

All Party Parliamentary Group on Deafness

Extraordinary General Meeting | 11am 30 June 2015

W1, Westminster Hall, Houses of Parliament

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Election of a chair and officers
3. A common purpose for the deaf sector (Jim Edwards, Chair, UK Council on Deafness)
4. Suggested work programme (Dan Sumners, Senior Policy Adviser, Signature)
5. Any other business

2. Election of a chair and officers

The Group must elect at least four officers, including a Chair. At least two of the officers must be MPs. At least one officer must be from the government party and at least one from the main opposition party.

The Chair must be an MP. The Chair will be the Group's Registered Contact and responsible for making sure the Group complies with the rules of the House.

3. A common purpose for the deaf sector (for information)

Over the past year, the UK Council on Deafness has supported an initiative to find a statement of common purpose for organisations concerned with deafness and hearing loss. After consulting a wide range of organisations and individuals we produced that statement.

The task force that has overseen the process is now identifying chairs to lead the various strands of work that were identified. They will form the bulk of a steering group that will oversee progress towards the vision and mission.

We are asking organisations and individuals to become founder signatories to the statement. Once we have enough signatures we will launch the statement at a public event.

We will appreciate the Group and individual Members agreeing to sign the statement and encouraging others to do so.

The statement of common purpose

This statement is the basis for collective work by organisations concerned with deafness or hearing loss.

The organisations listed below are committed to the vision, mission and values. Any organisation concerned with deafness or hearing loss may join us as a signatory.

We use 'deafness' and 'hearing loss' to encompass people who are deaf, Deaf, deafblind, deafened and hard of hearing, whatever their chosen mode of communication or response to their deafness and hearing loss.

Vision

A world that benefits from people who are deaf or have a hearing loss being able to fulfil their potential.

Mission

To realise our vision we will work with people who are deaf or have a hearing loss to make sure they have equal access to all aspects of society by

- making sure access is available in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual;
- making sure people who are deaf or have a hearing loss can access all public services, giving special attention to education, health and social care, policing and justice;
- making sure government and others fulfil their obligations under legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- making sure people who are deaf or have a hearing loss are central to discussions about issues affecting their lives, in particular the development of services;
- raising public awareness of deafness and hearing loss, the challenges faced by people who are deaf or have a hearing loss, the needs they have and the contribution they make;
- making sure the education of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss is delivered in environments which maximise linguistic, academic and social development and attainment;
- improving the education and training available to professionals providing services to people who are deaf or have a hearing loss;
- making sure people who are deaf or have a hearing loss can access employment and training in environments which maximise professional and social development and attainment;
- improving the quality and availability of information, advice and guidance for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss, and parents and carers of children who are deaf or have a hearing loss;

- improving the quality of services for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss, including assisting the research and development of technologies that improve access for and to people who are deaf or have a hearing loss; and
- preventing avoidable deafness and hearing loss by educating the public about the value of hearing and how to protect it.

Values

In carrying out our mission we

- **collaborate**: work together;
- are **creative**: explore new ideas and approaches;
- use **evidence**: base our work on the best research and the experiences of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss;
- are **inclusive**: seek to involve all interested organisations and individuals in our work;
- have **integrity**: be open and honest about our work; and
- demonstrate **respect**: have due regard for the different views of individuals and organisations involved in our work.

Steering group

A steering group oversees progress on the following elements of the mission:

- making sure access is available in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual;
- making sure people who are deaf or have a hearing loss can access all public services, giving special attention to education, health and social care, policing and justice;
- making sure government and others fulfil their obligations under legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and
- making sure people who are deaf or have a hearing loss are central to discussions about issues affecting their lives, in particular the development of services.

Mission groups

The following groups develop work on the elements of the mission:

- **awareness:** raising public awareness of deafness and hearing loss, the challenges faced by people who are deaf or have a hearing loss, the needs they have and the contribution they make;
- **education:** making sure the education of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss is delivered in environments which maximise linguistic, academic and social development and attainment; and improving the education and training available to professionals providing services to people who are deaf or have a hearing loss;
- **employment:** making sure people who are deaf or have a hearing loss can access employment and training in environments which maximise professional and social development and attainment;
- **information:** improving the quality and availability of information, advice and guidance for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss, and parents and carers of children who are deaf or have a hearing loss; and
- **services:** improving the quality of services for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss, including assisting the research and development of technologies that improve access for and to people who are deaf or have a hearing loss; and
- **prevention:** preventing avoidable deafness and hearing loss by educating the public about the value of hearing and how to protect it.

4. Suggested work programme (for discussion and agreement)

Members will want to set out a programme of work for the year and, perhaps, the Parliament. Below are some suggestions. Following the discussion, we will draw up an action plan and present it to the next meeting.

Adult hearing screening

The Group's previous chair, Stephen Lloyd, supported the [Hearing Screening for Life](#) campaign. It is a coalition of charities who are calling on the government to introduce a hearing screening programme for everyone at the age of 65.

If the Group decides to support the campaign we will arrange for [Hearing Link](#) to make a presentation at a subsequent meeting.

Provision of hearing aids

In the past year, some clinical commissioning groups have proposed rationing the provision of hearing aids via the NHS. North Staffordshire CCG approved such rationing on 4 March. Organisations concerned with deafness and hearing loss have been opposing these developments.

If the Group decides to support the campaign to retain full NHS hearing aid provision we will arrange for [Action on Hearing Loss](#) to make a presentation at a subsequent meeting.

Inquiry into the cost of minority language recognition for BSL

Although it is indigenous to the United Kingdom and the first language of thousands of people, the government has not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages with respect to British Sign Language (BSL).

Perceived financial cost is possibly the main reason BSL has not been recognised as a minority language. The Group's previous Chair therefore asked us to plan an inquiry that would estimate the economic, social and individual costs of recognition. The inquiry report would help politicians, policy makers and campaigners form a strategy for providing better access for people whose first or main language is BSL

If the Group decides to proceed with the inquiry, we will present a plan at the next meeting.

Employment of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss

People who are deaf or have a hearing loss now enjoy better access to employment, but they are still less likely to be employed than hearing people. The government's commitment to halving the disability employment gap is therefore welcome.

The Access to Work scheme - which provides financial support for aids, adaptations and support workers – has helped many deaf people into work. However, changes to the scheme over the past two years have effected deaf people disproportionately.

Many people still report employers not fulfilling their duties under the Equality Act. They may be unwilling to make reasonable adjustments, or change their working practices in anticipation of recruiting more disabled people.

If the Group decides to proceed with work in this area, we will present a plan at the next meeting. It will include a backbench debate proposal on the impact of government policy on the employment of deaf people, which the Group's previous Chair asked us to draft. We will also ask the [Royal Association for Deaf People](#) (RAD) to make a presentation at a subsequent meeting.

Education of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss

Employment prospects are of course closely linked with access to education. Level of education affects someone's ability to get a job, and the types of job they are suitable for.

Over a fifth of working age people with difficulty hearing have no qualifications, and only around a quarter are educated to degree level. Whilst these figures are improving, if people who are deaf or have a hearing loss are to have the same opportunity as hearing people, access to education must be improved. That means education institutions better able to support children, young people and adults who are deaf or have a hearing loss, and more investment in and better use of technology and communication and language workers.

If the Group decides to proceed with work in this area, we will ask the [National Deaf Children's Society](#) (NDCS) to make a presentation at a subsequent meeting.