



STEPPING UP

QUALITY STANDARDS FOR YOUNG DEAF LEARNERS IN
FURTHER EDUCATION

Introduction

With the right support in place, regardless of the degree of their deafness, deaf young people are capable of achieving qualifications at all levels and moving onto a wide range of different careers from lawyers to midwives to construction workers. However, our research has found that there is great variability in provision across further education providers and limited progression for deaf young people¹.

These six quality standards have been drafted to ensure greater consistency of provision and to improve outcomes for deaf young people. They are supported by case studies and further resources. They apply to young people with all levels of deafness including those without Education, Health and Care Plans.

The six standards are relevant to all providers across the FE sector. They aim to support further education providers to:

- evaluate the quality of their provision for deaf learners
- inform the development of policies and plans
- promote good practice

The standards have been drafted by the National Deaf Children's Society on behalf of the Education and Training Foundation. They are written with deaf young people aged 16-25 in mind. However, many could be applied to learners over the age of 25.

The standards are designed to complement the National Deaf Children's Society's resource, **Supporting the achievement of deaf young people in further education**: www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingfurthereducation. This resource includes an audit tool which can be used by providers to self-assess their provision.

The term 'deaf' is used throughout this document to describe young people with all levels of deafness from mild to profound².

1 Young et al. (2015) **Identifying effective practice in the provision of education and education support services for 16-19 year old deaf young people in Further Education in England**. Available from: www.ndcs.org.uk/research

2 **Levels of deafness**. National Deaf Children's Society. Available from: www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/childhood-deafness/what-is-deafness/levels-of-deafness/



The six standards

1. DEAF AWARENESS

All staff and students in contact with deaf learners are aware of their needs.

[Page 4](#)

2. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Deaf learners are expected to make the same progress as their non-deaf peers.

[Page 5](#)

3. LISTENING ENVIRONMENT

Your organisation is actively seeking to improve listening conditions across your premises.

[Page 6](#)

4. INFORMED CHOICE

Learners are supported to make properly informed choices about their futures.

[Page 7](#)

5. SUPPORT STAFF EXPERTISE

Learners have access to specialist support staff with the appropriate competences to meet their needs.

[Page 8](#)

6. NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

There is specialist input into assessments of deaf learner needs.

[Page 9](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Page 11](#)

1: Deaf awareness

All staff and students in contact with deaf learners are aware of their needs

“

Every deaf young person is different. Some speak, some sign and some use both signing and speaking. But we face the same thing every day: communicating with different people. Sometimes it goes well, sometimes it's difficult because people don't know what to do³.

JAKE
DEAF YOUNG PERSON

”



Deaf young people have specific, yet diverse needs. The impact of deafness can be poorly understood and it is important that staff in contact with deaf learners receive training and advice on meeting their needs from specialists.

CASE STUDY:

Derby College has a deaf support team which provides deaf awareness training to new staff as part of their induction training, to help them understand how deaf people learn and the impact being deaf has on their lives⁴.

USEFUL RESOURCE:

Where there is no in-house expertise in deafness, some providers buy in deaf awareness training from local authority sensory support services or other external organisations. For a list of organisations offering training see the Education and Training Foundation's SEND CPD Framework:

www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf2857

³ Quote taken from: <https://www.buzz.org.uk/looksmilechat/>

⁴ Case study from Derby College, Roundhouse Road, Derby, DE24 8JE. inclusionandsupport@derby-college.ac.uk, 0300 1237890. www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/import-pdf14477

2: High expectations

Deaf learners are expected to make the same progress as their non-deaf peers.



“

My advice to other deaf young people would be: don't think you can't do stuff because you're deaf⁷.

FLORENCE
DEAF YOUNG PERSON

”

Deafness is not a learning disability. With the right support in place deaf learners can make the same progress as their non-deaf peers. Hundreds of deaf young people move on from further education to higher education or apprenticeships every year, including British Sign Language users.

Research has found that a strong focus on outcomes by further education providers is necessary to help ensure they identify what is working and how they can improve provision for deaf learners⁵.

Some deaf young people struggle with Maths and English due to the impact of language delay in the early years but have the cognitive ability to complete technical qualifications at Level 3.

CASE STUDY:

Warwickshire College has flexible admission criteria for Level 3 courses, recognising the ability of a deaf learner, with appropriate language support in place to complete qualifications at a higher level where English is not being specifically assessed⁶.

⁵ Young et al. (2015) Identifying effective practice in the provision of education and education support services for 16-19 year old deaf young people in Further Education in England. Available from: www.ndcs.org.uk/research

⁶ Case study from Warwickshire College, Warwick New Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 5JE. Academic learning support. 01926 318086.

⁷ Quote taken from: www.buzz.org.uk/going-to-university-florences-story/

3: Listening environment

Your organisation is actively seeking to improve listening conditions across your premises.

Improving acoustics and minimising background noise within your premises can help not only deaf learners but also learners with normal hearing. Research has shown that improving listening conditions will:

- Improve learning and retention
- Improve behaviour
- Reduce teacher absences
- Ensure hearing aids are more effective⁸

CASE STUDY:

Strode's College's dining room was used as a multi-use space for students. However, floor to ceiling windows and the floorboards were propelling conversational noise around the busy space which led to students and staff complaining of severe auditory discomfort. A company was paid to install 30 acoustic rafts into the space. Afterwards, students and staff reported back that the space was now conducive to ease of conversation and general comfort⁹.

USEFUL RESOURCE:

Creating good listening conditions for learning in education provides information for education providers on improving acoustics. Available from: www.ndcs.org.uk/post14



⁸ Dockrell, J.E. and Shield, B.M. (2006) Acoustical barriers in classrooms: The impact of noise on performance in the classroom, British Educational Research Journal 32(3), 509-525.

⁹ Case study from: Strode's College, High Street, Egham, TW20 9DR. info@strodes.ac.uk, <https://resonics.co.uk/projects/strodes-college-egham/>

4: Informed choice

Learners are supported to make properly informed choices about their futures.

Research has found that careers information and advice for deaf learners in further education is not specialist enough. This means deaf learners are missing out on crucial information about their rights in employment and the support available to them¹⁰.

CASE STUDY:

In addition to their generic careers provision, the Deaf Co-ordinator at Bedford College supports deaf students with the next steps on moving from FE. They ensure students are aware of the Government's Access to Work scheme which can cover the cost of communication support in the workplace. Additionally, the coordinator has strong links with the local community and is able to signpost students to the appropriate support to achieve their long-term goals¹¹.



CASE STUDY:

West Kent College's Careers Team provides a pre-entry service to support deaf students with the transition from school to college. They work closely with the Deaf Services Team to ensure careers staff have the knowledge to equip deaf young people with the tools they need to make their own informed decisions¹².

USEFUL RESOURCE:

Supporting deaf young people through transition, National Deaf Children's Society. www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingtransition

10 Young et al. (2015) Identifying effective practice in the provision of education and education support services for 16-19 year old deaf young people in Further Education in England. Available from: www.ndcs.org.uk/research

11 Case study from Bedford College, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AH, additionallearningsupport@bedford.ac.uk, 01234 291905.

12 Case study from BATOD magazine. November 2018. ISSN 1336-0799. West Kent College, Brook Street, Tonbridge, TN9 2PW careers@westkent.ac.uk, 01732 358 101.

5: Support staff expertise

Learners have access to specialist support staff with the appropriate competences to meet their needs.

“

I asked for an interpreter, note-taker and one-to-one language tutor and all were provided which I felt better about and I was happy to have enough support to help me through the course which is good¹³.

ISHMAEL
DEAF YOUNG PERSON

”



Members of the wider workforce who are well trained and deployed appropriately are found to make a considerable difference to student learning when they provided intervention for specific groups or individuals¹⁴.

There are a variety of specialist roles that can be involved in supporting deaf students such as Teachers of the Deaf, communication support workers and electronic notetakers. These are outlined within the National Deaf Children's Society's **Supporting the achievement of deaf young people in further education** resource: www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingfurthereducation

Teachers of the Deaf are qualified teachers with an additional post-graduate diploma in deaf education. Some colleges such as West Kent College employ their own Teachers of the Deaf. Other colleges may buy in Teacher of the Deaf support from a local sensory support service.

It is crucial that those interpreting English to British Sign Language (BSL) and vice versa for deaf learners have the appropriate standard of BSL. Refer to the **National Sensory Impairment Partnership's framework for communication support**: See: www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/supporting-the-si-workforce/communication-support-workers/1422-csw-framework-report

“

It has to be a communication support worker for me. Depending on their signing level [to] suit me. If their skills are of a lower level, I'm not keen on using them¹³

CLARA
DEAF YOUNG PERSON

”

¹³ Quotes have been anonymised. From: Young et al. (2015) **Identifying effective practice in the provision of education and education support services for 16-19 year old deaf young people in Further Education in England**. Available from: www.ndcs.org.uk/research

¹⁴ Workforce Reform in Schools - has it made a difference? Ofsted 2010. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1095/1/Workforce%20reform%20in%20schools%20has%20it%20made%20a%20difference.pdf>

6: Needs assessments

There is specialist input into assessments of deaf learner needs.



Effective support relies on a full and recent assessment of a young person's strengths and weaknesses¹⁵. Deaf young people have diverse needs and it is crucial that there is specialist input into assessments of needs to support identification of what support may be required to enable the learner to achieve their best.

CASE STUDY:

At West Kent College, before starting, deaf students receive a specialist needs assessment. Data provided for the assessment includes reports from local authority-employed Teacher of the Deaf and audiological reports¹⁶.

CASE STUDY:

Some providers in the Birmingham area such as Joseph Chamberlain 6th Form College use Birmingham Sensory Support Service to provide assessments of need. The assessments are designed to ease the transition process into further education, recommend appropriate support and better enable the provider to track the learner's progress through their programme of study¹⁷.

15 Department for Education. (2017) SEN Support : A rapid evidence assessment.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/628630/DfE_SEN_Support_REA_Report.pdf

16 Case study from: West Kent College, Brook Street, Tonbridge, TN9 2PW. Additional Learning Support.

www.westkent.ac.uk/life-at-college/disability-and-learning-support

17 Case study from: Birmingham Sensory Support Service. 0121 303 1793. A2EVauxhallgardens@birmingham.gov.uk



We hope that you have found these standards useful and they support you in stepping up for deaf learners. Please help us by sharing them with others. Our vision is to see them adopted by many providers resulting more deaf young people achieving their full potential.

Additional resources

FROM THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOUNDATION

SEND Excellence Gateway: A collection of resources for FE providers aimed at improving outcomes for learners with SEND.

<https://send.excellencegateway.org.uk/>

FROM THE NATIONAL DEAF CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Supporting achievement series. These are a set of guides aimed at staff who may not have much experience in working with deaf young people, that provide practical information and guidance. The resources include:

- Supporting the achievement of deaf young people in further education.
- Supporting the achievement of deaf young people on apprenticeships.
- Supporting the achievement of deaf young people in higher education.

Supporting deaf young people through transition. This is a guide for professionals who are involved in supporting deaf young people with the transition to adulthood.

Breaking the Sound Barrier. A guide aimed at employers about the reasonable adjustments they should make when employing or recruiting deaf young people.

Creating Good Listening Conditions for Learning. Briefing to help education settings create a good listening environment.

All the above resources are available free of charge from:

www.ndcs.org.uk/post14

FROM THE NATIONAL SENSORY IMPAIRMENT PARTNERSHIP:

Framework for the allocation of communication support workers in education settings: Available from: www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/supporting-the-si-workforce/communication-support-workers/1422-csw-framework-report



Delivered in partnership with:

