

Response to Department for Communities Draft Budget

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the draft budget and Equality Impact Assessment. We wish to express our concern about the disappearance of the Jobstart programme from Department of Communities' plans and budget. This will leave us as the only part of the UK to miss out on the tailored support for deaf young people that is being delivered elsewhere through the Kickstart programme.

RNID and NDCS met officials in the autumn to discuss how the programme met the needs of deaf young people and we were encouraged by the interest and commitment shown. We were therefore concerned by the delay in rollout and are obviously dismayed to see the draft budget and the plans to postpone the programme for at least a year.

Deaf adults are more than twice as likely to be unemployed compared to non-disabled adults. Employment rate 36% for deaf 16-64 year olds, 79% of those who are not disabled¹.

Data on employment outcomes for deaf young people is weak. However, research suggests that deaf young people are more likely to be NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) eg, O'Neill et al (2014) found that 31% of deaf 16-24 year old were working compared to 53% of all the workforce of that age².

Research from RNID in Northern Ireland highlighted the struggles that deaf young people face in moving on from school into education, training and employment³.

It is striking that the Equality Impact Assessment noted the potential impact on both Young People and on Persons with a Disability. People who are both young and also deaf or disabled are likely to be subject to particularly negative impact from this decision.

We believe strongly that the proposed mitigations, as outlined by Minister Hargey in response to Assembly Question AQW 14237 17-22, will not be effective in mitigating the impact of the loss of the Jobstart programme. The long term future of some of the alternatives highlighted (eg Workable NI) is not secure. The Access to Work grant scheme is indeed highly valued by deaf people, however only 5% of young deaf adults are using the scheme and in recent

¹ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/being-disabled-britain-supporting-data>

² O'Neill, R., Arendt, A. & Marschark, M. (2014) Report from the Achievement and Opportunities for Deaf Students in the United Kingdom: from Research to Practice project

³ Action on Hearing Loss (2014) Opening Doors: Transitions experiences of young people with hearing loss in Northern Ireland

research 90% of young deaf people did not know about the scheme. Job coaches do not typically have the specialist understanding of deafness to adequately support young people.

With the right support put in place, deaf people can work in almost any job role. We believe that this scheme has the potential to significantly contribute to preventing the current generation of deaf young people being left behind during this crisis. We would urge you to reconsider, and to include this important new employability programme in this year's budget.

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