



2021 Scottish Parliamentary
Election
deafscotland's asks

December 2020

Janis McDonald

"Blindness cuts us off from things, but deafness cuts us off from people" Helen Keller

deafscotland's five asks for the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary election and for those elected

deafscotland wants Scotland's 1 million people affected by deafness to be connected and included as active citizens in Scotland. The elections to the Scottish Parliament in May 2021 give you the opportunity to make that happen.

We invite you to support the following five "asks", during and after the election campaign. Your support counts as a candidate, an activist, trade unionist and as a citizen in Scotland. Our asks are:

1. That you **support Inclusive Communication** to move from only being about "disability" to the mainstream in order to ease the passage of equality and human rights to the heart of mainstream democracy, government, services and information.
2. You commit to making sure the **Principles of Inclusive Communication** are at the heart of everything you do – your manifesto, your strategy, the way your party operates, and should your candidates be elected, your party will push for an Inclusive Communication strategy to be at the heart of government.
3. Scotland's **children and young people**, including deaf children, should be supported to reach their full potential. You will support an Inclusive Communication strategy to make sure this happens.
4. **Health and Social Care Partnerships** support our most vulnerable citizens, including deaf people. You will promote Communication For All to make sure service planning and delivery is inclusive from the start, person-centred and rights-based.
5. **Data collection** is Scotland needs to change. You will support changes to the way data is collected to make sure there is accurate information on the numbers of deaf people across the four pillars of deafness and the barriers they face on a daily basis to ensure the services and information that they use and get are fit for purpose.

Communication is a basic human right: without Inclusive Communication (**Communication For All**), the rights holders have little chance of accessing their rights; and duty bearers have little chance of ensuring that rights holders have the information they need to access

their rights. Inclusive Communication must be at the centre of any strategy to ensure that the work is inclusive of and accessible to all citizens in Scotland. What this means in practice is that **Inclusive Communication must be moved from “disability” to mainstream** in order to ease the passage of equality and human rights to the heart of **mainstream services and information**. Too often Inclusive Communication is seen as how information is produced, for example, when a paper is translated into Braille or BSL or when an Electronic Notetaker is booked for a meeting. This is, in fact, producing **Accessible Information**. **Inclusive Communication is the thinking** behind Accessible Information. **Inclusive Communication is the inclusion of people** who use the services and information at the planning stages. **Inclusive Communication is looking at how you train staff** to make sure they know how to include service users and produce accessible information.

We ask that your political party puts the **Principles of Inclusive Communication** at the **very centre of their manifestos** in order that everyone in Scotland receives the same messages at the same time so reducing **communication poverty** and **deficit**. For example, you make sure that information is accessible because you have put Inclusive Communication at the heart of your election strategy. If putting out TV election broadcasts, insist that BSL interpretation and subtitles are provided as standard. Videos produced by the party or by the candidate are produced with BSL translation and captions. All written materials are written in plain language. You consider translating written materials to Easy Read for people who have a Learning Disability. You can provide someone who can use Deafblind Manual when you visit a Deafblind person in their home to ask for their support. If elected, the **Principles of Inclusive Communication** will continue to influence all your communication in Parliament, across Government and with constituents.

We ask that each party and independent candidate puts the Principles of Inclusive Communication at the centre of **all education strategies** in Scotland, whether The Curriculum for Excellence and GIRFEC remain or are changed. This should ensure all children in Scotland, including all deaf children, reach their full potential. The Scottish Government needs to invest in Teachers of the Deaf, BSL tutors and BSL Champions to make sure deaf children are not left behind and have the option to learn bilingually from a young age. Hearing children should also have the opportunity to learn BSL so that deaf children have a peer group who can communicate with them directly, in their own communities.

We ask that each political party and independent candidate gives the commitment that **Health and Social Care Partnerships** will be actively encouraged to apply the Principles of Inclusive Communication to the planning of services so that each service is truly inclusive from the start, person-centred and rights-based.

And finally we ask that each political party and independent candidate gives a firm commitment to **look at how data is collected** in Scotland. You will support changes to the way data is collected to make sure there is accurate information on the numbers of deaf people across the four pillars of deafness and the barriers they face on a daily basis to ensure the services and information that they use and get are fit for purpose. As the use of technology increases, there is a real and pressing need to make sure people affected by deafness are not left behind or subject to “Cinderella” services because service providers/duty bearers do not know how many deaf people will need their services or how to break down the language/communication barriers they face.

Background to our “asks”

Since Covid-19 hit Scotland, it has become more obvious that the lack of understanding of inclusive communication has had a detrimental effect on deaf people and their access to information and services. The “Road to Recovery” could be completely different if the **Principles of Inclusive Communication** are incorporated into strategic planning across the whole of government and all public bodies in Scotland.

Our campaign, **Communication For All**, wants to see Inclusive Communication being the way forward. We speak about Communication Poverty and Communication Deficit.

What do we mean by **Communication Poverty**? During lockdown, the First Minister's broadcasts all had and still have a BSL/English Interpreter present. To begin with, too often, the interpreter was cut from the screen so that people watching could not see what the interpreter was signing. This defeats the purpose of having the interpreter in the first place. But while we applaud the use of the interpreter, again, there were too few subtitles produced at the same time, meaning the 12,500 Deaf/BSL users in Scotland had access to the information, but the 355,000 people who are Deafened and some of the 700,000 people who are Hard of Hearing missed out.

Communication deficit, on the other hand, came in the fact that most of the support on offer during lockdown was only accessible by telephone or online. The majority of people affected by deafness are

older and do not use online technology as it is not something they grew up with or used in their work. Many deaf people cannot use the telephone, but do have mobile phones so they can use SMS. Those who are online, use email. These two options were not available to access most support services so deaf people were left without the very services set up to support them.

The especially vulnerable

A group of deaf people who have been particularly let down have been those who are **Deafblind** and need hands-on communication in order to communicate with others and receive information and support. These people have been left much more socially isolated and more vulnerable to mental and physical ill-health because of this. Without contact with others, people who are Deafblind and use hands –on signing or Deafblind Manual have been left without information about the pandemic and about what is happening on a daily basis during the crisis, but they are also being left without companionship and comfort in these strange times. This is a breach of their human rights.

In the last 20 years, since devolution, deafscotland and its members have been working with and across government and Scottish public bodies to make life in Scotland more inclusive and accessible for people affected by deafness. The **Cross Party Group on Deafness (CPGD)** (<https://www.parliament.scot/msps/deafness.aspx>) has provided the opportunity for elected members to find out more about deafness across the four pillars since the group was set up in 2000.

The Scottish Government published **the Principles of Inclusive Communication** in 2011 as part of the work done by the Independent Living in Scotland Reference Group:
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2011/09/principles-inclusive-communication-information-self-assessment-tool-public-authorities/documents/0120931-pdf/0120931-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/0120931.pdf?forceDownload=true>

The **British Sign Language and Linguistic Access Working Group** (BSLLAWG), set up at the same time, provided a bridge between deaf organisations and the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government published the “**Long and Winding Road: A Roadmap for BSL and Linguistic Access in Scotland**” (<http://www.scod.org.uk/scotdeaf/wp->

[content/uploads/2015/04/The-Long-and-Winding-Road-Roadmap-for-BSL-and-Linguistic-Access-in-Scotland-2008.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_15-05_British_Sign_Language_Scotland_Bill.pdf)) in 2009.

In 2014, the Scottish Government published “**See Hear: A strategic framework for meeting the needs of people with a sensory impairment in Scotland**” (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/see-hear/pages/3/>)

Mark Griffin MSP, the Convenor of the CPGD, put forward the British Sign Language (BSL) Bill as a Private Member’s Bill (http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_15-05_British_Sign_Language_Scotland_Bill.pdf) , supported by deafscotland and its members. The **BSL (Scotland) Act** was passed into law in 2015. Since then, the Scottish Government and public bodies have put in place the BSL National and Local Plans. So far, there is little evidence of the rolling review that was to take place once the plans were published.

In 2014, deafscotland **reviewed the Long and Winding Road** (<http://www.scod.org.uk/scotdeaf/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Summary-of-the-Roadmap-Review-Report.pdf>) and found that some achievements had been made in progressing BSL and Linguistic Access for deaf people in Scotland, but many of the asks in the roadmap had been shelved.

deafscotland launched our **Communication For All Campaign** in Edinburgh on Wednesday 4 September 2019. This is the overarching campaign for Inclusive Communication and Accessible Information for all people affected by deafness across the four pillars of deafness (<https://deafscotland.org/support-communication-for-all/>) so that everyone of these 1 million people can be an active, informed citizen in Scotland.

About deafscotland

deafscotland is the trading name for the Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD), a company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland (492886) and a registered Scottish charity (SC016957). We are the **membership organisation for the deaf sector** in Scotland promoting equality, access and citizenship for all those affected by deafness and their families. Established in 1927, we support the **social model of disability** and promote a **rights based, person-centred approach**. Our members are from the Public, Private and Third Sectors and we are an enabling, lived experience-led organisation.

deafscotland aims to ensure that the 1 million people affected by deafness in Scotland are integrated in the political agenda of all political parties in the short, medium and longer term. We represent organisations and individuals, working with and on behalf of people from across the full spectrum of deafness – the **four pillars**: Deaf/Deaf Sign Language users (12,500); Deafened (355,000); Deafblind (4,000); and Hard of Hearing (700,000).



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