

# Consultation on the Childcare Funding (Wales) Bill

April 2018



## 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

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru believes the early years play a crucial role in a child's educational development and future prospects for academic achievement. As such, it is imperative that childcare provision is able to meet and cater for a child's additional learning need requirements.

The needs of deaf children will vary. Indeed, some deaf children may have an oral approach to communication, some may use sign and others may use a mixture of both. Examples of support required by deaf children in a childcare setting could include:

- Basic deaf awareness training for staff at childcare setting
- Action to improve acoustics at childcare setting
- An awareness of how to use assistive listening devices
- Assistive listening devices such as radio aids
- Advice from a Teacher of the Deaf
- Sign language support

At present, it can be difficult for parents of deaf children to find childcare settings where they feel confident that their child's communication needs will be met. This can present a barrier for these parents in returning to work, or educational and linguistic development barriers for the deaf child. Ultimately, if we are to close the [attainment gap](#) between deaf pupils and their peers, we must address this issue at the foundation of a child's educational journey. Ensuring that the Welsh Government's free childcare offer is accessible to deaf children and their families is one key factor.

It is our understanding that parents applying for the free childcare offer within the pilot areas are invited to provide details of any additional learning needs. This is a positive step forward and we hope that reviews of the pilot schemes will specifically cover ALN. This could include determining whether the application process was successful in identifying ALN and whether families were aware that ALN adaptations could be made.

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru notes that ALN is not mentioned within the draft Bill. We would welcome further information as to why this is the case. Whether it be through the Bill itself or accompanying statutory regulations, we seek assurance that local authorities

will have a clear and firm duty to consider ALN requirements and consequently find suitable placements.

To this end, we would strongly recommend that, where families disclose that a child has ALN on applying for a free childcare place, the application is referred to the Early Year ALNCO. Under the recently passed Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act, learners aged 0-25 with ALN are entitled to a learner support plan, known as an IDP. The Early Year ALNCO is to hold responsibility for co-ordinating plans for pre-schoolers. We feel it is essential that a connection is made between these two pieces of legislation for the benefit of all children with additional learning needs and their families. Such a connection would help to ensure access to appropriate assessments for support in childcare settings and would also assist in establishing a clear ALN pathway for families.

Furthermore, we would recommend that the Welsh Government, Regional Consortia and local authorities consider the skillset of the existing childcare workforce in relation to ALN and whether any further development is required.

## Contact

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information. Please email [Campaigns.Wales@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:Campaigns.Wales@ndcs.org.uk), or telephone 029 20373474.