**British Sign Language APPG 26/02/2025**

***Attendees:***

* Jen Craft MP
* Katie Lam MP
* Charlotte Nichols MP
* Perran Moon MP
* Frank McNally MP
* Matt Turmaine MP
* David Findlay (representing Alberto Costa MP)

In attendance: Tom Lichy, Mike Hobday, British Deaf Association

***Statement of purpose – agreed to by all present:***

“To raise the profile of British Sign Language in Parliament; to bring the voice of BSL signers into Westminster and to promise the aspirations of the signing community”

***Election of Officers & Secretariat:***

All officers were elected unanimously:

* Jen Craft MP – Chair
* Charlotte Nichols MP – Vice-Chair
* Katie Lam MP – Treasurer
* Perran Moon MP – Secretary

British Deaf Association (BDA) elected as Secretariat.

***Discussion of plans for Sign Language Week:***

*Westminster Hall Debate:*

* BDA happy to offer speaking notes.

Re: question of using BSL on the floor of the house

* Frank McNally – involved in writing Scottish Sign Language Act in 2014, which was introduced in sign language. Precedent for signing in other assemblies.
* Charlotte – suggestion of raising the point at Business Questions - if we’re unable to use BSL this year, we could request a meeting with Leader of the House & Modernisation Committee.

*Informal engagement event ahead of Westminster Hall Debate 20/03/02*

* Room O, PCH, 11.00-12.30.
* Invite to include photo call – 12.20pm

*Introduction to BSL for Members:*

* Jen to send details of sessions to officers, who will share with colleagues.

[ParliNet | Introduction to BSL for Members](https://parlinet.parliament.uk/events/2025/march/introduction-to-bsl-for-members2/) 18/3/2025

 [ParliNet | Introduction to BSL for Members](https://parlinet.parliament.uk/events/2025/march/introduction-to-bsl-for-members/) 6/3/2025

*PCH interactive session:*

* Charlotte – keen to book space in centre of PCH for interactive activities. BDA will look into this – Jen’s office to follow up.

*Social Media:*

* Charlotte – suggestion of video demonstrating how to sign key parliamentary terminology, for example, ‘honourable friend’ & ‘thank you Mr Speaker’.
* Charlotte – suggestion of video describing how deaf constituents can contact their MPs.

***Discussion Points:***

*Artificial Intelligence:*

* David – interested to discuss how AI can be used to increase access, for example on Public Transport.
* Charlotte – good opportunities to raise AI points in the House over the next few months. Errors in AI generated language translation – need to ensure deaf people are involved in creation of services.
* BDA: Opportunities and risks. AI recognition of sign language is challenging – translation is one-directional, but interpretation is two-way. Issues around ethics. BDA currently in the process of writing a discussion paper on this issue.

*Government:*

* David – importance of encouraging uptake of local Government services, as well as pushing for better provisions.
* Perran - keen to encourage Government to provide free BSL classes to the families of deaf children.
* Frank – BSL services are largely devolved. Suggestion that it could be helpful to get some cross-party conversations going. Can learn from the work of the Scottish Parliament & discuss shared issues.

*British Sign Language GCSE:*

* Teaching was set to begin in September 2025, but this target will not be met. Ofqual unsure how to assess – disappointing given existing assessment system for BSL already in place. Jen to follow up with Ministers and / or potential for group letter.

*Visits:*

* Jen keen to visit BSL first language school. Catherine Atkinson may be willing to help organise (given prominent school in her constituency).
* Charlotte – would like to host the group in Warrington Deaf Centre & aims to discuss this further at future meetings.