

UKCoD | Access to Work

Steering meeting 23 April 2014 | Minutes

Attendees

Caroline Player, SignHealth
Cheryl Cullen, Clarion
Craig Crowley, Action Deafness (Chair)
Dan Sumners, Signature (Minutes)
Danni Manzi, NDCS
David Buxton, BDA (Chair)
Jim Edwards, Signature/UKCoD
Karen Rutherford, BID Services
Lidia Best, NADP
Paul Breckell, Action on Hearing Loss
Rob Burley, Action on Hearing Loss

1. Craig Crowley chaired the majority of the meeting. David Buxton took the chair once Craig had left.

Update on recent activity

2. In October 2013, Sir Malcolm Bruce MP and UKCoD members met with Mike Penning MP, the Minister for Disabled People. They discussed the problems Access to Work was causing.
 - a. Mike Penning had requested another meeting with Sir Malcolm and the delegation. The meeting was scheduled for 14 May.
3. At the time of the October meeting, Sir Malcolm was the chair of the APPG on Deafness. The new chair was Stephen Lloyd MP.
 - a. AS UKCoD secretariat, Jim Edwards and Dan Sumners met with Stephen about the APPG's work plan. Stephen emphasised the importance of a solution based approach to the Access to Work issue.

4. In February 2014 UKCoD members met with representatives of Access to Work and the DWP Employment Strategy Team. The main point of discussion was the 30 hour policy.
 - a. After the meeting the group sent letters to the DWP and the Minister for Disabled People explaining the problems in writing. The BDA sent its briefing on the 30 hour rule to Access to Work.
 - b. UKCoD members would meet with representatives of Access to Work and DWP again on 22 May.
5. The ASLI Access to Work working group had met with Access to Work. ASLI would be asked for an update.
6. On 17 March the BDA organised a lobby of Parliament. It was an opportunity for a large group of deaf people to speak to MPs about access to public services.
 - a. At the lobby one of Sir Alan Meale MP's constituents explained the problems Access to Work was causing for deaf people. As a result Sir Alan tabled Early Day Motion 1197. 43 MPs had signed it.
 - b. David Buxton was contacted by members of the DWP Select Committee. They would approach the Select Committee chair about an inquiry into Access to Work.

Group membership

7. Roger Wicks of Action on Hearing Loss had suggested that the group discuss how broad the UKCoD Access to Work group should be. In particular, whether it should include interpreter groups.
8. Attendees thought it was strategically important all members of UKCoD were involved so a collective strategy could be agreed and followed. It was also the most effective way of making sure everyone knew what everyone else was saying and doing.
9. Attendees thought it was tactically important that smaller groups continued with the scheduled meetings. Attendees at those meetings would feedback to the UKCoD Access to Work group.

10. It was agreed that a UKCoD led campaign was needed. It was also agreed that different groups would lead different elements of the campaign as appropriate, with all members being informed of activity.

Campaign

11. Signature and Action on Hearing Loss had circulated papers. The Action on Hearing Loss paper identified six themes covering the problems Access to Work was causing. The Signature paper identified a number of problems and their impacts.

12. The Signature paper suggested UKCoD Access to Work group adopt an options appraisal as its main practical aim.

13. It was agreed that Action on Hearing Loss and Signature would combine the two papers to form a proposal for an independent inquiry by 2 May.

- a. The draft proposal would be circulated to attendees on 2 May for comment by 9 May.
- b. The draft proposal would be circulated to all members of the UKCoD Access to Work group on 13 May.
- c. The proposal would be agreed at the UKCoD Access to Work meeting on 20 May.

14. It was agreed the Minister for Disabled people would be told about the proposal for an independent inquiry at the meeting on 14 May.

- a. The draft proposal would be sent to Sir Malcolm Bruce MP on 2 May. It would be discussed with him before the 14 May meeting.

15. The Signature paper included a proposal to include information about Access to Work on the UKCoD website. Draft pages were included.

- a. It was agreed the web pages would be redrafted in line with the proposal and on the same timescale.
- b. It was agreed UKCoD and the BDA would explore options for making the information available in BSL.

Activities

Parliamentary debate

16. It was proposed that UKCoD ask a backbench MP to apply to the Backbench Business Committee for a debate about the impact of government policy on d/Deaf people.
- a. The Hearing Loss and Deafness Alliance was also considering a debate on access to health services for d/Deaf people.
 - b. It was suggested that UKCoD consider working with the Alliance on a debate about access for d/Deaf people. The application could make reference to
 - i. Access to Work;
 - ii. Sick Of It and the associated Lords debate;
 - iii. NHS England's proposed accessible information standards and action plan on hearing loss;
 - iv. the lobby and EDM; and
 - v. the proposed BSL (Scotland) Bill.
 - c. It was agreed that the Hearing Loss and Deafness Alliance would be approached about a debate.
 - d. It was agreed that Stephen Lloyd MP, in his role as chair of the APPG on Deafness, would be asked about making the application to the Backbench Business Committee.
 - e. It was agreed that an additional Westminster Hall debate about Access to Work would be explored. It would be pursued if it was considered appropriate.

Role of the APPG on Deafness

17. As UKCoD secretariat, Jim Edwards and Dan Sumners had met with Stephen Lloyd MP about the APPG's work plan. Access to Work was top of the agenda.
18. David Buxton suggested a cumulative impact assessment of government policy on d/Deaf people was needed. This was in addition to an independent inquiry into Access to Work.
- a. It was agreed the APPG on Deafness would be asked about asking for an impact assessment.

19. It was agreed all UKCoD members should support the APPG to be proactive.

Collecting more case studies

20. The BDA had published case studies in its consultation report and 30 hour rule briefing. Other members had shared cases via email.
21. David Buxton had suggested the UKCoD Access to Work group needed to collect more case studies, especially of people who received high level support.
22. Darren Townsend-Handscomb RSLI had been collecting case studies as part of his Deaf AtW project. He had shared case studies confidentially, but said most deaf people did not want them to be made public. This was due to fear of repercussions.
23. It was agreed more case studies needed to be collected, in particular
 - a. positive stories of people who had successfully challenged Access to Work;
 - b. examples of people who had lost their job as a result of an Access to Work decision; and
 - c. which demonstrated all the problems that had been identified.
24. All UKCoD members would collect case studies. A Googledoc spreadsheet would be set up so they could be stored centrally.
25. Guidance on the types of case studies needed would be circulated once the proposal for an independent inquiry had been agreed. This was because the proposal would contain a definitive list of the problems.
26. It was agreed more quantitative data was also needed. A survey would be drafted once the proposal for an independent inquiry had been agreed. This was because the proposal would contain a definitive list of the problems.

Freedom of Information requests

27. David Buxton suggested we could make Freedom of Information requests to find out if Access to Work officials would receive bonuses for reducing claims.
 - a. Attendees felt it was a tactic that might be used at a later date. The focus should be the proposal for an independent inquiry.
28. It was suggested Freedom of Information requests could also be made about
 - a. the Access to Work actual spend against the budget;
 - b. key performance indicators for Access to Work; and

- c. the planned Access to Work budget for 2015/16.

20 May UKCoD Access to Work meeting

29. A draft agenda for the full UKCoD Access to Work meeting on 20 May was circulated with the agenda.

30. It was agreed the agenda would be as follows:

1. Update on recent activity
 - a. Meeting with Access to Work
 - b. ASLI meeting with Access to Work
 - c. Sir Malcolm Bruce MP meeting with Mike Penning MP
2. Campaign tactics and plan
 - a. Proposal: independent review
 - b. Activities
 - i. Parliamentary debate
 - ii. Role of the APPG
 - iii. Collecting more case studies
3. Any other business

22 May meeting with Access to Work officials

31. On 22 May there would be a meeting with Access to Work. It was a follow up to a meeting in February.

32. It was agreed, pending agreement at the 20 May meeting, officials would be told the UKCoD Access to Work group was asking the Minister for an independent inquiry.

33. The delegation would also

- a. share new case studies;
- b. ask about the “equality analysis to study the impact upon disabled people of the 30 hour guidance for support workers contained in Access to Work guidance” (Rilesh Jadeja, Access to Work, in a letter to Paul Breckell, 20 March 2014); and
- c. ask about DWP plans to increase the use of VRS and VRI.

34. The delegation had agreed to provide officials with details of the cost of interpreters. Signature would seek to provide that information, in consultation with ASLI.

35. An agenda for the meeting would be drafted and circulated for agreement by Laura Arrowsmith at Action on Hearing Loss.

Any other business

36. A Doodle poll would be circulated with the minutes to fix a date and time for a meeting of the UKCoD Access to Work steering group after the 22 May meeting with Access to Work officials.