



Department
for Education

Developing a set of standards for Teaching Assistants

**Government call for evidence response
form**

**A response by the National Deaf
Children's Society (NDCS)**

November 2014

1 Your response

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for confidentiality:	
Name: Ian Noon	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of organisation (if applicable): National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)	
Address: Castle House, 37-45 Paul Street, London, EC2A 4LS	

2 Please mark the box that best describes you as a respondent

<input type="checkbox"/>	Headteacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher (other than a headteacher)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching Assistant/School Support Staff
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bursar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Authority Employee	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade union Representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other

The National Deaf Children's Society is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for every deaf child. Our response focuses on the skills and competences needed by a teaching assistant working with deaf children.

We use the term deaf is used to refer to all types of hearing impairment including a mild to profound hearing loss, a hearing loss in one ear and temporary hearing loss such as glue ear. This includes children who may have been identified as having a 'hearing impairment' in the School Census.

76% of deaf children attend mainstream schools where there is no specialist provision. Many will be reliant on support from a teaching assistant to access the curriculum.

Deafness is not a cognitive disability and deaf pupils cover the whole range of ability. They have the same potential to attain and achieve as any other pupils

given the right levels of support and access to the curriculum by their teachers and other adults who support them. However, as most children learn through hearing, deafness presents complex learning challenges to children and those who teach them.

This challenge is compounded by the fact that deafness is a low incidence but also a very diverse need. Thus, for example, deaf pupils will have different communication preferences (signers/non signers), use different types of hearing technologies and have different communication and language delays that depend on the age of onset of the hearing loss and when it was diagnosed. This means that many mainstream teachers, including SENCOs, have not gained the training or experience in working with deaf children or lack opportunities to retain this expertise. Their ability to train and direct the work of other adults who support deaf pupils is likely to be far less than it is for other higher incidence types of SEN. Hearing technologies are still a poor substitute for normal hearing and pupils using equipment will still miss a lot of what is being said. Neither will they experience the same opportunities for incidental learning that are afforded to other children.

Our response draws from guidance produced by the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) *Raising the achievement of pupils with a hearing impairment: effective working with teaching assistants in schools*. This resource is available online at: www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=6928. Appendix 3 of the NatSIP resource includes a range of case studies which may be of interest to the panel.

3 Call for evidence – specific questions

The expert panel has identified four broad themes as a basis for the new standards.

Question 1 – We identified the following key themes which may apply to all teaching assistants. For each of these themes, what specific standards or statements do you think they should include which would apply to all teaching assistants? Please could you highlight which standards you would consider as minimum or aspirational

a) Personal and Professional conduct (this includes professional values and qualities and how they are put into practice)

Teaching assistants must have an ability to establish good rapport and build professional relationships rooted in mutual respect with deaf pupils, whilst at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position.

Teaching assistants must have high expectations for every deaf child, recognising that deafness itself is not a learning disability and that deaf children and young people should have the same potential to achieve as other learners.

Teaching assistants must have an ability to establish good professional relationship and rapport with deaf pupils, supporting their full participation and independence.

Respect for the communication options chosen (e.g. use of oral communication, sign language, etc.) by deaf students and their families and their right to make 'informed choices' about what communication option is right for their family.

A willingness to learn and to undertake further training to ensure the required knowledge for the post is kept updated to reflect, for example, developments in technology for deaf children.

Competence and confidence to use own initiative when appropriate, but tempered with being able to identify when in need of further advice and support.

b) Knowledge and understanding (this covers TAs demonstrating that they have sufficient knowledge, expertise and awareness to help the pupils they work with make progress with their learning. This may also relate to a specialist area which could be subject-based or linked to a specific role eg support of a specific phase or SEND)

What statements/standards should be included?

A knowledge and understanding of how to communicate effectively with deaf children and the range of different communication preferences of deaf children

A good understanding of the needs of deaf pupils, the impact on learning and the support required to ensure they make progress and feel included. Deaf learners do not have the same access to information through incidental learning as their peers. They may also have delayed language and communication skills.

A good knowledge of hearing technology including:
(i) its benefits, limitations and conditions for effective use; and
(ii) how to maintain equipment, check it is functioning and troubleshoot, undertaking basic repairs

An understanding of the importance of listening conditions in the learning environment and a knowledge of the steps that can be taken to improve the listening environment.

An awareness of the challenges that deaf students may face in achieving social and emotional well being

An understanding of legislation on special educational needs and the Equality Act and the implications for their practice.

A good understanding of the respective roles of the class/subject teacher and specialist roles e.g. Teacher of the Deaf, audiologist, speech and language therapist

Where a child uses sign language, the teaching assistant must have **at least** a level 3 qualification in British Sign Language. This is approximately equivalent to an A Level standard and is the **minimum** level of competence required to accurately interpret what the teacher is saying. Some deaf pupils may require support from someone with more advanced skills in sign language.

Have a good understanding of the safeguarding implications in their work with deaf children and understand their responsibility to take action if any concerns arise.

c) Teaching and learning (this covers structuring teaching and learning activities as well as managing behaviour to enable learning to take place)

What statements/standards should be included?

Teaching assistants play a key role in supporting the teaching and learning of deaf children. However, we strongly believe that it is the role of the teacher, with support from a Teacher of the Deaf, to develop teaching strategies for a child, with the role of a teaching assistant being to support the teacher in the implementation of those strategies. With that in mind, we suggest the below standards:

Accessing the curriculum

An ability to ensure deaf pupils are able to access the lesson. This includes an ability to:

- Provide pre-tutoring or post-tutoring the pupil in individual 1 to 1 sessions or small groups, to ensure that key concepts are understood and their associated language reinforced.
- Adapt learning resources and teaching material so that they are accessible and more understandable to the pupil.
- Take lesson notes, if required, to support deaf pupils' understanding of what is being said and the pupils' own record of lessons. Deaf pupils may experience difficulty in, for example, lip reading what the teacher says and taking notes at the same time.
- Ensure that any audio or video materials are used with subtitles wherever possible, with transcripts being available.
- Establish an appropriate balance between supporting the pupil to complete a task while encouraging independent learning and ensuring the pupil has a full understanding of the learning points of the lesson

Supporting individual learning programmes

An ability to support the development and implementation of individual learning programmes set by the classroom teacher with the Teacher of the Deaf. These might include work in the areas of language, literacy, personal, social and emotional development and numeracy as required.

Supporting assessments

An ability to observe and report on pupil progress, gathering information about their knowledge, skills and understanding, including their progress towards targets to support teachers in re-assessing need, evaluating teaching strategies and interventions, setting new learning targets and formulating new learning plans. Provide feedback to relevant colleagues about the pupil's progress towards targets and the effectiveness of the programme in securing this and the pupil's engagement. Contribute to the maintenance of pupil records as agreed with the teacher and/or SENCO.

Effective use of hearing technology

An ability to ensure the effective use of hearing aids, radio aids and other technology to promote pupil's learning by:

- Checking that the pupil's personal hearing technology is functioning
- Taking steps to ensure any problems with equipment are dealt with as quickly as possible.
- Making sure that the technology is available and functioning and promptly informing the teacher/technician if there are any problems.
- Checking the technology is switched on and ready for use and undertake basic maintenance and repairs.
- Support the pupil and staff in the use of technology encouraging pupils to use the equipment independently.

Supporting social and emotional development

An ability to support social and emotional development by:

- Ensuring the pupil is socially included and has similar opportunities to be involved and to contribute to lessons and the school community as other pupils.
- Supporting positive behaviour giving praise and encouragement as appropriate to build confidence and self-esteem.
- Providing support to enable the pupil to have the opportunities to participate in all school activities, to make choices and take decisions for themselves.
- Encouraging pupils to evaluate their own progress and to take an active part in reviews of their progress, when appropriate.
- Observing how pupils express their feelings and emotions and relate to others and feedback to the teacher and/or SENCO, recording any findings accurately.
- Delivering programmes designed by specialists to support this area as appropriate.

Supporting the development of language and communication

Meeting any specialist language and communication needs: Where deaf children need access to sign language to access the curriculum (whether this be through British Sign Language, sign supported English or cued speech), ensure this support is provided to a high level. NDCS recommends that, **at the minimum**, this support be provided by a person with a level 3 qualification in British Sign Language. Depending on the needs of the pupil, it may also be necessary to:

- Translate written documents into signed versions or what the pupil is signing into writing.
- Voice over what a deaf pupil is saying if their speech is difficult to understand.
- Take written notes.

d) Working with others (this covers working collectively with teachers, parents and other professionals. The theme will recognise particular specialisms supported by teaching assistants)

What statements/standards should be included?

Working with the class / subject teacher, Teacher of the Deaf, SENCO and other specialists where appropriate to plan and agree a programme which contains clear, challenging but achievable objectives for the pupil. The teaching assistant should be able to contribute to the planning and identification of strategies to meet the pupil's needs and the confidence to contribute with ideas based on detailed knowledge gained through supporting the pupil

Support the class / subject teacher in evaluating the deaf pupils' learning and access by:

- Providing constructive feedback to the teacher on the how the deaf pupil has responded to the lesson.
- Discussing with the teacher any difficulties experienced in providing the support needed.
- Providing information on how well the child is engaging in the lesson, any difficulties they appear to be experiencing, work they find relatively easy and work they find more difficult.

Support teachers and SENCOs in discharging their responsibility in involving parents by providing information on the pupil's engagement with learning and interactions with other pupils and helping to maintain home-school liaison records.

Question 2 – Do you consider that any other themes should be included in the new standards? If so, what specific standards or statements do you think they should include which would apply to all teaching assistants?

NDCS strongly supports the development of a new set of professional standards for all teaching assistants.

For standards to effectively meet the needs of deaf children, NDCS strongly recommends that the review panel gives careful consideration to **separate** standards of support, training mentoring and supervision of teaching assistants who support deaf pupils. Pupils with a hearing loss have a wide range of needs but many managers and teachers in mainstream schools have not had the opportunity to gain sufficient knowledge and experience of successfully supporting such pupils. Hence, their ability to give well-informed professional direction to the teaching assistant will be more limited than for other types of higher incidence needs.

Local authority specialist sensory support services have an important role to play in providing this knowledge and expertise. In order to ensure that school managers and teaching assistants receive the necessary support, we believe it will be necessary to set out standards regarding the level of support that they should receive from local authority specialist sensory support services.

As part of this, we believe that the review panel could also helpfully consider the introduction of a mandatory minimum qualification for communication support workers who provide interpretation support for pupils who are signers and require signed support to access education. This will ensure that, unlike now, future generations of such pupils will at least receive assistance from a support worker who can accurately interpret what teachers, pupils and other school staff are saying.

Question 3 – What purpose would you use the new standards for and how do you see them being best used by schools?

The standards will provide clarity about the minimum standards and competencies teaching assistants should meet to provide support that is consistent and fit for purpose. This clarity will be particularly valued by parents of deaf children.

However, if teaching assistants are not managed and supported effectively by schools then this will limit their effectiveness, regardless of whether professional standards have been put in place. For this reason, in addition to the professional standards, we also recommend that the panel also consider whether there is also a need for standards of support and supervision.

As noted earlier, as deafness is a low incidence disability, schools may lack sufficient knowledge and experience of successfully supporting such learners and so may not be able to provide adequate support and guidance to the teaching assistant. In such cases, we consider that the potential role of local authority specialist sensory support services in providing appropriate knowledge and expertise should be explored.

In terms of how any standards developed are used within schools, NDCS would also like to see Ofsted play a specific role in assessing the quality of teaching assistants used during inspections of the whole schools, reviewing how effectively the teacher is using teaching assistants to raise outcomes for deaf children and other children with SEN.

NDCS has developed a range of resources for mainstream education practitioners on supporting the achievement of deaf children in the education settings (www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingachievement). We would be happy to explore how these could reinforce any new standards developed and be used as supporting documentation.

Question 4 – Recognising the context and aims of this review (see sections 1 and 2 of the outline document), are there any further comments you would like to make?

The following may be outside the remit of the review panel but it may be necessary to:

- 1) Consider whether the existing pay and conditions structure for adult support allows appropriate remuneration for the specific levels of skills and training required to meet required standards of competence (for example, communication support workers who require a level 3 qualification in sign language to effectively support pupils who sign).
- 2) The most effective models of delivering a teaching assistant workforce capable of meeting minimum standards of competence for supporting pupils with low incidence needs. For example, this could be a team of teaching assistants and communication support workers who are part of a local authority's specialist sensory support service, deployed across schools as needed. Such a model would take account of the low incidence of need and the specific competencies required from support staff to meet the needs of deaf pupils.

Please acknowledge this reply

Email address for acknowledgement: ian.noon@ndcs.org.uk

Taking part in future consultations

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents.

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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