**Draft Criteria for the accreditation of Initial Teacher Education programmes in Wales and the proposal for the Education Workforce Council to accredit initial teacher education**

**NDCS Cymru Consultation Response**

**October 2016**

**About Us**

National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) Cymru is the national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people.

We represent the interests and campaign for the rights of all deaf children and young people from birth until they reach independence.

In referring to deaf, we refer to all levels of hearing loss including mild to profound, unilateral and temporary.

**Response**

Deaf children and young people tell us that a lack of deaf awareness among school staff is one of the biggest barriers they face in reaching their full educational potential. Indeed, this is reflected in Welsh Government statistics which demonstrate a gap in attainment between deaf pupils and their peers at every Key Stage.[[1]](#footnote-1)

It is also important to note that, while permanent deafness is a relatively low incidence disability, it is common for children to experience temporary deafness through glue ear (some 80% will have glue ear before the age of ten)[[2]](#footnote-2). Glue ear can last weeks, months or even years, having a profound impact on a pupil’s learning experience in the meantime.

Deafness is often referred to as the “invisible disability”. Indeed, there is a general misconception around the use of assistive listening aids like radio aids, hearing aids or cochlear implants. Although these aids improve access to sound, they do not restore typical hearing levels and deaf learners who use these devices will still need specific assessments to ensure they are able to access the curriculum.

In light of this and the key role teachers will play in the IDP process under the proposed ALN and Education Tribunal Bill Wales, we feel it is imperative that initial teacher training includes basic deaf awareness and an understanding of the new ALN system and Person Centred Planning.

As such, we were pleased to note the Cabinet Secretary’s response to a plenary question on 22 September:

*“You will be aware that the principle behind the ALN Bill is that all teaching professions should have an understanding and an ability to respond to low-impact, high-incidence rates of additional learning needs, and that has to be incorporated into the initial teacher training of our teachers. There will be the need, alongside the introduction of the legislation, for continual professional development programmes to support that. Because what we do know is that many people feel that there is scant regard paid to additional learning needs in existing ITE and that will be part of the accreditation programme: to look to see how individual courses are truly addressing that if they're to be accredited by the new body.”*

We are also pleased to note that “curriculum planning to meet the needs of all learners” and “meeting the needs of pupils with additional learning or other special needs” is to form part of the “Professional and pedagogical studies” which course providers must provide details of in presenting their programmes for accreditation.

However, given the points outlined above, we are keen to ensure that course providers acknowledge the need to cover a basic level of deaf awareness within these vital areas of their programme. **We seek assurances from the Welsh Government that programme providers will specifically be required to cover deafness.**

In addition, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight a resource which we previously worked on in collaboration with Bridgend County Council and was funded by the Welsh Government. The resource (see attached) was part of a wider information pack for newly qualified teachers to give them an introduction to various disabilities. NDCS Cymru suggests that this resource could be utilised to ensure that programme providers cover a basic level of deaf awareness. NDCS Cymru, would of course, be happy to assist with the development of any other materials.

In relation to the requirement to cover the Equality Act, we would highlight the specific access requirements of deaf learners, which can often be overlooked. These can include access to appropriate technology and good acoustics.

With regard to CPD, NDCS also offers a range of materials for education staff on deaf learners, which are available free of charge at <http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/our_resources/education_resources.html>.

**Further Information**

Please do not hesitate to get in contact if you have any questions at campaigns.wales@ndcs.org.uk or on 029 20373474.

1. For more details please see <http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/national_data/index.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See page 1, section 1.1 *Surgical management of otitis media with effusion in children, Clinical Guideline,* National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)