

Agenda APPG Deafness: Meeting – 02 April 2025, 1700 - 1800

Venue: Room S, Portcullis House

Attendance

- Catherine Atkinson MP
- Lord (Malcolm) Bruce
- Peter Prinsley MP

- Victoria Adshead (British Academy of Audiology)
- Clare Benton (British Academy of Audiology)
- Justin Cooke (NDCS)
- Nathan Draper (SignHealth)
- Anita Grover (Auditory Verbal UK)
- Rob Geaney (RNID – secretariat).
- Steph Lotz (SignLive)

Agenda Items

1. Workplan for the APPG Deafness

The group held a wide-ranging discussion on the issues that the APPG Deafness could choose to focus on over the coming years. There was widespread agreement that there are far more issues that the APPG could cover than we have the time and capacity to focus on effectively, so we have agreed a short-list of agenda items.

Reform of the Audiology Pathway

The Group discussed some of the issues and problems that are currently facing NHS audiology services, and the impact that this is having on patients and other parts of the NHS system – such as ENT services. Peter Prinsley highlighted the fact that hearing aids were are a clinically effective intervention and highly cost-effective for the NHS. Given the huge unmet need for hearing aids – only two of the six million people that could benefit from them do so – it was agreed that improvements in the audiology pathway offered the APPG the chance to have a positive impact for a huge number of people.

Action – Peter Prinsley will be the lead Officer for the APPG on this work. The first step will be for the British Academy of Audiology and RNID to prepare a paper setting out the issues, to be shared with Peter Prinsley to agree next steps.

Access to Healthcare

RNID and SignHealth informed the group about a report that they are producing on the failure of the NHS in England to meet the communication needs of people who are deaf or have a hearing loss. They briefed on some of the headline findings of their report

(which are still under embargo) and informed the APPG that they would appreciate some parliamentary support for their upcoming campaign to get Government to intervene and encourage the NHS to improve the way it implements the Accessible Information Standard.

Action - Catherine Atkinson as chair will write to the relevant minister, Stephen Kinnock MP, to request that he attends a meeting of the APPG to discuss the report from RNID and SignHealth. RNID will liaise with counterparts at RNIB to discuss whether this should be a joint meeting with the APPG on Eye Health and Visual impairment, and will then draft the letter to be sent to Stephen Kinnock.

Employment Opportunities for people who are deaf or have hearing loss

The group discussed the existing Government support which aims to help disabled people – including those who are deaf and have hearing loss – to enter, remain and thrive in the workplace. Catherine Atkinson highlighted the number of deaf constituents who are attending her surgery seeking support in engaging with Access to Work, noting that the delays in claims and payments with the scheme are hampering their ability to book communication support for work.

The group also discussed the provision of employment support to people who are deaf or have a hearing loss and the importance of ensuring that the additional £1bn of spending allocated to these services is delivered effectively for deaf people – which might include the use of specialist deaf services who are linguistically and culturally aware of the barriers deaf BSL users face.

Action – RNID to pull together examples of the problems that people are facing within the Access to Work scheme and set out the potential intervention that the APPG could make on that issue. RNID will also look at the evidence around the existing evidence of what forms of employment support work best for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss, in order to allow the APPG to make a strong argument about how the £1bn of funding allocated in the Green Paper can make the biggest difference for our community.

Celebrating deaf achievement and culture within Parliament

Catherine Atkinson opened this part of the discussion, saying that she has been contacted by a number of deaf organisations and believes that there is a positive vision of deaf culture and achievement that should be celebrated in Parliament. It was also noted that the Deaflympics take place in Tokyo this November and that all the Team GB athletes competing will be self-funding.

Action – NDCS will lead on pulling together a list of deaf celebrities or high-achievers that could be invited to a possible event. Catherine Atkinson will investigate the potential for us to use Speaker's House as a venue for the reception.

2. AOB

If was agreed that the APPG should hold another meeting in June to report back on progress on each of these issues. The secretariat will liaise with Catherine Atkinson's office to arrange this date.