

Specialist Education Support Services for Deaf Children: Advice for commissioners (England)

Introduction

This factsheet is for directors of children's services and other local decision makers in England. It will:

- give you information about the importance of providing specialist education or hearing support services for deaf children, so you can help make sure that children in your area get the right education support
- remind you of the issues and legal requirements that need to be taken into account when proposing any changes to these vital services or when carrying out any local strategic reviews (in 2017, the Department for Education made funding available to local authorities to carry out such reviews)
- dispel some common myths about deafness
- help you to better understand childhood deafness.

We also have a separate guide with information for commissioners who are considering making changes to specialist provision in mainstream schools (i.e. resource provisions or bases).¹

Childhood deafness: some key points

Deafness is not a learning disability and non-verbal IQ results don't show significant differences between hearing and deaf children.² But government figures consistently show that deaf children are not making the educational progress they are capable of.³

This doesn't have to be the case. With the right support, deaf children should make the same progress, and reach similar levels of attainment, as other children. Decisions made in your local authority can help make sure this happens.

Teaching and learning use the main senses of sight and hearing. Having a hearing loss means that both deaf pupils and those who teach them are faced with complex challenges in developing language and accessing learning. Research shows that even a mild hearing loss can have a significant impact.⁴

¹ National Deaf Children's Society. *Specialist Provision for Hearing Children Within Mainstream Schools: Advice for commissioners*.

www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/our_resources/education_resources.html (accessed 26 May 2017).

² McCay, V. Fifty Years of Research on the Intelligence of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children: A review of the literature and discussion of implications. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*. 2005. 10 (3).

³ National Deaf Children's Society. Note on Department for Education figures on attainment for deaf children in 2016 (England). www.ndcs.org.uk/data (accessed 26 May 2017).

The needs of deaf children are extremely diverse in terms of:

- levels and types of hearing loss, which could range from mild to profound and include temporary and unilateral (one-sided) deafness
- technologies used, for example, hearing aids, cochlear implants, radio aids, middle ear implants
- communication approaches, for example, oral, British Sign Language (BSL), Sign Supported English (SSE), Cued Speech, etc.
- languages used – research suggests that more than 1 in 10 (12%) deaf children in the UK use an additional spoken language other than English at home.⁵
- other additional needs – research suggests that around 21% of deaf children in England have additional special educational needs.⁶

Permanent deafness is a low incidence need, meaning that mainstream teachers and other school staff are unlikely to have the experience, knowledge and skills to support deaf children to access the curriculum. Deaf pupils, their teachers and other staff depend on support from specialist Teachers of the Deaf to help deaf children progress in their education.

Teachers of the Deaf play a critical role in the early years. Unlike other teachers, Teachers of the Deaf work directly with deaf children and their families from a very early age, throughout their education. As the majority of parents of deaf children (90%⁷) have no previous experience of deafness, Teachers of the Deaf play an important role in giving advice and support to families, particularly on communication and language development. They also give emotional support – helping parents come to terms with their child's diagnosis. Teachers of the Deaf advise staff in nurseries and other early years settings on the adjustments they need to make to make sure deaf children are included and don't fall behind.

If a deaf child doesn't get the right support, right from the start, and fails to achieve in language and communication in their early years, they are likely to need more support in school as they get older, at a higher cost to the local authority.

⁴ Ear Foundation. *Experiences of Young People with Mild to Moderate Hearing Loss: Views of parents and teachers*. 2015. www.ndcs.org.uk/research (accessed 26 May 2017).

⁵ Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE). 2015 UK-Wide Summary: CRIDE report on 2015 survey of educational provision for deaf children. 2016. www.ndcs.org.uk/cride (accessed 17 May 2017).

⁶ Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE). CRIDE report on 2015 survey of educational provision for deaf children: England. 2016. www.ndcs.org.uk/cride (accessed 17 May 2017).

⁷ Mitchell, R.E. and Karchmer, M.A. Chasing the Mythical Ten Percent: Parental Hearing Status of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in the United States. *Sign Language Studies*. 2004. 4: 138–163

Case study: learning how to support a deaf child

Angela's son, Riley, was diagnosed as profoundly deaf at three weeks old. The family has been receiving support from their Teacher of the Deaf at home once a week. This has helped them to understand childhood deafness and to learn how they can support Riley. Angela said: "The professional and emotional support offered is so valued by my family and I'm sure every other family she works with. We really don't know what we would do without our weekly visits – our teacher is a lifeline."

We know that many local authorities are looking to make cost-savings. And that local authorities are being asked to carry out strategic reviews of how high needs funding is spent. We hope that this information will influence decision makers to protect services for some of the most vulnerable children in society.

Our team of regional directors work to support local decision makers on the needs of deaf children and can talk through any of the issues raised in this factsheet. Details of how to contact your regional director can be found on page 14.

Myths and misunderstandings about deafness

Myth: cochlear implants and new technology mean deaf children no longer need support.

Fact: cochlear implants don't 'cure' deafness and no technology turns deaf children into 'hearing' children. Children with cochlear implants and advanced hearing aids still need support from qualified Teachers of the Deaf.

Myth: newborn hearing screening and vastly improved hearing technologies mean that more deaf children are now diagnosed earlier, have the potential to use spoken language and therefore don't need as much support as before.

Fact: support from Teachers of the Deaf is actually more, not less, important. This will help to maximise the effects of these positive developments and identify any language, communication or learning needs that may be masked by improved speech intelligibility.

Myth: children with unilateral (one-sided) or mild hearing loss aren't deaf and don't need help.

Fact: research has shown that mild deafness can have a major impact on outcomes and there is a very significant gap in attainment between deaf and hearing children.⁸ Each child's needs should be considered on an individual basis and specialist support should be given as needed.

Myth: local authorities don't need to provide specialist help to pre-school deaf children – this is the responsibility of the NHS.

Fact: the SEN and Disability Code of Practice defines SEN and SEN provision for the age ranges 0–2 and 3–5. It lists specialist teaching support, including from Teachers of

⁸ Ear Foundation. *Experiences of Young People with Mild to Moderate Hearing Loss: Views of parents and teachers*. 2015. www.ndcs.org.uk/research (accessed 26 May 2017).

the Deaf, as being among the services that pre-school children might need. The School Finance Regulations state that the Dedicated Schools Grant should be used to fund specialist educational support for these children.

Myth: most deaf children have statements or Education Health and Care (EHC) plans.

Fact: in 2016, only 14% of deaf children had a statement or an EHC plan.⁹ There is a very significant attainment gap between hearing and deaf children that needs to be closed, whether the child has a statutory plan or not.

Myth: there is no obligation for the local authority to provide education support for young people once they have left school.

Fact: young people in colleges and on apprenticeships can now have an EHC plan. The local authority still has statutory responsibility for these young people. The SEN and Disability Code of Practice also applies to children and young people aged 0–25. Local authorities will need to make sure that their services for deaf children are adequately funded and able to meet the needs of deaf young people post-16.

Myth: services for deaf children are double-funded as schools already receive £6,000 of SEN funding per pupil.

Fact: since 2013/14, the Department for Education has included all funding for SEN services within the high needs block – with no separation of funding for services to children with higher needs than others.¹⁰ Unless a local authority has already delegated their entire high needs budget to all schools and settings, this means that schools have **not** received funding to pay the cost of SEN services and therefore there has been no double funding.

What do specialist support services for deaf children do?

Specialist support services usually consist of a number of Teachers of the Deaf and other specialists (including, for example, communication support workers, educational audiologists and higher-level teaching assistants). Teachers of the Deaf are teachers with an additional specialist mandatory¹¹ qualification in teaching deaf children.

Teachers of the Deaf play a range of important roles, including:

- Supporting parents of pre-school deaf children at home, including advising on how they can support their child's development and, in particular, their language and communication skills.
- Undertaking specialist assessments to get a full understanding of the child's needs, which can be used to inform plans, provision, and teaching and learning approaches.

⁹ Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE). CRIDE report on 2015 survey of educational provision for deaf children: England. 2016. www.ndcs.org.uk/cride (accessed 17 May 2017).

¹⁰ There was a period when academies were being double-funded for SEN services but this funding has since been deducted from their budgets.

¹¹ See the Education (School Teachers' Qualifications) (England) Regulations 2003. Accompanying government correspondence states that: "The regulations apply to teachers employed in schools and not specialist peripatetic HI/VI/MSI teachers employed in [local authority] SEN support services. It would, however, be our expectation that such teachers would have the relevant mandatory qualification." The SEND Code of Practice (paragraphs 6.61) also makes it clear that advisory teachers of deaf children should hold the mandatory qualification.

- Advising staff in early years settings, mainstream schools, special schools and post-16 settings on how best to support deaf children to make good progress and achieve good outcomes. This support is especially important when the child is moving to a new education setting.
- Providing direct teaching support, including in schools with resource provisions.
- Working with other professionals who support deaf children including, for example, speech and language therapists and social workers for deaf children.
- Advising on the best use and maintenance of hearing technologies and improving the listening environment, for example, for learning in the classroom.
- Supporting deaf young people in making a successful transition to adulthood and independence.

The important role of Teachers of the Deaf and specialist support services in improving educational outcomes for deaf children has been widely recognised.

- “It is a priority to improve the educational outcomes for all children and we recognise the important role specialists, such as Teachers of the Deaf, play in meeting this goal.”¹² – Minister of State for Children and Families, Department for Education.
- Many of the changes introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014 rely on support from a Teacher of the Deaf to make sure they are carried out effectively. For example, accompanying regulations state that advice from a Teacher of the Deaf must be sought in any Education, Health and Care needs assessment. Teachers of the Deaf can also provide specialist advice on assessments and teaching strategies to make sure the ‘assess, plan, do, review’ cycle is carried out correctly.
- In a study of best practice Ofsted found that when deaf children progressed well, it was because services were underpinned by a good understanding of the need for specialist services for deaf children and a strong commitment to maintain them.¹³
- In addition, in a report¹⁴ on the further education and skills sector, Ofsted stated that providers with “effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning... used specialist staff to observe learning sessions, interview learners and review learning materials to identify good practice and develop training plans for the teaching and support staff.”
- An expansive international literature review found that: “The learning styles and needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students differ sufficiently from those of their hearing peers to require specialised programming and teaching methods or strategies if children are to achieve their full potential. Special assistance thus is also required for teachers.”¹⁵

¹² Hansard. Pupils: Hearing Impairment. 2010.

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101202/text/101202w0005.htm#101203700017 (accessed 26 May 2017).

¹³ Ofsted. Communication is the Key. 2012. www.gov.uk/government/publications/communication-is-the-key (accessed 26 May 2017).

¹⁴ Ofsted. Moving Forward? How well the further education and skills sector is preparing young people with high needs for adult life. 2016. www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-learners-with-high-needs-for-adult-life (accessed 26 May 2017).

¹⁵ Marschark, M & Spencer, P.E. Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Deaf Children and Hard-of-Hearing Children: An international review. 2009. Center for Education Research Partnerships, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology.

More information on the role of a Teacher of the Deaf and a head of a specialist education service for deaf children is shown in the annexes.

Considerations when making decisions that may affect services

There are a range of considerations and legal requirements to take into account when making any decisions that may affect specialist education services for deaf children or in carrying out any strategic reviews. This section sets out five key steps. These should be read alongside the Department for Education's *High Needs Funding: Operational guide 2017 to 2018*¹⁶ which includes information on preparing for any local strategic reviews.

Even where services are sub-contracted out to third parties, the commissioner remains legally responsible for making sure that the following legal requirements are met. The commissioner should therefore oversee how the service is being managed.

1) Assess and audit provision

To ensure you can make an informed decision on any changes, you should have basic information on deaf children in your area, including:

- the total number of deaf children, their age, educational placements and any future trends (for example, arising from demographic growth)
- the needs of deaf children and their families – this should include information on levels of deafness, use of additional languages and additional disabilities
- the educational outcomes and developmental milestones achieved by deaf children and whether the results are in line with other children. The National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) has developed a range of tools to help identify outcomes and how services are adding value¹⁷
- data on deaf children's post-school destinations and whether these are in line with those of other children
- the range and quality of specialist provision (including resource provisions and special schools) available, with reference to quality standards and feedback from parents and deaf children. This should include specialist provision nearby which deaf children and young people in your area already attend or may do so in the future.

This information may also form part of your local authority's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

¹⁶ Department for Education. High Needs Funding: Operational guidance. 2017.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2017-to-2018/high-needs-funding-operational-guide-2017-to-2018 (accessed 26 May 2017).

¹⁷ www.natsip.org.uk

Section 22 of the Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to identify all children in its area who may have a special educational need or a disability. Information on the number of children may be available from your local authority's register of disabled children. Local authorities have a duty to maintain such a register and, in a ruling against Warwickshire local authority, a judge stated that:

“Plainly unless this local authority has such a register and knows more or less precisely how many disabled children there are in the county it cannot make a fully informed decision about budgetary allocation or as to the terms of a proposed Local Offer.”¹⁸

2) Arranging provision and keeping it under review

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on local authorities to make reasonable adjustments – including through the provision of auxiliary aids – to make sure that disabled children are not placed at a substantial disadvantage. This duty is anticipatory, meaning that local authorities must consider the potential future needs of disabled children in any planning decisions.

Section 24 of the Children and Families Act 2014 states that local authorities are responsible for all children who have a disability (as well as a SEN). And section 27 of the Act requires local authorities to keep provision for disabled children under review to make sure it's sufficient to meet their education, training and social care needs, and that there are no gaps in provision. Disabled children and their parents must be consulted as part of any such review, as well as in any work to develop your Local Offer.

Paragraph 4.19 of the SEN and Disability Code of Practice states that:

“Local authorities must keep their educational and training provision and social care provision under review and this includes the sufficiency of that provision. When considering any reorganisation of SEN provision decision makers must make clear how they are satisfied that the proposed alternative arrangements are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for children with SEN.”

Where provision is not sufficient, this may lead to requests for more out-of-area placements which could increase costs in the medium-term.

Where a deaf child has been identified as having a special educational need, local authorities are required under the Children and Families Act 2014 to make sure that the child receives the support they need to facilitate their development and achieve “the best possible educational and other outcomes”. Local authorities are also required to assess their needs and, if necessary, determine through an assessment for an Education, Health and Care plan what provision is needed to meet those needs. These services cannot be withdrawn without a reassessment of a child's needs.

Many local authorities are able to provide specialist support to many deaf children at the SEN support stage without the need for a statement. Reducing SEN support at this

¹⁸ L & P v Warwickshire CC & Safeguarding Children Board. 2015. <https://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/l-p-warwickshire-cc.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2017).

stage is likely to trigger more requests for statutory EHC needs assessment, which is likely to add to spending in the medium term.

Since May 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have inspected 'local area' provision for children with SEN and/or disabilities to identify their effectiveness in identifying and meeting needs. These have included specific consideration of how vulnerable groups, such as children with a sensory impairment, are being supported.

A number of services use the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) Eligibility Framework for Scoring Support Levels.¹⁹ This is a guide to help peripatetic services identify the level of outreach support that children in its area should receive, based on their need. The framework does not itself state what level of support children should receive, as this will depend on the resources available locally. As the resource itself states:

“Whilst the NatSIP Eligibility Framework is designed to provide the basis for a fair allocation of available resources, it relies on professional judgement and should only be used as part of a full assessment by a qualified specialist sensory impairment teacher. For example, a detailed language profile may be used alongside the Eligibility Framework to support an adjustment in levels of provision. Professionals will know that use of the NatSIP Eligibility Framework is leading to effective identification of support when children are making good progress and achieving good outcomes.”

Therefore the NatSIP eligibility framework should not be used to justify a reduction in support to children who are not making good progress nor achieving good outcomes, or where continued support is needed for deaf children to maintain the progress and outcomes they've already achieved.

3) Making sure the funding system delivers help to where it's needed

Government regulations specify that specialist educational services are funded through the high needs block within the dedicated schools grant (DSG).

Because deafness is a low incidence disability, deaf children are unevenly distributed across the mainstream school population. There is therefore no funding formula using proxy indicators of need which enables funding to 'follow' the deaf child. As a result, we believe that funding for specialist education support services for deaf children, including specialist equipment such as radio aids, must be held centrally by, for example, a local authority. Ofsted has recognised the risks that come with delegation of funding to all schools.²⁰ These risks include:

- Waste of valuable funding. It distributes resources to schools that don't have any deaf children, while schools with deaf children are unlikely to receive a sufficient share of funding to deliver the support needed.

¹⁹ National Sensory Impairment Partnership. Eligibility Framework. 2015. www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/eligibility-framework/685-natsip-eligibility-framework-2015 (accessed 26 May 2017).

²⁰ Ofsted. Inclusion: The impact of LEA support and outreach services. 2005.

- Difficulties in retaining specialist expertise to meet the needs of all deaf children in an area, whichever schools they attend, without a reliable source of funding.
- The disproportionate impact on the service and its ability to meet the needs of all local deaf children that small reductions or fluctuations in funding can have.

The decision to fund specialist education services through the high needs block shows that the Department for Education has also recognised the risks from delegation of funding for these services, including through traded services. In any moves to traded services or delegation of funding, local authorities will need to be able to explain why they are tolerating risks that the Department for Education has deemed unacceptable.

We recommend that funding for equipment for deaf children, such as radio aids, is held by the local authority, rather than education settings. A briefing by the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) provides more information about funding arrangements for equipment. NatSIP has also produced a range of other briefings on education funding arrangements and its implications for services for deaf children.²¹

4) Considering the impact of proposed changes

You must make sure that any changes to the services meet the obligations set out under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons and to take steps to take account of a person's disability.²² Local authorities must show they had due and specific regard to how any changes will affect deaf children. The local authority should provide an audit trail or documentation to show how this regard was had.

Though there has never been a specific requirement to produce an equality impact assessment, it's a common way of demonstrating that due regard has been had. We recommend that this assessment is carried out where any changes are being proposed that may affect services for deaf children.

Case study: reversing cuts in Stoke-on-Trent

Legal action was taken by parents of deaf children, with support from the National Deaf Children's Society, against Stoke-on-Trent council after it became clear that proposals to cut the number of Teachers of the Deaf had been put forward without any assessment of the significant impact these changes would have on deaf children. In the face of judicial review, local authority officials conceded and signed a 'consent order' agreeing to reverse plans for further cuts.

The SEN and Disability Regulations 2014 states that the Local Offer should include "information about any criteria that must be satisfied before any provision or service set out in in the Local Offer can be provided". Therefore, the Local Offer should be

²¹ www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/doc-library-login/natsip-briefing-documents-and-papers/funding-briefings (accessed 26 May 2017).

²² Department for Education. Equality Act 2010: Advice for schools. 2014. www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/policiesandprocedures/equalityanddiversity/a0064570/the-equality-act-2010 (accessed 26 May 2017).

amended and updated following any changes to how deaf children and their families can access support given by your local authority.

5) Involving parents and young people and consultation

The involvement of parents and young people is now a requirement under section 19 of the Children and Families Act. This applies to decisions about individual support but also about local provision more generally. Section 19 does not set out any exemptions (for example, where a service is being sub-contracted to a commercial body) where this principle need not apply.

We believe that parents and young people have the right to be consulted about any change which may affect education provision, including any changes to staffing arrangements. It's often only through consultation that the actual impact of any proposed changes can be fully established.

The law²³ requires that any consultation:

- must allow respondents to make an informed response – this means setting out fully the implications for their deaf children and making documents accessible to families who use other languages as needed
- ensures adequate time for responses
- genuinely takes responses into account and is conducted with an open mind.

Section 4.12 of the SEN and Disability Code of Practice sets out some principles on how to make sure that young people are able to meaningfully engage with any consultations.

It's important that all relevant parents and young people have an opportunity to respond and give their views. To ensure this, you should take steps to proactively draw their attention to relevant consultations and avoid limiting any consultation to selected stakeholders, who may not necessarily be representative of everyone's views.

Improving efficiency and effectiveness

We are keen to work in partnership with local authorities to identify best practice and the overall effectiveness of the specialist educational service for deaf children. General tips on how this can be achieved are as follows:

- Quality standards can help you deliver a better, more cost-effective service that improves outcomes for deaf children and reduces the need for costlier intervention in later life. Quality standards for specialist services for children with sensory impairments has been published by the National Sensory Impairment Partnership
- (NatSIP), funded by the Department for Education.²⁴ A quality improvement pack has been produced by NatSIP to support services in demonstrating that they meet

²³ Broach, S., Clements, L. & Read, J. *Disabled Children: A Legal Handbook*, 2nd edition. 2016. councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/disabled-children-legal-handbook-2nd-edition (accessed 26 May 2017).

- these quality standards.²⁵ They illustrate good practice and may help in developing local provision and support.
- Regular and ongoing consultation with deaf children, young people, parents and professionals is not just best practice; they may have their own suggestions and ideas for smarter working. As the SEND Code of Practice states:
“Effective participation should lead to a better fit between families’ needs and the services provided, higher satisfaction with services, reduced costs (as long-term benefits emerge) and better value for money”.
- Conducting full impact assessments will not only help you identify any risks or unintended consequences that may negatively affect deaf children, but will also allow you to consider in detail any actual savings that are likely to be made. It’s important to be aware that, in many cases, other factors may conspire to reduce the original savings expected.

Joint commissioning between local authorities

The SEN and Disability Code of Practice states that “partners should consider strategic planning and commissioning of services for placements for children and young people with high levels of need across groups of local authorities, or at a regional level” and the Department for Education’s *High Needs Funding: Operational Guidance* identifies “more effective collaboration between local authorities” as a key outcome from local strategic reviews. We also strongly encourage local authorities to consider joint commissioning with other local authority education services. Many local authorities attempt to meet the diverse needs of all deaf children with just one or two Teachers of the Deaf. It’s highly unlikely that such a small team will have the range of skills and expertise needed.

The Department for Education’s *High Needs Funding: Operational Guidance* also encourages local authorities to consider working together in commissioning specialist placements:

“Sharing intelligence across a region would allow a group of local authorities to develop a strategic plan for meeting low incidence but high complexity needs, reviewing the quality and sufficiency of existing provision and working with providers to ensure the provision available meets both current and anticipated needs. This would offer a number of benefits, including reducing costs by removing duplication in the commissioning and quality assurance process. It would also allow highly specialised providers to plan ahead, ensuring the provision they offer reflects the likely demand from commissioning local authorities.”

Joint commissioning between education, health and social care

Section 26 of the Children and Families Act introduces a requirement for local authorities and health bodies to work together to jointly commission services for children with SEN and disabilities. As the SEN and Disability Code of Practice sets out,

²⁴ National Sensory Impairment Partnership. Quality Standards for Sensory Support Services in England. 2016 www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/supporting-si-workforce/quality-improvement-standards (accessed 26 May 2017).

²⁵ National Sensory Impairment Partnership. Quality Improvement Support Pack. 2016. www.natsip.org.uk/index.php/supporting-si-workforce/quality-improvement-standards (accessed 26 May 2017).

integration of services across education, health and social care can improve the quality of provision for disabled children. Again, the Department for Education's *High Needs Funding: Operational Guidance* encourages local authorities to set up 'centres of expertise' drawing together relevant professionals, both within and across local authorities.

For deaf children, you might consider joint commissioning between audiology and education services. This could lead to a better quality of support for deaf children, particularly in relation to the hearing equipment they use, and a better continuity of support from diagnosis onwards. You could also think about establishing a closer collaboration or co-location with speech, language and communication teams.

You might also consider joint commissioning between social care and education services. Again, this can help make sure, for example, that families receive more support to help their child develop.

Case study: an integrated model in Suffolk

An Ofsted report on good practice in support for deaf children found that in the Suffolk local authority, "an integrated model of service provision effectively supported joint working by staff from different professional backgrounds and specialisms.²⁶ In this area a sensory and communication service had been set up. This incorporated a specialist social work service for sensory impaired children with specialist teachers of deaf children, supported by sensory support practitioners and language aides".

²⁶ Ofsted. Communication is the Key. 2012. www.gov.uk/government/publications/communication-is-the-key (accessed 26 May 2017).

Checklist

If you don't have clear answers to the following questions, you should not approve any decisions to make changes to specialist education support services for deaf children.

- ✓ Do you have reliable figures on the number of deaf children in the area, where they are (or are likely to be) placed, their education progress, the outcomes they achieve and their post-school destinations?
- ✓ Have you audited existing provision to check compliance with relevant quality standards?
- ✓ In proposing any changes, can you show that you've had due and specific regard to the needs of all deaf children and the impact on their education progress?
- ✓ Have you consulted with deaf children and young people and their parents on any proposed changes and can you show you've had due regard for their views?
- ✓ Have you considered joint working with other local authorities to maximise the benefits from economies of scale and improve the range and depth of expertise schools, children and families receive?
- ✓ Have you sought advice from your local authority compliance officer to confirm that your proposals and the way in which they have been developed are not vulnerable to being challenged as unlawful?

Working in partnership

We help parents of deaf children to make sure that their children receive the support they need to make good educational progress. Our team of regional directors support local decision makers on the needs of deaf children, including sharing examples of best practice, to make sure that this support is in place.

Contact your nearest regional director by visiting www.ndcs.org.uk/RDs or through our Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880 (voice and text), or email helpline@ndcs.org.uk.

Annex A: The role of a Teacher of the Deaf

The complexity of teaching deaf children and supporting their education is recognised in the government requirement that specialist teachers of children with sensory impairments should hold a mandatory qualification, a requirement not held in other areas of SEN.

Teachers of the Deaf are also unusual because they are expected to hold a range of expertise across different age groups. A Teacher of the Deaf may have a caseload of children aged 0–25 across a range of different settings including nurseries, primary, secondary, special schools and colleges. This requires them to have a good knowledge of the curriculum across all stages. Teachers of the Deaf are also unique in that they help families with pre-school children to support their child in developing good language and communication skills.

The important role of Teachers of the Deaf has been recognised by Ofsted in a number of documents, as shown below.

“Teachers of the Deaf had high levels of expertise and played a pivotal role in providing and coordinating support. They promoted deaf awareness among school staff working daily with deaf children, who did not all have expertise in this area. This ensured that they understood the communication needs of the individual children and that the necessary resources were put in place to meet their needs.”²⁷

“Pupils who worked with specialist teachers made greater academic progress than when they had to rely on other types of support, including teaching assistants. Specialist teachers gave a high level of skilled support, both academically and socially to individual pupils. They also liaised closely with other professionals and parents, and carefully monitored the work of teaching assistants.”²⁸

It’s unlikely that teachers without the mandatory qualification have received the level of initial and ongoing training, nor have the necessary experience and knowledge, to make sure deaf pupils’ needs are assessed and met, and that they make good progress. It’s even more unlikely that specialist teaching assistants will be able to fulfil the role of a Teacher of the Deaf.

A government specification for the mandatory qualification is available online.²⁹ This sets out, in full, the key competencies that a Teacher of the Deaf is expected to hold.

Any decision to reduce the number of Teachers of the Deaf or replace them with other staff should be made with a full regard to the impact this will have. Key questions that will need to be considered are as follows.

²⁷ Ofsted. Communication is the Key. 2012. www.gov.uk/government/publications/communication-is-the-key (accessed 26 May 2017).

²⁸ Ofsted. Inclusion: Does it matter where pupils are taught? 2006. www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/HMI-2535.doc.doc (accessed 26 May 2017).

²⁹ National College for Teaching and Leadership. Specification for Mandatory Qualifications: For specialist teachers of children and young people who are deaf. 2015. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/430094/HI_Template_FINAL.pdf (accessed 26 May 2017).

Assessments

Within the local authority:

- who is qualified and able to: (i) identify which specialist assessments are most suitable for deaf children, (ii) be able to undertake them (iii) analyse the results and identify the implications for teaching and learning and (iv) use the results to set targets and develop teaching and learning strategies?
- who has the necessary knowledge and experience to put appropriate arrangements in place to make sure that deaf children are not placed at a disadvantage when taking tests such as SATs and GCSE examinations?
- who has the necessary knowledge and experience to advise on strategies to support children at SEN support stage, within the 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle?
- who will contribute to an EHC needs assessment for a deaf child? Legislation requires that a Teacher of the Deaf must be involved in any such assessment.

Teaching and learning

Within the local authority, who will have the necessary training, knowledge and experience to:

- fully understand the learning challenges deaf pupils face in nurseries, schools, colleges, other education settings and at home
- identify possible reasons why a pupil is not making expected progress and develop strategies to address this
- advise parents, particularly those where the child has yet to start school, on how they can promote the language and communication skills of their child
- advise mainstream teachers and other staff on strategies to ensure access to teaching and learning and that deaf pupils make good progress including delivering the necessary training
- advise mainstream teachers and other staff on differentiating the curriculum
- develop and deliver one-to-one tutoring to support lessons and ensure good progress is made
- provide targeted sessions to support the pupil's language development including working with small groups?

Training and support for staff in early years and education settings

In the local authority, who will be able to make sure that education settings have the necessary skills and knowledge to:

- deliver deaf awareness training to pupils and staff
- support and train teaching assistants and communication support workers and ensure they work effectively with the teacher to help the pupil make good progress, in accordance with guidance issued by the National Sensory Impairment Partnership³⁰
- support and train teachers and college tutors, particularly those new to the setting who may not have received previous training or experience in teaching deaf children with high levels of need?

Use of technology

How will the local authority ensure that nurseries, schools, colleges and other education settings have the relevant training and competence to:

- assess whether the child is a suitable candidate for radio aids and other assistive listening devices and ensure that they are used in accordance with national standards
- ensure all equipment is working and set up properly, troubleshoot any problems and provide appropriate support and training to, for example, teaching assistants
- liaise with audiology services and implant centres to make sure the setting has a detailed knowledge of the child's hearing loss, its implications and how to ensure the best use is made of equipment
- understand the implications of changes in hearing status and interpret audiological data
- provide advice on how the local authority can comply with its duty to provide auxiliary aids as reasonable adjustments?

Creating a good listening environment

- In the local authority, who will be able to give advice to nurseries, schools, colleges and other education settings on the acoustic qualities of teaching spaces and advise on how to improve the listening environment?

³⁰ National Sensory Impairment Partnership. Raising the Achievement of Pupils with a Hearing Impairment: Effective working with teaching assistants in schools. www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=6928 (accessed 26 May 2017).

Effective multi-disciplinary working

- In the local authority, who will have the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to liaise with audiology services, implant centres, speech and language therapists, social workers and mental health services to ensure these agencies provide effective support in meeting the needs of deaf children in the setting?
- In the local authority, who will be able to liaise with other bodies to ensure that a deaf young person makes a successful transition to adulthood, in a way that ensures the deaf young person will be as independent as possible with full knowledge of the support available to deaf adults in their local community and their rights?

Social and emotional development

- In the local authority, who will be able to provide advice to schools and other education settings on how to reduce deaf children's vulnerability to bullying, low levels of emotional wellbeing, exclusion and child abuse?

Working with and supporting parents and family

- Who in the local authority is able to advise and support the parents and family of the deaf child on the implications of their deafness for learning, how they can help their child make progress and prepare for moving to another school, college or employment?
- Under the newborn hearing screening programme, it's expected that any family whose child has been diagnosed as deaf will be contacted by a Teacher of the Deaf within 48 hours. Will this support still be provided within the local authority?

Annex B: Heads of Services

“Services were underpinned by a good understanding of the need for specialist services for deaf children and a strong commitment to maintain them.”

Ofsted (2012) *Communication is the Key*.³¹

Most specialist education services for deaf children employ a head of service. While the job title may vary, all heads of service will have a key role to play in ensuring that the service as a whole is working to improve outcomes for deaf children and narrow any attainment gaps. Some heads of service manage the service for vision impaired children, as well as for deaf children.

In some areas, it has been proposed that the head of service role is removed. This is sometimes presented as part of a focus on ‘frontline’ roles such as Teachers of the Deaf. Any such proposal should first consider who would perform the below roles and whether any other person has the necessary skills and expertise to do so.

- Ensuring that progress towards outcomes is systematically recorded and monitored and used strategically to evaluate the impact of provision.
- Be able to respond to public requests for information about the service.
- Ability to make judgements on support allocation, based on an understanding of the individual needs of all deaf children in the area.
- Be able to promote the use of interventions based on up-to-date specialist knowledge and expertise of suitably qualified professional staff.
- Responding to feedback from parents and young people effectively.
- Deploying staff expertise effectively. This means that staff experience, knowledge and competencies are identified, developed, sustained, and recognised.
- Ensuring that appropriate quality standards are met.
- Working closely with other services, such as audiology or social care services for deaf children.
- Ensuring that funding is used in a way that matches need.
- Representing education at multi-agency Children’s Hearing Services Working Groups (CHSWG).
- Overseeing the outcomes achieved by deaf children who are being educated outside of the local authority but who the local authority has statutory responsibility for.
- Ensuring statutory duties, including the Equality Act, are met in a way which has regard for individual child’s needs relating to their deafness.

The impact of any decision to remove the head of service role needs to be considered carefully. For example, you will need to consider what impact this will have on an existing team of Teachers of the Deaf. The absence of a head of service may result in more duties being passed to frontline practitioners, and lead to a reduction in the amount of time they can spend supporting individual deaf children.

³¹ Ofsted. *Communication is the Key*. 2012. www.gov.uk/government/publications/communication-is-the-key (accessed 26 May 2017).

About the National Deaf Children's Society

We are the National Deaf Children's Society, the leading charity for deaf children.

We use the term 'deaf' to refer to all types of hearing loss from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary hearing loss such as glue ear.

We use the word 'parent' to refer to all parents and carers of children.

For more information visit our website www.ndcs.org.uk.

Freephone Helpline: 0808 800 8880 (voice and text)

helpline@ndcs.org.uk

www.ndcs.org.uk

This information can be requested in large print or as a text file.

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Give us your feedback by emailing your comments to informationteam@ndcs.org.uk.