

Policy document	
Title	Policy on deaf children and access to media
Approved by	Executive Directors
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1. Background

NDCS believes that deaf children need full access to same TV, film, online content and all other types of media as other children. Full access enables deaf children to understand, enjoy and share in the wider community, its languages and culture. NDCS welcomes the advances that have been made in recent years in improving access to media, and continues to call for continued progress.

2. Access

Deaf children should be able to access all broadcast services and equipment in a functionally equivalent way to other children and without cost penalty. Broadcasters have a duty to provide a high-quality universal service that meets the diverse needs of deaf children and young people. Broadcasters also have a duty to consider and meet the access needs of deaf children and young people from the start when developing new forms of technology, such as on-demand online TV or web-streaming of video clips.

For many deaf children, subtitles enable access to television, cinema and other types of media. Research shows that the majority of deaf children rely on subtitles on television all of the time or sometimes. Parents and teachers report that subtitles can have a positive impact on literacy. NDCS calls on all broadcasters to continue to move towards 100% on-demand provision of subtitles for all types of media, including online media and films shown in the cinema.

For some deaf children, sign language provision is needed to enable access. Research shows that deaf children and young people prefer content to be delivered directly in sign language, rather than through interpreters. NDCS calls on all broadcasters to explore ways in which signed content can be shown more often and at times convenient to deaf children and their families.

Where access is provided, NDCS calls on broadcasters to ensure that awareness of this is effectively promoted and disseminated to deaf children and their families through sources such as the NDCS website.

NDCS also calls on all broadcasters to ensure quality assurance mechanisms are in place to minimise mistakes and poor quality subtitles / signed interpretation and to proactively take steps to continue to improve access.

3. Portrayal of deafness

The majority of deaf children are born to hearing families and attend mainstream schools. Many deaf children may therefore rarely see or encounter other deaf children, young people or adults. Exposure to deaf people, if presented in a positive and realistic way, in TV, films and other media can therefore be invaluable in raising deaf children's self esteem. It can also help to raise awareness of deafness and the communication needs of deaf children and young people in other people, and demonstrate that deafness is not a barrier to achievement and success.

NDCS encourages broadcasters to identify and explore opportunities for deaf children, young people and adults to appear in a positive and realistic way as characters, presenters or participants in programmes aimed at children and young people.

4. Involving deaf children

Broadcasters and decision-makers must consult with and include deaf children and their families in decisions on access to television, film and other media, particularly in the development of new technologies. Decision-makers and broadcasters must establish an ongoing and effective consultation mechanism with deaf children, and their families and those who represent and support them. For example, cinemas should work with deaf people and their families to ensure that subtitled films are shown at times that are convenient to deaf children and their families.

Broadcasters should also encourage the training and involvement of deaf young people within the industry.

NDCS continues to work with broadcasters to provide advice and training on simple steps that can be taken to deliver wider access to media and accurate portrayals of deafness.

Research

NDCS (2005), In their own words: young deaf people's access to television. Funded by Red Bee Media Ltd. Available at: <http://www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=3192>