**Minutes: APPG Deafness, Meeting, 19th July 2023, 1000-1100**

**Minutes**

Meeting Held via MS Teams, details circulated in advance

**Present**

* Lilian Greenwood MP
* Marion Fellows MP
* Nicola Taylor, office of Apsana Begum MP

**In attendance**

* Joanne Cholerton, UK Deaf Sport (speaker)
* Justin Cooke, NDCS
* Craig Crowley (Speaker), Chair of the BSL Advisory Board and Action Deafness
* Rob Geaney, RNID (Minutes)
* Alistair Hyde, NCHA
* Tom Lichy, BDA
* Katie Littlejohns (speaker)
* Emily McCabe, NCHA
* Graham Turner, BDA

**1. Update on the work of the BSL Advisory Board and implementation of the BSL Act**

Craig Crowley provided an update on the work of the BSL Advisory Board since his appointment as co-chair of the Board in November. He explained that the rest of the Board had since been appointed and met twice to agree it’s priorities and working programmes. He explained that the first report to be issued under Part 2 of the BSL Act – focusing on how each Government department communicates with the Deaf community – will be published imminently.

Marion Fellows ask if the Advisory Board has a webpage and if it would be possible for her to access minutes of the discussions. Craig confirmed this was the case and the relevant link was shared in the meeting chat (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/british-sign-language-bsl-advisory-board-meeting-summaries/bsl-advisory-board-meeting-summary-9-may-2023-including-bsl-version>)

Lilian asked what the Advisory Board saw its role being in relation to the report – was it as a regulator of Government communications, to offer advice or to try and highlight and spread best practice. Craig said that the role of the Board was still emerging, but he expected the report to highlight differences between the best and worst performing departments and to push for more consistency.

**2. Funding and access to BSL classes for parents of Deaf children**

Katie Littlejohhs informed the Group about the lack of support and information that she had been provided when she found out that her newborn son was Deaf. She explained that the support provided to her was loaded towards technology to support hearing and didn’t provide guidance on BSL or Deaf culture. She said that although she considered BSL to be her child’s first language there was no support, funding or route for her or the rest of the family to learn BSL and be able to communicate with her child. Katie provided details of her petition to the Government and the steps she has taken with NDCS and BDA to find a mechanism for parents of Deaf Children to access BSL classes.

Justin Cooke from NDCS highlighted that one of the key problems in this situation is that BSL lessons are considered within the adult education system as a skill for the parent, and family lessons in BSL are not seen as a core form of support for the child through their family.

Marion Fellows asked Katie to provide her further details of her correspondence on this issue so that she could raise the issues directly with the Minister.

Lilian asked what support the APPG could provide. Justin indicated that NDCS would be happy to provide suggested PQs and correspondence on the matter and confirmed that he would share that with the Chair.

Actions:

* Katie Littlejohns to provide further information and previous correspondence to Marion Fellows MP.
* Justin Cooke from NDCS to provide Lilian with suggested PQs and correspondence.

**3. Funding for UK Deaf Sport**

Joanne Cholerton, Chief Executive of UK Deaf Sport provided a presentation to the Group of the lack of funding from UK Sport and the DCMS for elite deaf athletes. The UK Deaflympic team receives no public money to help them train and compete at the Deaflympics – in contrast to the Olympic, Paralympic and Special Olympic Teams. She highlighted that the only funding UK Deaf Sport has is for participation, not elite competition. She said that the lack of high-profile deaf sports starts is an issue for participation, and provided data showing the lack of sport and physical activity undertaken in the Deaf community. She asked the Group to help her press DCMS to provide funding.

In the discussion that followed both Lilian Greenwood and Marion Fellows expressed disappointment that funding still hasn’t been provided to Deaf athletes at indicated that they would support the campaign. It was agreed that UK Deaf Sport would work with the Secretariat to provide suggested WPQs and correspondence for MPs to lobby the DCMS on the issue.

**4. AOB**

No issues were raised under AOB.