**Deaf Children in Scotland**

**Briefing for Parliamentary Candidates**

**General Election 2019**

**There are as many as 3850 deaf children in Scotland**

**Early years**

Every child has the right to develop language and communication. Many deaf children use technology called radio aids to help them hear conversations and take part in family life. We campaign to make sure local authorities provide radio aids for deaf pre-school children to use at home.

Only 33% of local authorities in Scotland say they provide radio aids for families to use at home. Can you help us make it 100%?

**British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015**

The passage of the Act marked a historic moment for deaf people across Scotland.

With 90% of deaf children being born to hearing parents, it is crucial that families receive timely interventions of support and information and the opportunity to learn British Sign Language to communicate with their child.

Despite the legislation, there is currently no nationally funded provision for parents of deaf children to access appropriate training to learn to how to communicate with their child through sign language. The only Scotland wide offer (though our Everyone Together project) ended in autumn 2019. The decisions some families make with regards to how they communicate with their child may be influenced by the reality of provision in their local area. For example, the lack of local opportunities to learn and be supported in BSL may discourage families from pursuing BSL as a communication method. We are calling candidates to ensure families have the opportunity to access age-appropriate support in communicating with their deaf child and to endorse Family Sign Language.

Similarly, deaf young people come to us expressing their wish to learn British Sign Language in school but not being given the opportunity to do so. All children, including those who are deaf, should have the option to develop signing language skills. Current uptake of British Sign Language as a subject in schools is patchy across Scotland. We want to see all schools in Scotland give pupils the opportunity to learn this language.

**School and education**

Deafness is not a learning disability and with the right support a deaf child can achieve as much as a hearing child. However, across Scotland deaf pupils are performing consistently worse than their hearing peers with deaf pupils four times more likely to leave school with no qualifications.

Deaf pupils rely on specialist support from Teachers of the Deaf, a service provided by local authority specialist education services for deaf children. In Scotland, the number of qualified teachers of the deaf has fallen by nearly a third (29%) since 2011. We want this issue to be addressed urgently and investment into the specialism to be made including the upskilling of professionals working with deaf pupils in the classroom.

**Ready for the future**

Unemployment among deaf people is more than double that of hearing people. We’re launching a new campaign to improve careers support for deaf young people – will you support us?

**For more information please contact us:** **campaigns.scotland@ndcs.org.uk** **or 0141 354 7850**