

Consultation: Respecting Others

National Deaf Children's Society Cymru

February 2019



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.

We represent the interests of 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

As the consultation document indicates, disabled children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to experience difficulties with bullying. In the case of deaf pupils, this can be exacerbated by communication barriers and feelings of social isolation. Some examples of things that might make a deaf child more vulnerable to bullying include:

- not understanding what's going on in lessons or break time
- being more direct than hearing peers
- being less able to pick up on social cues, both verbal and non-verbal, for example, a sarcastic comment or tone of voice.
- appearing physically different because of using hearing aids, implants and radio aids
- teaching arrangements which emphasise their difference (e.g. being taught separately from peers, being given different work or being supported by a teaching assistant)
- negative attitudes of others towards any kind of disability
- lack of deaf awareness among staff and other children
- a history of over-protection by adults, meaning that they have little experience of standing up for themselves or defending themselves within their peer group.

Given the particular vulnerability of deaf learners to experience bullying, we are keen to ensure the new guidance maintains a disability/ALN specific element. We would wish to see the continuation of ALN specific guidance (such as the current [guidance](#)), or a strengthened focus within the draft new guidance. The disability section within the current draft of the revised guidance is very limited and does not signpost to further disability-specific information or resources.

We would also wish to ensure that helpline/support information that young people are sign posted to includes accessible contact methods. For example, SMS may be more accessible than telephone for a deaf young person.

The National Deaf Children's Society offers a number of anti-bullying resources for deaf young people, their parents and educational professionals, as well as specific information on cyber-bullying. We would welcome the opportunity to highlight these within the Welsh Government's new guidance. More information on these resources, is available [here](#).

We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the preventative measures that should be taken to reduce the likelihood of disability-related bullying issues occurring. It is really important to ensure that staff and pupils are inclusive of a disabled learner and able to meet their communication needs. We would urge that within the guidance, the Welsh Government emphasises the importance of routinely and pro-actively raising disability awareness. The National Deaf Children's Society offers a range of free resources to assist schools in teaching about deaf awareness. You can find out more about our Look, Smile, Chat resources [here](#).

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru also considers it important to assist vulnerable learners in developing self-confidence as a means of building resilience. This can be particularly important for disabled learners who face particular social barriers. Often a deaf learner will be the only deaf pupil in his/her school and it is vital that they are supported to feel confident as a deaf individual. We would welcome reference to this within the Welsh Government guidance.

Further information

If you would like any further information on any of the points raised within this response, please do not hesitate to get in contact at campaigns.wales@ndcs.org.uk.