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### **Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan 2016-19**

The 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 support and represent the interests of deaf children and young people from birth through to independence. In referring to "deaf" we refer to all levels of hearing loss, including mild, moderate, severe, profound and temporary hearing loss.

Although we do not have a response to all of the points outlined in the consultation document, we would like to highlight the specific needs of deaf children and young people in terms of access to appropriate and timely support.

We welcome the high level outcomes outlined in this consultation document. However, we would like reassurance that express consideration has been given to the needs of deaf children and young people in particular in relation to the delivery of the first and final bullet points under "A more equal Wales":

- People with protected characteristics and vulnerable groups experience equitable access and services are more responsive to the needs of a diverse Welsh population;
- Service user experience is improved, with safety, protection and dignity ensured and embedded in sustainable services.

In 2010 we welcomed the inclusion of provisions to prioritise access to services for deaf children in *Breaking the Barriers: Meeting the Challenges, Better support for children and young people with emotional wellbeing and mental health needs – an action plan*. We are pleased that benchmarking of services has taken place and that in some areas care pathways have been developed for deaf children and young people.

However, we would suggest that it is important to build upon this through the development of a specific performance measure in the Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan which addresses the needs of all deaf children and young people across

Wales.

Being deaf in a hearing orientated society can present a number of challenges. As a result, research demonstrates that deaf children are 60% more likely to experience mental health problems than other children<sup>1</sup>. Generic CAMHS should have a good understanding of childhood deafness and be accessible to deaf children. However, research has indicated that generic CAMHS lack the expertise and skills in deafness to fully and effectively support and communicate directly with deaf children.<sup>2</sup>

It is our understanding that there is still no specialist provision in Wales for deaf children who have a mental health condition, although each Health Board has identified a lead professional for deaf CAMHS and been tasked with the development and implementation of a specific training plan for CAMHS and associated staff. Therefore, It is important that this delivery plan reflects the vulnerability of deaf children and young people in terms of emotional health and wellbeing and adequately provides for the creation and maintenance of appropriate services.

We would also like to note the importance of deaf awareness in supporting deaf children and young people to access services. The School Nursing Service and the School Based Counselling Service act as a conduit to improve appropriate access to CAMHS. We would, therefore, urge that health professionals, school counsellors and nurses receive basic deaf awareness training. It should be noted that over 90% of deaf children in Wales attend a mainstream school, so it is imperative that these mainstream services are accessible to deaf pupils. NDCS Cymru was commissioned by the Welsh Government to produce a resource for schools on counselling deaf children, which should be available through the WG Education Department

Deaf awareness amongst health professionals is still an issue that needs to be addressed. Often the GP is the first point of contact for a child or young person with mental health issues. If that child is also deaf it can be difficult for him or her to explain what is troubling them if that GP is not deaf aware. NDCS's Youth Advisory Board has produced the My Life, My Health resource pack for deaf young people and their parents, which includes a leaflet for health professionals on supporting deaf young people at the GP surgery.<sup>3</sup>

We would also wish to draw to the attention of the committee to the Healthy Minds Resource produced by NDCS, which focuses on helping young deaf people to develop a positive sense of self and emotional health and wellbeing.<sup>4</sup>

If we can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

Kate Cabbage  
Policy and Campaigns Officer

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health and National Institute of Mental Health (2005). *Towards Equity and Access*.

<sup>2</sup> Beresford, B., Greco, V., Clarke, S., and Sutherland, H. (2008) An evaluation of specialist mental health services for deaf children, Research Works, 2008-02, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, York

<sup>3</sup> <http://youngpeople.ndcsbuzz.org.uk/go.php?structureID=cooltopics&ref=N52E7DEE1E81B4>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family\\_support/positive\\_parenting\\_families/emotional\\_health\\_and\\_wellbeing/healthy\\_minds.html](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/positive_parenting_families/emotional_health_and_wellbeing/healthy_minds.html)