

About Us

The National Deaf Children's Society is the national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people.

In referring to deafness, we refer to all levels of hearing loss from mild through to profound. We also include those experiencing a temporary hearing loss.

Response

Deafness is not a learning disability and, with appropriate support, deaf children can achieve on a par with their hearing peers. The support required by deaf pupils will vary according to the individual, but for most, this will include access to specialist professionals such as Teachers of Deaf, Communication Support Workers, and specialist speech and language therapists.

Page 8 of the consultation document states that Monmouthshire County Council is currently unable to support pupils with a hearing impairment locally. The following page explicitly states that the reorganisation seeks to ensure these learners can "access services as required, as locally as possible and at the very least within Monmouthshire." We are concerned that the proposals outlined within the consultation document do not deliver in this regard.

The provision described within the proposed special school and satellite resource bases does not include a hearing impaired resource base. Although there is mention of support in relation to communication difficulties, this represents a broad spectrum of needs. It must be acknowledged that deaf pupils require support from deaf specialists. While some may be appropriately supported peripatetically, others will need to attend a school with onsite provision to reach their potential.

To this end, we would welcome further information on the proposed staffing structure for the satellite centres. If it is the case that deaf specialists are not to be included, then we believe these proposals would not provide an appropriate

service for deaf learners. While we appreciate that local provision is desirable, it is of far greater importance that pupils access support appropriate to their needs. As such, these proposals would not eliminate the need for deaf learners to be supported out of county, as is suggested on page 9 of the document.

Furthermore, we are nervous that the document refers to the numbers of pupils accessing independent schools and mentions the deaf specialist school, Mary Hare. It is important to recognise that the needs of some deaf learners are such that they require a specialist school within an all-encompassing deaf community. Due to the lower incidence of permanent hearing loss, such provision could not be sustained within each county. Therefore, a small number of learners will always require out of county/country access to independent specialist deaf schools.

The National Deaf Children's Society is aware that Monmouthshire has historically accessed the Greater Gwent sensory impairment service and would appreciate further information as to the impact these proposals would have on such an arrangement. Indeed, the statement on page 9 seems to infer that following the reorganisation, Monmouthshire County Council will not be looking to place any ALN pupils outside of Monmouthshire.

Furthermore, the document refers to the need to refurbish school buildings in order to deliver this reorganisation. We wish to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of ensuring refurbishment works meet with high acoustic standards and are tested for compliance with Building Bulletin 93. A good listening environment is imperative for all learners, particularly those with a hearing impairment, speech and language difficulties, visual impairment and autism.

In light of the points raised within this response, we would appreciate further discussion with Monmouthshire about the details of the proposals and its implications for deaf learners. In particular, we would welcome information about any deaf specific support that may not have been detailed within the document. However, on the basis of the information provided within the document, we oppose suggestions that this reorganisation would enable all deaf learners to be supported within the boundaries of Monmouthshire.

Contact

For further discussion, please contact Campaigns.Wales@ndcs.org.uk, or call 029 20373474.