

Enterprise and Business Committee Consultation Inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work

- 1.1. The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) 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 deaf children, young people and their families. In referring to "deaf", we refer to all levels of hearing loss, including mild, moderate, severe, profound, and temporary hearing loss.
- 1.2. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Enterprise and Business Committee's Inquiry into Assisting Young People at Work. In our response we will focus on the needs of deaf young people and respond specifically to the question: "What can be done to assist the groups of young people who are more affected by barriers to re-entering the labour market, for example those with disability?"
- 1.3. This response is endorsed by Action on Hearing Loss Cymru (formerly RNID) who work with deaf and hard of hearing adults.

2. Background

- 2.1. Deafness is not a learning disability and given the right support a deaf young person can achieve the same things that all young people aspire to: to do well at school, college, in an apprenticeship or at university and to build a career.
- 2.2. However, this support is not always in place and as a result deaf young people can face a number of barriers to achievement. It is also true that young people who have learning difficulties or complex needs are more likely to have a hearing loss and it is important that their deafness is considered alongside any other needs.
- 2.3. The exact impact varies hugely, but deafness in childhood is likely to affect a range of skills children and young people need in order to learn effectively and develop into independent adults, including:
 - listening skills
 - attention and concentration
 - language development
 - literacy skills
 - self confidence.
- 2.4. Deaf children and young people are also at a higher risk of developing mental health problems. It is estimated that as many as 40% of deaf young people will experience some form of emotional or behavioural disorder.

- 2.5. Deaf young people are much more likely to be unemployed than hearing peers. If they do work they are more likely to be in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs.
- 2.6. Research for the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (now Action on Hearing Loss) in 2007 found that even at a time of near full employment severely and profoundly deaf people were four times more likely to be unemployed than the general population, with negative attitudes from employers being seen as the main barrier to getting a job.¹
- 2.7. Data from the Department of Work and Pensions Work Choice scheme from 2011-2014 indicates that in England, Wales and Scotland 970 people with hearing and/or speech impairment achieved a job outcome out of a total of 26,660, which is about 3.65% of the total. There is no regional breakdown of referrals by primary disability. In the same period 2,790 people in Wales achieved a job outcome therefore we can extrapolate that fewer than 100 people with a hearing impairment managed to get a job through Work Choice in Wales between 2011 and 2014.²

3. Transitions

- 3.1. Deaf young people have rights under international law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities both make clear that young people who are deaf have the right to access education, employment and training on the same basis as their peers – and to be provided with the necessary support to do so. But deaf young people still face too many barriers and challenges when transitioning into employment.
- 3.2. Careers Wales works with all children and young people to develop a transitions plan and has specific guidance on working with young people who have a statement of special educational needs.
- 3.3. Only a small minority of deaf children and young people have a statement of SEN with most having support through Individual Education Plans (IEPs). **There is a risk that the present transition planning process fails to take account of the specific needs of the majority of deaf young people.**
- 3.4. NDCS Scotland has developed a toolkit to encourage positive transitions into further education, training and work for deaf young people in Scotland. The toolkit has been developed with Donaldson's School for the Deaf and Skills Development Scotland.³
- 3.5. **We would encourage Careers Wales to consider the content of this toolkit in order to ensure that the needs of the majority of deaf young people, who do not have a Statement of SEN, are adequately addressed in the transition planning process.**
- 3.6. The proposed reforms to the Additional Learning Needs assessment and support framework will create a new system of Individual Development Plans (IDP) for all children and young people with additional learning needs from birth to 25. In theory this will aid with the transition from secondary education to post-16 education or work.

¹ RNID, Opportunity Blocked, 2007

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/work-choice-statistics-number-of-starts-and-referrals--2>

³ http://www.ndcs.org.uk/about_us/campaign_with_us/scotland/campaign_news/a_template_for.html

- 3.7. NDCS Cymru does have some concerns that the proposed new system of IDPs will not apply to apprenticeships and in workplace learning settings. We have strongly urged the Welsh Government to reconsider. **We would also ask this committee to recommend extending IDPs to apprenticeships and workplace learning settings.**
- 3.8. Deaf people are entitled to support through the Access to Work programme to employ interpreters. It is up to the individual deaf person to arrange booking interpreters and manage the funding. In the context of deaf young people transitioning from school or college into work this can be very challenging because of lack of knowledge and/or confidence.
- 3.9. **We urge the committee to recommend that information and guidance on Access to Work is included in the IDP of every young person with additional learning needs before that young person leaves secondary education.**
- 3.10. Action on Hearing Loss in Northern Ireland has recently published a report on transitions experiences of young people with hearing loss.⁴ The report makes several key recommendations that also have relevance in the Welsh context. These include:
- Ongoing deaf awareness training among training providers and employers.
 - Support and resourcing is needed for mainstream training providers who are unable to avail of support or funding attached to specialist training programmes, i.e. a training equivalent of Access to Work or Disabled Students' Allowances.
 - Support is needed for young deaf people when they transition from training and employment programmes.
 - A work mentoring programme which matches young deaf people with a mentor in the relevant career area – and which can provide ongoing support and advice – should be developed

4. Work Experience

- 4.1. Organising work experience for deaf young pupils can be very challenging. Workplaces need to be aware of the specific needs of deaf young people and the challenges they face.
- 4.2. NDCS Cymru has recently arranged for a group of deaf young people to have a week of work experience at the John Lewis department store in Cardiff
- 4.3. Staff at the store had deaf awareness training before the work experience placements started enabling them to provide additional support for the young people and store staff.
- 4.4. Careers Wales advisors who support pupils in arranging work experience placements for deaf pupils should be have training in the specific needs of deaf young people
- 4.5. Advisors should also provide information for the workplaces on the needs of deaf young people e.g. communication strategies

Response from Elin Wyn, Policy & Campaigns Advisor, NDCS Cymru.

⁴ <http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/news-and-events/n-ireland/news/new-research-report-on-transitions-for-young-deaf-people.aspx>