

STAKEHOLDER REPORT TO INFORM THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD'S 'LIST OF ISSUES PRIOR TO REPORTING'

KEY ISSUES

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ON BEHALF OF: The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

DATE: 21 September 2020

- **Issue:**

Inequalities in educational attainment for deaf children in Northern Ireland

Context:

Deafness is not a learning disability, yet deaf children are at risk of falling a whole grade behind their hearing friends. Research shows that every category of deafness, including mild hearing loss, has a negative effect on attainment.

The vast majority (91%) of deaf children are born to hearing parents, most with no experience of deafness. 78% of deaf children in Northern Ireland attend mainstream schools where they may be the only deaf child.

When early identification of deafness is followed quickly by high quality specialist intervention, deaf children can achieve the same outcomes as other children. A key intervention for many children is the Teacher of the Deaf service. They provide highly specialist support for families in the early years and help to ensure deaf learners in school have full access to the curriculum. Without this, deaf children are more likely to struggle at school, experience mental ill health and have fewer opportunities in employment.

Evidence:

The Department of Education's own data from 2017/18 shows that only 48% of deaf school leavers obtained 5+GCSEs A*-C2 including English and Maths, compared to 71% of the total: an attainment gap of 23%. In 14/15 (evidence available at the time of the last UNCRC report) the gap was 18%, so the situation has worsened rather than improved in the intervening years.

The 2019 report by the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE) on educational staffing and service provision for deaf children found that the number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf in employment fell by 11% over the past year. It has fallen by 28% since the CRIDE survey started in 2011¹.

Question(s):

What are the Department of Education's plans to reduce the widening attainment gap for deaf children in Northern Ireland?

What is the Department of Education's workforce plan to arrest the decline in numbers of specialist Teachers of the Deaf in Northern Ireland?

¹ <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/media/6062/cride-2019-northern-ireland-report-final.pdf>