

## Consultation Responses on additional Curriculum Guidance

July 2021

### About Us

The National Deaf Children's Society seeks to create a world without barriers for deaf children, young people and their families. We support children and young people with all levels of deafness, from mild through to profound, including those with temporary hearing loss and a unilateral loss. We use the term deafness to refer to all levels of hearing loss.

Below, we have responded to a range of consultations as found on the *Consultations on additional Curriculum for Wales* [guidance page](#) on the Hwb. Each consultation response has been headed with the name of the consultation document. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, these responses are briefer than we would have wished. However, we would be very happy to discuss any of the items raised further and our contact information can be found at the end of this response.

### Consultation responses

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru welcomes guidance on the identified areas. While we appreciate the need for these documents to be applicable to a wide range of learners, given the particular vulnerabilities of learners with ALN and deaf learners, we feel that there is a need to draw attention to some specific and core areas of support relating to this group of learners within the guides. We have highlighted these points under the headings for each of the relevant documents. The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru would welcome the opportunity to work further with the Welsh Government in order to address these points.

### Guidance on the design and delivery of mandatory Religion, Values and Ethics

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru believes in the importance of teaching all learners disability awareness in order to develop values on diversity and inclusion. As we (and other organisations) have consistently raised during the development of the curriculum, we believe the Welsh Government should encourage schools to teach disability awareness within this area of the curriculum. The National Deaf Children's Society is disappointed that, despite repeatedly raising this matter, this matter does not appear in the guidance. We strongly urge that the Welsh Government rectify this.

The National Deaf Children's Society offers free resources (as do other disability organisations) which this guide could signpost to in order to assist teachers with raising disability awareness. Our free lesson plans on deaf awareness are available [here](#).

In addition to this, a National Deaf Children's Society survey highlighted great appetite among learners in Wales, both hearing and deaf, to learn British Sign Language (BSL). In this survey, 80% said they wanted to learn the language. As highlighted in the Welsh Government's draft BSL Curriculum Guidance, teaching BSL can help to raise awareness of other cultures and of diversity. For this reason, we would welcome a cross reference to the BSL guidance within this guidance.

### Cross-curricular skills frameworks

The cross-curricular skills frameworks should highlight that practitioners need to be aware that some learners may struggle with one area of learning, particularly those with Additional Learning Needs

(ALN). The guidance should encourage teachers to share information in an Individual Development Plan so that cross-curricular learning does not mean that barriers faced in one subject by a learner creates barriers in other subjects.

In referring to the ABC steps, it is important to make the distinction that not all learners with ALN will be working to these steps. Many learners with ALN are capable of achieving on a par with their peers given the appropriate support. Practitioners should work with specialist professionals, such as Teachers of the Deaf, in order to establish which progression steps are suitable and support learners to reach their full potential.

### **Enabling Pathways**

The section on *'childhood development and curriculum design'* mentions that *"ALN learners...may have uneven developmental profiles."* This undermines the statement in the previous paragraph on how the *"journey should meet individual needs and be at a pace that is appropriate to each individual learner"*. Deaf learners may require additional support, but this should not be labelled as an *"uneven developmental profile."* We would like to see this line removed from the document and instead an emphasis placed on seeking high expectations and consistent progress of learners with ALN.

### **Curriculum for Wales guidance for Careers and Work-related Experiences**

Throughout our attendance at the stakeholder conferences, the National Deaf Children's Society has often raised the issue that deaf learners (and indeed others with ALN, as is often highlighted by TSANA, the Third Sector Additional Needs Alliance in Wales) are often unaware of their rights in the workplace. There are often myths surrounding what learners with ALN can or cannot do in their careers and these can be perpetuated by education professionals who are also unaware of rights in the work place for those with a disability.

In light of this, we welcome the references already within this guidance around diverse role models and making work experience accessible. We recommend that the guidance provides signposts to organisations like ourselves in order to assist with this.

However, we strongly recommend that this guidance goes further in its reference to disability, highlighting the importance of covering disability rights in employment such as the Access to Work scheme and reasonable adjustments.

In addition, it would be helpful for the guidance to highlight the ability to make requests to Careers Wales for tailored advice to disabled learners at their school.

Useful signposts within this resource could include the Careers Wales [webpage](#) on disability support and the National Deaf Children's Society Deaf Works Everywhere [resource](#).

### **Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings**

Supporting educational development in the early years is crucial for all children. But this is especially the case for those who might need extra support in language acquisition, or who may not have the same access to incidental learning, including deaf children. For this reason, we urge the Welsh Government to place more emphasis on the need for practitioners to adapt the curriculum to meet

the individual needs of children with ALN within this guidance document, working alongside specialist professionals to do so.

There is a high incidence of [glue ear](#) in the early years, with one in five pre-school children having glue ear at any one time. As such, we believe it would be particularly useful for this guide to highlight the incidence of temporary deafness through glue ear and steps that nursery practitioners can take in order to support these learners, such as improving the acoustic environment. The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru would be happy to assist with this.

We would also emphasise the role of supporting families in order to help facilitate learning beyond the nursery environment.

In addition, we would also welcome a focus on the social aspects of learning. We know that some learners with ALN may need additional support with this and it can be crucial to both their learning and their emotional wellbeing.

#### - Literacy

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru welcomes that the section on 'literacy' recognises that *"some children will also communicate by means other than speech."* However, we would advise that this should then go on to provide more information on the types of communication that the child might use, such as British Sign Language or Sign Supported English/Welsh with a cross reference to the Welsh Government's BSL curriculum guidance.

#### - Belonging

The belonging pathway recognises 'culture'. We would like to see the introduction of 'identity' to this section as well. Deafness is an identity which some deaf children relate to. This identity can be enhanced by practitioners sharing materials and stories that provide Deaf role models to children. They can use stories that represent deaf characters to support children to engage with their identity and enhance their sense of 'belonging'.

#### - Communication

We would welcome an acknowledgement in this guidance that visual communication is important to understanding language in addition to "hearing"/ "listening." Lip patterns and/or signs are an integral part of receiving information for many deaf learners. The document should recognise throughout, especially in the section on Literacy, that language is broader than producing spoken/written words.

In the communication pathway it would be useful to clarify the benefits of an enabling environment. The presence of deaf aware practitioners in nursery settings can help optimise the communication environment for deaf children.

The section on rhymes and songs within the communication pathway should make it clear that actions and sign language should also be encouraged to be used by children in relation to rhymes and songs.

Practitioners may find our [phonics guidance](#) useful. We would also welcome a strong reference within the document to seeking support from specialist professionals, such as Teachers of the Deaf where appropriate.

## - **Effective Environments**

Creating effective learning environments can be particularly crucial for those with ALN, where there needs to be a focus on inclusivity. As such, we would welcome clear reference within this document to the need to liaise with specialist professionals in order to meet the needs of children with ALN.

Specifically with regard to deaf children and those experiencing a temporary hearing loss (a high number of preschool children experience glue ear), we would welcome reference to the use of a range of multi-sensory activities and learning experiences using visuals.

A cross reference to the BSL guidance and encouraging children to use some sign language with their deaf peer/s would also be welcome.

## - **Assessment and Observation**

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru strongly recommends that this section should signpost to practitioners to where they can go if they have any concerns in terms of speech and language development and how to engage with specialist professionals such as Teachers of the Deaf.

The guidance could highlight some "triggers" for referrals. For example, babies and young children will often produce babble and streams of language with lots of expression and intonation but not distinct words. If this is not happening, it could suggest deafness or other additional needs. Other referral triggers might include signs of frustration or a lack of interest in noises.

It would also be very helpful if this guidance were to cross reference to the Individual Development Plan system and alert practitioners to their duty to talk to parents and help refer children to the local authority Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer if they suspect that they have ALN and require additional support in order to access learning.

## **Further information**

As outlined at the start of this response, the National Deaf Children's Society Cymru would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the points raised within this response further. For more information, please contact [Campaigns.Wales@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:Campaigns.Wales@ndcs.org.uk).

Thank you.