

Children, Young People and Education Committee Inquiry into Teachers' Professional Learning and Education



NDCS Cymru Response

January 2017

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

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. 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 adaptations to ensure they are able to access the curriculum.

The impact that a small time investment on basic training can have for deaf pupils is significant. As such, NDCS Cymru believes it should be covered both within initial teacher training and within refresher CPD.

We do not expect teachers to become experts in deafness, but a simple awareness of the need to make adaptations, key communication tips, and which expert professionals can be contacted for advice, can make a big difference.

¹ For more details please see http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/national_data/index.html.

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.

NDCS Cymru recently responded to the Welsh Government consultation on *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* (October 2016). We are concerned that the broad nature of the ALN requirement for programme providers leaves no guarantee that deafness will be covered within initial teacher training programmes.

In addition to basic deaf awareness training, NDCS Cymru believes it is imperative that teachers also receive training in understanding the new ALN system and the accompanying practice of Person Centred Planning (PCP). Indeed, the proposed new system places teachers in a key role.

Furthermore, we would suggest that training on the Equality Act highlights the specific access requirements of deaf learners, which can often be overlooked. These can include access to appropriate technology and good acoustics.

Existing resources to assist in teacher training

We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight a resource we worked on in collaboration with Bridgend County Council, which 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. Unfortunately, it was not distributed. NDCS Cymru suggests that this resource could be utilised in teacher training.

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.

NDCS Cymru would, of course, be happy to assist with the development of any other materials

Our Recommendations

In summary, we recommend that both initial teacher training and CPD opportunities cover:

- Basic deaf awareness
- An understanding of the new ALN system
- Person Centred Planning
- Equality Act Training includes specific access requirements of deaf learners, which can often be overlooked.

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.