

# MINUTES

## Cross-Party Group on Deaf Issues

Thursday 3 July 2025, 1.00 - 2.30 PM

Meeting Held on Zoom – Online meeting.

**Meeting chaired by:** Mark Isherwood MS (Chair)

**Secretary:** Tom Lichy (BDA)

**BSL Interpreters:** Robyn Harris, Dee Savage

**Captioner:** Julia Jacobie

### Attendees:

- Mark Isherwood MS (Chair)
- Mike Hedges MS
- Jane Hutt MS
- Julie Morgan MS
- Attaf Hussein MS
- Sioned Williams MS
- Tom Lichy (BDA, Secretariat)
- Martin Griffiths (BDA)
- Ben Cullerton (BDA)
- Mike Hobday (BDA)
- Colette Forrest (BDA)
- Stuart Parkinson (ABSLTA)
- Tori Bishop-Rowe (AVUK)
- Alison Bryan
- Rob Wilks
- Lori Lewis
- Kieran Sawdon (NDCS)
- Rob Geaney (RNID)
- Sarah Capstick
- Christopher Shank
- Samantha Green
- Helen West
- WDC
- Sarah Thomas (COS)
- Melanie Toveey (observer)
- Zeng Biao
- Nia Davies (EHRC) (observer)
- Jamie Williams
- Cath Booth (WCoD)
- Also in attendance:
  - Lorna Hall, Deputy Director of Equality and Human Rights, Welsh Government
  - Bethany Thomas, BSL policy manager, Welsh Government

### Apologies:

- Ali Thomas (Rhyl City Strategy)
- Polly Winn (RNID)
- Nigel Williams (NHS Wales)
- Sarah Sparke (Cardiff Council)

### Welcome

- Mark Isherwood MS opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

### Approval of minutes of Group meeting on 13 March 2025

- Approval proposed by Altaf Hussein MS, seconded by Alison Bryan and agreed.

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

### Presentation on the draft BSL (Wales) Bill

- Mark Isherwood MS referred members to the background to the Bill and introduced Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice.
- Jane Hutt reaffirmed her commitment to the recognition and promotion of British Sign Language and her determination to drive long-term positive change for deaf BSL signers across Wales. She said that improving provision for deaf BSL signers is an absolute priority. She will continue to offer her support and collaboration to Mark Isherwood MS and to the BSL (Wales) Bill. She also spoke about the work of the Welsh government BSL stakeholder group.

- Members asked the Cabinet Secretary a number of questions about the Bill. In reply, she spoke about the proposed BSL Adviser role which would be similar to the National Advisers for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Likewise the proposed National BSL Strategy would be similar in approach to the strategy to end violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence. She would be happy for the Government's BSL Stakeholder Group to continue. Welsh Government consultations on the Bill will be available in BSL, and the Children's Commissioner will be involved.

### **Discussion on the draft BSL (Wales) Bill**

- Mark Isherwood MS outlined next steps in the Senedd's consideration of the Bill. The Bill will be tabled on July 14, and then discussed in the chamber on July 16. It will then be referred to the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee. The committee will undertake an inquiry into the Bill, in order to decide whether to recommend its general principles to the Senedd and whether they wish to make any additional recommendations. On approval of the committee report, the Bill will return to the same committee for line by line scrutiny and possible amendments. The Bill will return to the Senedd floor for its 2 final stages. It is hoped that the Bill will pass through all stages by the spring of 2026 and will then receive Royal Assent. when it will come into effect immediately.
- Mark Isherwood encouraged members to think carefully about the evidence that they would submit to the committee, so that it would benefit from members' expertise.
- He explained the meaning of each section of the draft Bill.

### **AGM**

- The Cross Party Group held its AGM – see separate minutes. Mark Isherwood MS was elected chair and Tom Lichy, BDA, as secretariat. The minutes of the 2024 AGM were approved.

**Action: Secretary to send annual report and accounts to the table office**

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

- The chair's meeting with Signature was reported.
- Ministerial replies (Specsavers and auditory verbal therapy) had been shared with all members. Mark Isherwood will write back to the Minister on auditory verbal therapy, following comments from them.
- Cardiff Council, the Welsh Local Government Association and EHRC have been added to the meeting invitation list.
- The RNID report on earwax has been shared with members.
- In discussion on these items, Mark Isherwood MS referred to a constituent who had to pay for ear wax removal and his meeting with Betsi Cadwaladr Hospital about their community support.
- Kieran Sawdon referred to NDCS's work, alongside Signature, to press Qualifications Wales to change their decision on the BSL GCSE for Wales.

**Action: Mark Isherwood to write back to the Minister on auditory verbal therapy.**

### **Update on Welsh Government BSL Stakeholder Group**

Tom Lichy, as co-chair of the BSL Stakeholder Group, reported on its progress. Six meetings have been held, with the final one in July when all recommendations will be reviewed. Progress has been very swift, which Tom attributed in part to the work of the two deaf, signing co-chairs.

### **Next Meeting Dates**

Confirmed: 6 November 2025, times to be confirmed.

#### **Action log**

1. Secretary to send minutes to the table office.
2. Secretary to send annual report and accounts to the table office.
3. Secretary to draft a letter for Mark Isherwood MS to write back to the Minister on auditory verbal therapy.