

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP on MODERN LANGUAGES



Chair: Tonia Antoniazzi MP (Lab); Co-Chair: Baroness Coussins (CB);
Vice-Chairs: Darren Paffey MP (Lab); Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury (Con).

APPG on Modern Languages: Review 2024/looking ahead to 2025

A summary of some of the APPG's (and APPG-related) activities this year, and a look ahead at some of the events and milestones coming up in 2025.

Review of 2024:

1) Activities of the APPG

1.1) The APPG elected new Officers following the General Election:

- Chair: Tonia Antoniazzi MP
- Co-Chair (re-elected): Baroness Coussins
- Vice-Chair: Darren Paffey MP
- Vice-Chair (re-elected): Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury.

The APPG formally thanks the previous Chair, Dame Nia Griffith MP, for her work chairing the Group since 2019, and as a Vice Chair for six years before that.

1.2) Six formal meetings were held:

29 January 2024

Parliamentary launch of The Languages Gateway

The British Academy and other leads discussed the Languages Gateway, the new national portal for languages, and plans for Towards a National Languages Strategy, with a focus on supporting key target audiences across the UK.

Speakers:

- Mark Critchley, Director, Durham University Language Centre, and Chair of the Languages Gateway Editorial Board
- Charles Forsdick, Lead Fellow for Languages, British Academy
- Sarah Cowan, Head of Policy – HE and Research, British Academy

18 March 2024

Annual General Meeting and planning meeting

The APPG re-elected its Officers.

29 April 2024

Meet the Cities of Languages

City-wide initiatives focussing on languages to boost schools and communities.

Speakers:

- Declan Baharini, Chief Executive Officer, International Newcastle
- Sarah Edgar, Education Consultant, Newcastle City Council
- Anna Grainger, Founder, Coventry City of Languages
- Kate Astbury, Warwick University
- Liz Lord, ALL Portsmouth Primary Hub
- Paul Joyce and Tanya Riordan, University of Portsmouth

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- Karen Thomas, Portsmouth City Council
- Yaron Matras, Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics
- Ivan Wadeson, Manchester City of Literature
- Qaisra Shahraz, MACFEST
- Raquel Tola Rego, Education Consultant, Hackney
- Paul Thomas, Headteacher, Parkwood Primary School, Hackney
- Bernadette Clinton, MFL Consultant, Hackney

9 September 2024

Inaugural meeting of the APPG in the new Parliament

The APPG elected its Officers and discussed issues relating to the forthcoming reporting year. Tonia Antoniazzi MP was elected as the new Chair, and Darren Paffey MP was elected as a new Vice Chair. Baroness Coussins, Co-Chair, and Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury, were both re-elected.

7 October 2024

Language department closures and loss of provision in the university sector

Understanding the pressures on HEIs leading them to reduce provision of language degrees, the emergence of 'cold spots' both geographically and demographically across the UK, with insights into perspectives of senior management, wider Humanities and English, and the interaction between university language departments and language centres.

Speakers:

- Vivienne Stern, CEO of Universities UK.
- Becky Muradas-Taylor, Professor of Languages & Linguistics, Leeds University
- Nadia Kiwan, Professor Francophone Studies, University of Aberdeen
- Nigel Harkness, Pro Vice Chancellor of Humanities & Social Sciences
- Jenny Richards, Professor of English, Cambridge University
- Ana Maria Sousa Aguiar de Medeiros, Director, King's College London Language Centre
- Emma Cayley, Professor of French, University of Leeds and Chair, UCFL

9 December 2024

How do we turn around teacher recruitment in languages?

Speakers:

- Rene Koglbauer, Chair of Management Board, ALL
- Judith Rifesser, President, ALL
- Vicky Gough, Schools Adviser, British Council
- Tanya Riordan, University of Portsmouth
- Katrin Sredksi-Seamer, Director of the National Modern Languages SCITT
- Nuria Ferrer Vilella, current LTTS Scholar trainee
- Natalya Corn, recent LTTS Scholar, newly qualified early career teacher.

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1.3) Other APPG activity

- In January, the APPG published *The APPG on Modern Languages calls for an urgent plan of action to safeguard accessibility to international visits and exchanges in all schools.*
- In March, the APPG submitted a response to the **Advanced British Standard Consultation.**
- In May, the APPG submitted a response to the **NHS Constitution consultation.**
- In July, **Module 1 of the COVID-19 Inquiry was published** to which the APPG had submitted evidence.
- In September, the **Lords Public Services Committee Inquiry into Interpreting and Translation Services in the Courts** opened, relevant to some of the discussions and submissions to which the APPG contributed in recent years.
- In October, the APPG's newly elected Officers met to discuss priorities for the new parliament.
- In November, the APPG submitted a response to the **Curriculum and Assessment Review's call for evidence.**

1.4) Increasing APPG membership in the new parliament

- **Current parliamentary membership is 38** (13 members of the House of Commons and 25 members of the House of Lords).
- The newly elected Officers of the APPG are **encouraging new members of both Houses of Parliament to join the APPG.**
- In December, the APPG promoted **Duolingo's Westminster Language Challenge, running January-March 2025**, in which MPs and peers can compete on the app for the chance to share out a £20,000 donation to charity.
 - On 4 December, the APPG held **Christmas Drinks**, sponsored by Duolingo, to welcome new parliamentary members to the APPG and announce the Language Challenge.
 - On 10 December, the APPG hosted a **drop-in session for MPs and peers** to meet, sign up to the Westminster Language Challenge, and take photographs.

2) Relevant activity of the Officers of the APPG

2.1) Spoken contributions:

- In [January](#) and [April](#), Baroness Coussins tabled an amendment to the Victims and Prisoners Bill that 'qualified and experienced professionals must be engaged' when interpreting and translation services are needed. HMG agreed to pursue this requirement in the Victims Code rather than in the bill, subject to stakeholder consultation.
- In March, Baroness Coussins [asked HMG](#) about the harassment of journalists working for the BBC Persian service.
- In April, Baroness Coussins [asked HMG](#) whether **group passports** could be reintroduced for school group travel.
- In April, Baroness Coussins tabled a [debate](#) on 'the importance of educational trips and exchanges from England to other countries'.
 - Baroness Garden, the Earl of Clancarty and Lord Hannay also spoke in this debate.
- In May, Tonia Antoniazzi [asked HMG](#) to debate measures to increase participation of young people in school trips and exchanges.

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- In May, Lord Aberdare tabled a [debate](#) ‘**to move that this House takes note of the Importance of skills for the success of the UK economy and for the quality of life for individuals**’.
 - Baroness Coussins also spoke in this debate
- In July, Baroness Coussins spoke in the Lords [debate](#) on King’s speech day about school visits and exchanges.
- In September, Baroness Garden spoke in a [debate](#) about **Higher Education funding**, on the fall in the number of international students.
- In September, Baroness Coussins spoke in the Lords [debate](#) on the **Covid-19 Inquiry**, citing evidence submitted by the APPG to the Inquiry on language policy implications for Covid-19 outcomes.
- In September, Baroness Coussins [asked HMG](#) about **rejoining Erasmus Plus**
- In November, spoke in a [debate](#) about **universities**, on the fall in the number of international students.
- In November, Baroness Coussins [asked HMG](#) about supporting the **BBC World Service**
- In December, Baroness Coussins [asked HMG](#) to ensure the **NHS Plan Consultation** would be published in languages other than English.
- In December, Baroness Coussins [asked HMG](#) about the loss of reciprocity in international student mobility since leaving Erasmus Plus, in a Lords debate about **the attractiveness of the HE sector**.

2.2) Written Questions:

During 2024, Baroness Coussins tabled 31 relevant [Written Questions](#) covering **public service interpreters in the NHS and the courts including amendments to the Victims Code; supporting Afghan interpreters; interpreters in conflict zones; machine translation; strategic support for languages in HE as a vulnerable subject; trainee teacher bursaries for languages and teacher recruitment; school visits and exchanges; and the Mandarin Excellence Programme.**

2.3) Other:

- In May, Baroness Coussins conducted an interview with a student journalist on **student international mobility**.
- In August, Baroness Coussins visited **GCHQ**.
- In August, **CIOL ran a competition** together with Baroness Coussins to propose a new collective noun for Linguists.
- In October, Baroness Coussins wrote the Foreword for the **Lifelong Education Institute’s Lifelong Learning Pathways – Incentivising the uptake of Foreign Language Skills** by Dr Maísa Edwards and Cristina Cortes.
- In October, Baroness Coussins gave **talks to pupils** at Simon Langton Girls' School in Kent and Haberdashers Askes School in London.
 - As a result of this visit, the APPG Secretariat has been working with the CIOL and the British Council and others on a **guide for schools listing speakers for assemblies and careers fairs**.

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3) Looking ahead to 2025:

3.1) Future APPG activity:

The APPG plans to host Duolingo to announce the winners of **the Westminster Language Challenge in April 2024**.

The APPG expects to pursue issues raised in meetings in 2024, including:

- Plan of action for **school visits and exchanges**
- Action to support the **provision of languages in the HE sector**
- Action to improve **teacher recruitment and retention for languages**.

The APPG is planning to run six meetings in 2025. Topics could include:

- **Artificial Intelligence and machine translation**
- **Modern languages and language policy in Wales**
- **Updates on issues affecting mobility and international exchange for pupils and students.**
- **The provision of public service interpreters in the NHS**

3.2) Other notable developments and milestones expected in 2025:

- **The Curriculum and Assessment Review** will report.
- The **Lords Public Services Committee Inquiry into Interpreting and Translation Services in the Courts** will report.
- The Ministry of Justice is expected to publish its **review of the qualifications and experience required of court and tribunal interpreters**.
- In England, **the National Consortium for Languages Education is expected to continue their work** with schools-based Language Hubs and the launch of a national online CPD programme.
- The introduction of the **new GCSE in British Sign Language** (originally planned for September 2025) is expected to be delayed.
- In Scotland, **the Curriculum for Excellence** is being reviewed.

4) Appendix: APPG Modern Languages in the media in 2024

- The APPG's Twitter (X) account reached **2,282 followers**.
- The APPG Secretariat writes a regular update for ***The Linguist***, the magazine for members of the Chartered Institute of Linguists.
- There were no significant press or media appearances by the APPG this year.