannah Googins (BCUHB Audiology)
- Biao Zeng (South Wales Uni)
- Lucy Vasiliou (AVUK)

**Apologies:**

- Joel James MS
- Cath Booth (WCD)

## **Welcome & Introductions**

- Mark Isherwood MS opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

## **Approval of minutes of Group meeting on 12 December 2024**

- **Approval** proposed by **Martin Griffiths**
- **Seconded** by **Mike Hedges MS**

***Action: Secretary to send minutes to Table Office.***

## **Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting:**

- **Ministerial Replies:**

- Letters from the Cabinet Secretary regarding AVUK and Specsavers presentations were received late.

### ***Action: Secretariat to circulate both ministerial responses to all CPGDI members.***

- Mark Isherwood summarised both responses. Lucy Vasiliou (AVUK) requested a copy of the auditory-verbal response.
- Martin Griffiths raised concerns over deaf children being placed under 'additional learning needs'.

### ***Action: Mark Isherwood to write back to the Minister, reflecting AVUK and Martin Griffiths' comments.***

- **BSL Stakeholder Group:**

- Martin Griffiths reported on the first two meetings.
- Initial concerns over representation and access were raised.
- Changes made: new co-chair appointed (BSL user), hybrid format introduced, better structure planned.
- Ongoing concern that the group is too government-driven and risks being a 'talking shop'.

- **Letters to Key Organisations:**

- Secretariat apologised for delay in sending invitations to Cardiff Council, WLGA, and EHRC.

### ***Action: Letters to be sent before the July meeting.***

- **BSL (Wales) Bill Consultation:**

- Only 4 BSL responses submitted despite extension.
- Feedback from BDA led to improved accessibility.
- Consultation summary and 119 total responses shared publicly.
- In addition to the 119 responses received, 77 participants — including BSL signers, parents, family members, older adults, individuals with physical disabilities, and people from an ethnic minority background — took part across four interviews and five focus groups.

- Key issues raised: healthcare access, interpreter shortage, education, employment, BSL recognition, and leadership.

### **BSL (Wales) Bill and Campaign Update**

Mark Isherwood MS gave a detailed update on the BSL (Wales) Bill:

- Strong support in consultation for the Bill's aims.
- Welsh Government now engaging positively, offering drafting support.
- Drafting to proceed quickly due to limited legislative time.
- Government prefers an 'adviser' model over a Commissioner due to cost.
- Mixed stakeholder feedback: many supported compromise to ensure Bill progresses.

***Action: Agenda item for next meeting or possible June special meeting to receive Welsh Government update.***

### **RNID Audiology and Earwax Management Update**

Polly Winn (RNID):

- Launched a new report on earwax services in Wales.
- Over 50% of population lacks NHS wax removal services.
- Disparities between health boards.
- Advocacy underway to improve service access and NHS funding.
- Meeting held with Health Minister (Jeremy Miles MS) in collaboration with NDCS.
- Raised issues: workforce shortages, interpreter access, promotion of hearing health.
- Cabinet Secretary open to further dialogue; NHS Executive engagement planned.

***Action:***

- ***Secretariat to share RNID report and supporter action links with CPGDI members.***
- ***Written update to be shared on RNID/NDCS meeting with Health Minister.***

### **Additional Business**

Martin Griffiths updated on BDA Cymru's community engagement:

Multiple visits to Deaf clubs and grassroots groups across Wales.

Plans to launch video helpline and in-person support service (lottery-funded).

### **Next Meeting Dates**

Confirmed:

10 July 2025, 10:00 – 11:30 AM

6 November 2025, 10:00 – 11:30 AM

Possible additional meeting in June to receive Welsh Government update on the Bill.

### **Action log**

1. Share ministerial replies (AVUK and Specsavers) with CPGDI members.
2. Mark Isherwood to write back to Minister on auditory-verbal response, incorporating AVUK and BDA input.
3. Send letters to Cardiff Council, WLGA, and EHRC to invite them to CPGDI.
4. Agenda item for next meeting (or June special meeting): Welsh Government presentation/update on BSL (Wales) Bill.
5. Share RNID earwax report and supporter action with group.
6. Written update to be shared on RNID/NDCS meeting with Health Minister.