

Guidance for Safeguarding Partners (England): Deaf Children, Young People and their Families.

Developed by the
Social Workers with Deaf Children and Professionals group

August 2022

What is the purpose of this guidance?

This guidance and accompanying tool are designed to support safeguarding partners and their partnership boards in England to consider the safeguarding needs of deaf¹ children, young people and their families in the services they provide.

Who is it for?

Given that the rights of disabled children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) up to age 25 overlap with children and adult social care legislation, this guidance will be useful for:

- safeguarding partners and their associated adult safeguarding partnership boards
- commissioners of statutory and voluntary services to disabled children and young people up to age 25, and their families
- managers of commissioned services to disabled children and young people and their families up to age 25
- practitioners working with deaf children and young people and their families up to age 25.

It will also be relevant to commissioners, managers and practitioners who work with deaf parents, some of whom will be British Sign Language users.

The guidance may also be useful to inspectors within Ofsted, CQC and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary.

The accompanying tool includes:

- a summary table of key legal duties on individual safeguarding partners with relevance to deaf children, young people and their families
- key outcomes demonstrating deaf children and young people are being supported in the area of your responsibility
- suggested actions to meet the key outcomes

¹ We use the word 'deaf' to mean children, young people who have a permanent hearing loss; who may choose to communicate through speech, sign language or a combination of both and may be supported by the use of hearing aids/cochlear implants. All deaf children and young people are disabled within the Children Act 1989. Deaf children and deaf adults are recognised as disabled within the Equality Act 2010 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability.

- links to examples of best practice guidance and documents of specific relevance to deaf children, young people and their families.

A self-audit tool is also included in order for partners to consider current provision, identify areas to develop, and track progression.

Acknowledgements

The members of the Social Workers with Deaf Children and Professionals group comprise of a range of different professionals drawn across different local authorities, social care, mental health, academia, and charitable organisations. The purpose of this group is to provide a regular forum for social workers with deaf children and professionals across England and Wales to have professional discussions in this specialist field and to share best practice and pathways.

The group have contributed immensely to the audit tool and other projects such as the NSPCC Safeguarding Deaf Children Conference. They also promote multi-agency working, seek to influence policy development within all member organisations and the wider audience in the needs of deaf children and young people, and proactively link research and practice using the group to share ideas and information.

The members of this group who have been involved as co-developers/authors of the audit tool are prepared to have their names and organisations listed at the front of the document for input in 2020/2021 and up till March 2022 as a collective group. All members are experienced and registered social workers with Social Work England.

- Shirley Wilson, Senior Consultant for d/Deaf and disabled children, NSPCC (chair of the group)
- Professor Alys Young, Professor of Social Work University of Manchester
- Jo Hornsby, Social Worker, Suffolk County Council
- Daniel Sharpe, Student Social Worker, West Sussex County Council (post June 2022 ASYE)
- Tim Richardson, Head of Operations, Deaf CAMHS, Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Nicola Rouse, Senior Practitioner, Kent County Council
- Carol-Ann Churm, Post Graduate Student
- Colm McGerigal, Social Worker for people who are Deaf, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Angela Goddard, Social Worker, Jersey

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Chris Mullen, former social care policy adviser for the National Deaf Children's Society and co-chair of the group for his contribution to the group and this resource.

Background

In 2010, the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) published an audit tool for the then Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs) to consider the safeguarding needs of deaf children and their families. This guidance updates that initial tool considering subsequent:

- legislative changes transferring powers to the new safeguarding partners and the ability of them to form partnership boards with the new Adult Safeguarding Boards
- the new duties on safeguarding partners to support children and young people with SEND
- the introduction of local area SEND inspections by Ofsted/CQC.

It is informed by evidence derived from the first ever national safeguarding deaf children conference hosted by NSPCC² in 2016, new research concerning deaf children and their families, advances and innovations in social work practice in this field and related published specialist guidance.

Understanding deafness

In the UK, approximately one in 1,000 children are born with a permanent hearing loss and there are around 51,000 deaf children with a permanent hearing loss in the UK ([CRIDE, 2021](#)), half whom are born deaf, half of whom have acquired their deafness through childhood. Between 30-40% of deaf children have additional needs ([Hauser & Marschark, 2008](#)) with the prevalence of severe multiple disabilities being at least 20% ([van Dijk, Nelson, Postma, & van Dijk, 2010](#)).

Deafness is commonly considered as if solely a medical condition with attention focussed on the restoration of hearing through the provision of technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants. This approach can lead to the false assumption that deaf children relying on technological support are not deaf anymore and can be treated as hearing children. A social model approach considers deaf children's needs from the perspective of their holistic psycho-social development and focusses attention on the ways in which this may be impeded. From this perspective, the difficulty is not that deaf children may not hear, but rather that features of their environment, whether in the family, school or wider society, may create barriers to their ability to thrive.

However, a cultural-linguistic approach to being deaf respects British Sign Language (BSL) as a language recognised in law and the community of its users as possessing a unique cultural identity. BSL was officially recognised as a language in its own right by the UK Government in 2003 and in Wales in 2004. In Scotland BSL has full legal status through the BSL Scotland Act 2015, where its use must be promoted. More recently, the BSL Act 2022 has been passed, legally recognising BSL as a language for England, Wales and Scotland and requiring government departments to report on how they are promoting and facilitating the use of BSL.

Deaf children are highly diverse whether in terms of their degree of deafness, language use (spoken, signed or both), cultural identity (whether in terms of being Deaf or their family heritage), use of technologies to hear and the ways in which the impact of deafness is filtered through responses of familial, educational and social environments. All deaf children have legal rights as 'disabled children', irrespective of their communication preferences for British Sign Language, or accessing spoken language through assistive hearing devices. Deaf children can be active participants in measures to safeguard and promote their welfare.

The impact of deafness

Deafness in itself is not a learning disability, and deaf children can achieve just as well as their hearing peers. However, without the right support in place to aid deaf children's age-appropriate language acquisition (whether through signed or spoken language or a combination of both), deafness can impact significantly on their cognitive, social and linguistic development, and psychological well-being. This may have lifelong detrimental consequences ([Glickman & Hall 2019](#)) with reduced opportunities to participate in society and achieve active citizenship ([Morris 2011](#)).

Without action to support deaf children's access to develop and use language, deaf children will be at greater risk of experiencing isolation within their families (over 90% of whom are hearing), their schools and their communities.

² The NSPCC conference at the University of Manchester was led with the participation of specialist practitioners working in children's social care.

The language and communication barriers faced by deaf children and young people manifest themselves in increased risk. From the limited research in the UK and internationally, deaf children, in comparison with the general population of children, are:

- struggling to access children's social care^{3 4}
- at greater risk of abuse⁵
- more likely experience mental health difficulties⁶
- will struggle to achieve key developmental milestones in the early years and are likely to underachieve at school⁷
- at greater risk of both unemployment and under employment when they reach adulthood.⁸

With reduced opportunities to access to language and communication, deaf children will struggle to develop the language needed to understand what abuse is, to be able to name it and be able to disclose this to someone who can understand their communication ([NSPCC, Taylor et al 2015](#)).

Why safeguarding partners must consider deaf children and their families, and Deaf parents

Over 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents with little or no experience of deafness, what this will mean for their children, and how they should respond.

Therefore, access to some level of support is vital, particularly following identification and in the early years where parents play a critical role in developing their child's language and communication and setting the foundations for socio-emotional development. For this reason, deaf children are recognised as 'disabled children' within the [Children Act 1989 \(s17\(11\)\)](#) as having 'protected characteristics' along with deaf adults, as disabled people within the [Equality Act 2010](#) and its associated [Public Sector Equality Duty \(2011\)](#). [Working Together 2018](#) specifically makes this important link between equalities legislation and how services must carry out their duties with regard to disabled children, which includes deaf children. Deaf children as disabled children are also afforded key rights as disabled children with the United Nations Conventions of the [Rights of the Child](#), and [Rights of Persons with a Disability](#).

However, research by the [University of Manchester in 2008-10](#) and follow up research by [NDCS in 2014](#) found many deaf children and their families were not able to access social care services that they were legally entitled to as disabled children. Both studies showed that many social care services were reluctant to identify deaf children as 'children in need' and often assumed that their needs would be fully met by health and education services alone. Such an approach fails to recognise the risks and complexities that deafness can pose in terms of child development and family life. It also fails to acknowledge the cultural aspect of being deaf associated for some children and families with BSL and an affiliation with the Deaf community.

At the [2016 NSPCC Safeguarding Deaf Children conference](#), delegates from across the country also reported that:

- multi-agency pathways to identify and respond to deaf children's needs across the whole span of childhood, not just the early years, are very poorly developed

³ www.ndcs.org.uk/media/1819/uom_social_care_report_exec_summary.pdf

⁴ www.ndcs.org.uk/media/1797/ndcs-report_social_care_support_for_deaf_children_in_england_2014.pdf

⁵ www.researchgate.net/publication/8635920_Sexual_abuse_of_deaf_children_A_retrospective_analysis_of_the_prevalence_and_characteristics_of_childhood_sexual_abuse_among_deaf_adults_in_Norway

⁶ [www.paediatricsandchildhealthjournal.co.uk/article/S0957-5839\(04\)00195-2/abstract](http://www.paediatricsandchildhealthjournal.co.uk/article/S0957-5839(04)00195-2/abstract)

⁷ www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/being-deaf-friendly/information-for-professionals/research-and-data/

⁸ www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/being-disabled-britain-supporting-data

- joint working protocols particularly with respect to responding to abuse and child protection are not well defined
- the specialist nature of knowledge required for an effective safeguarding response is under-estimated
- a clear definition and understanding of outcomes to be achieved for deaf children are poorly articulated.

Deaf parents

Many deaf parents successfully parent their deaf or hearing children without the need for any social care involvement. Deaf parents who use a signed language such as BSL offer their children unimpeded access to fluent language and communication which supports language acquisition, the achievement of age-appropriate milestones and socio-emotional development on a par with hearing children in hearing/spoken language homes. This conferred benefit is not always recognised by those more used to spoken language developmental norms.

However, many deaf parents have experienced lifelong challenges and barriers to accessing everyday information because of poorly developed literacy in the written word and the lack of access to information and communication in a signed language. This extends to their educational experiences which have not fully met their language and communication needs in their formative years. Consequently, some deaf parents lack 'expected' parenting skills and knowledge. The vast majority will have been parented by hearing people with few deaf parent role models available to them. Research by [Munro et al 2018](#) confirms previous studies which show that when disabled parents seek help from children's social care, their response is more one of surveillance and monitoring.

Therefore, in decisions to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, services must fully recognise the everyday barriers that deaf parents experience and have experienced in society and where possible provide support to them in their parenting role in a manner that is linguistically accessible and culturally appropriate for those who are signers.

The decline of deaf specialist social care knowledge and practice

Specialist social work and social care teams, sometimes referred to as sensory teams or deaf teams, were once common in local authorities and played a nationally recognised specialist role. They usually worked with children and adults across the lifespan attending to needs of those who were sign language users and those who were not. Staff had specialist knowledge of, for example, usual developmental trajectories for deaf children as well as specialist skills in, for example, how to communicate effectively in spoken and/or signed language with deaf children and deaf adults. However following changes brought about by the Children Act 2004, [research](#) has found that such teams have largely disappeared, an unintended consequence as councils separated their children and adult services leaving no room for an all-age specialist team. Many local authorities have, therefore, lost this vital expertise in recognising and responding to the safeguarding needs of deaf children and their families. The [2016 deaf child safeguarding conference](#) recognised the challenges faced by service providers given the low incidence of deafness among the children's population, but highlighted the critical importance of a strong multi-agency approach to safeguarding deaf children and the additional specialist knowledge and practice that may be required.

Safeguarding partners may wish to consider in their locality what the safeguarding pathway would be in the case of a deaf child or a child in a Deaf family and whether the arrangements are clear, appropriately resourced, and effective. In the few examples where specialist teams remain, it is also important to understand and appreciate their working practices. The tool accompanying the guidance will assist in this process.

SEND legislation and inspection duties

SEND legislation, extending support up to age 25, has led many local authorities to combine some of their once separated social care duties towards children and adults. These developments, along with ability for new safeguarding arrangements to cover more than one local authority, present an opportunity to create, share or develop specialist expertise/resources in safeguarding of deaf children and young people which could not be achieved in previous structures.

In addition, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission's joint local area SEND inspections, although shorter and less in-depth than other inspections, are shining an important light on the multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with SEND. Such inspections offer the opportunity to understand that, whilst there are specialist education support for deaf children and young people, there is often an absence of any formal arrangements to consider their potential social care needs.

Challenge to safeguarding partners

As strategic leaders in safeguarding their local population of children and young people, the new safeguarding partners have important legislative duties and responsibilities with regard to deaf children and young people as disabled children and determining whether their collective functions are able to safeguard them appropriately. For example, partners must produce a threshold document with clear procedures and process relating to the support of disabled children (1(16) Working Together 2018) including deaf children whose requirements may be particular because of the fundamental issues of language and communication that surround deafness.

The challenge for safeguarding partners is that, whilst they are increasing their awareness and response to the risks to children and young people through sexual exploitation, online abuse and county lines, and the wider context in which these occur, are they also able to explicitly consider how these threats pose additional risks to deaf children and young people and what planning processes are in place to respond to these?

The tool accompanying this guidance

The tool that follows will help safeguarding partners through their corresponding partnership arrangements to consider their legal duties to safeguard deaf children and young people and support their families. The summary table identifies key outcomes for deaf children and young people with reference via hyperlinks to relevant legislation, statutory guidance and to further examples for better practice. All links are correct at the time of publication.

It is complimented by a self-evaluation audit tool, which follows in Appendix 1, which can serve as a useful benchmarking tool for partners to consider their provision and track progression and complement other service-user led evaluations.

Key outcomes for deaf children – summary table

Although we signpost to examples of reports/documents for better practice, this does not mean we endorse everything cited in them. Additional examples of reports/documents may be added as practice continually develops.

The table that follows covers the following areas:

- 1) Safeguard and promote welfare in all functions
- 2) Provide information
- 3) Multi-agency working
- 4) Early help services
- 5) Actively seeking deaf young peoples' wishes and feelings
- 6) Social care assessments
- 7) Child Protection Investigations
- 8) Moving into adulthood
- 9) Mental health needs of deaf children and young people
- 10) Care- experienced deaf children and young people
- 11) Co-production

A self-audit tool follows in Appendix 1.

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
1) Safeguard and promote welfare in all functions	s10 Children Act 2004	✓			<p>Deaf children are enabled and supported to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - know what abuse is - know how to report this and who to report this to - fully participate in family life, education, leisure and citizenship opportunities - develop to the best of their capabilities. <p>All partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider safeguarding risks to deaf children and young people in all their functions and how these might be mitigated and their well-being promoted (reflected in inter-agency policies and procedures). - ensure services are fully accessible within equality duties recognising the wider variation in language and communication needs of deaf children and young people and deaf parents. 	<p>All partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review their section 11 audits to see if they are able to evidence equality of access to deaf children and young people and their families (and deaf parents). This also applies to providers of commissioned services. - review how accessible consultations are to deaf children and young people and their families (and deaf parents) who have a range of different communication needs. - identify a strategic lead, within each/or across all partners, who will ensure deaf children and young people's safeguarding needs are considered (in addition, a lead person with the required expertise at practitioner level is also identified). <p>LA, ICBS promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication passports - deaf peer support programmes - deaf young inspectors of services. 	<p>Safeguarding Disabled Children (DFE 2009)</p> <p>NSPCC Guidance on Safeguarding Deaf/disabled children</p> <p>National Working Group report on Safeguarding Disabled children</p> <p>Ofsted commentary</p> <p>NSPCC Deafzone</p> <p>NDCS personal passports</p> <p>NDCS peer support toolkit</p> <p>Powys Police reporting child or adult abuse</p>
	sch2(6) Children Act 1989	✓					
	Equality Act 2010	✓	✓	✓			
	s11 Children Act 2004	✓	✓	✓			
	s16 Children and Social Work Act 2017	✓	✓	✓			
	s35 Children and Social Work Act 2017	✓					
	Accessible information standard	✓	✓				
	RE/SRE Curriculum	✓					
	Working Together 2018	✓	✓	✓			
	UNCRC UNCRDP	✓	✓	✓			
	<p><i>Language and communication is critical to a child's social and emotional, educational and intellectual development. For deaf children without the right support in place this poses a significant challenge without additional action by statutory/non-statutory services.</i></p>						

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
						<p>Fire authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - where fire authorities issue smoke alarms, ensure there are written procedures in place for accessible alarms to be provided for households with an identified deaf child or adult. 	<p>Leicestershire Fire Authority Advice needs of deaf people</p>

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
2) Provide information	s6 s149 Equality Act 2010	✓	✓	✓	Parent-carers of deaf children are provided with clear and impartial information on childhood deafness, its implications and communication options.	All partners: - provide information in range of languages, formats and modalities suitable for a range of communication needs. Written information translated into British Sign Language must be undertaken by registered BSL translator. There are currently two regulatory bodies in England including NRCPD and RBSL. - use a range of technologies to promote equal access to services. - consult with users in review of services through a variety of platforms online, face to face and with wide group of stakeholders. - implement accessible and effective comments, compliments, complaints procedure. ICBs: - monitor accessibility of health appointments, patient satisfaction and accessible complaints procedures and their outcomes.	Accessible Information standard CQC advice Accessibility requirements for public sector bodies NHS England best practices in interpreting and translation in primary care. WY Police accessible-information/deaf-community-champions NDCS Youth Advisory Board My Life My Health Deafzone Childline
	Public Sector Body Accessibility Regs 2018	✓	✓	✓			
	s30-37 Children and Families Act 2014 Local Offer	✓					
	Statutory guidance Code of Practice 2015	✓			Deaf children and young people know where they can seek information to support them to safeguard and promote their welfare.		
	Para 50 DeafBlind stat. guidance 2014	✓					
	Accessible information standard 2015	✓	✓		All partners: - produce information in full range of formats, modalities and languages.		
	Regard to Article 13, 17 UNCRC	✓	✓	✓	- staff are aware how to provide information in alternative formats and languages and understand their responsibilities to provide BSL Interpreters for Deaf parents and families where required.		
<p><i>Information is key to people being able to understand their rights and make decisions.</i></p> <p><i>Over 90% of parents of deaf children have no experience of deafness therefore clear information is critical to help parents make key decisions for their child.</i></p> <p><i>Services should provide information which is accessible to the range of communication needs of deaf children</i></p>							

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBs	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<p><i>and Deaf parents, e.g. BSL and other communication modes.</i></p> <p><i>Written information is often not accessible to many first language BSL users</i></p>				<p>LAs, ICBs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - take proactive steps to provide impartial information on deafness - SEND information is available in a range of formats and languages to suit varied needs of deaf children and young people. 		<p>West Yorks Crime Commissioner Hate Crime (BSL)</p> <p>Sick of It report SignHealth</p>

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
3) Multi-agency working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying population Planning and commissioning services Training 	s10,11 Children Act 2004	✓	✓	✓	<p>Deaf children and young people's population and their needs are identified and this informs the JSNA and Health and Well-Being Strategy.</p> <p>Deaf children, young people and their families are able to access a range of community services in a way which meets their linguistic and communication needs. These are based on clear rights to full participation.</p> <p>All partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consult with deaf children and their families. - safeguard and promote deaf children's well-being in the planning and developing of their services. <p>LA, ICBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider the integration and joint commissioning of services to deaf children and their families which safeguard and promote well-being. 	<p>All partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify a strategic lead (as stated above) and develop joint protocols where necessary. - contribute to developing multi-agency safeguarding training with regard to deaf children. This should be informed by specialist expertise in deafness across education, health and social care and sign language interpreting, and with deaf children and families. - ensure key members of their workforce are given deaf awareness training which considers deaf children's vulnerabilities/working with Deaf adults. - jointly review interpreting and translation contracts to ensure providers use qualified British Sign language interpreters or trainee interpreters and translators who are registered with a regulatory body such as NRCPD or RBSLI. 	<p>Council for Disabled Children: data collection</p> <p>Ofsted 2012 Communication is the Key</p> <p>NHS NDCS: What works; CHGWG Guidance for commissioners (2019)</p> <p>Herts sensory pathway (2018)</p> <p>Best practice Early intervention support (2013)</p> <p>Children's Commissioner report on Speech and Language services 2019</p> <p>NDCS Early years support Quality Standards</p>
	s16(E)Children and Social Work Act 2017	✓	✓	✓			
	s25,26, 31 Children and Families Act 2014	✓	✓				
	s22 Children and Families Act 2014	✓					
	Sch 2 para 2 Children Act 1989	✓					
	S85 Children Act 1989	✓					
	s23 Children and Families Act 2014		✓				
	s192,195 Health and Social Care Act 2012	✓	✓				
	Chapter 1,3, Working Together 2018	✓	✓	✓			
<p><i>Deaf children and their families often are seen by a number of different professionals. Multiagency approaches are cited as best practice by Ofsted *. Deaf children are a low incidence group and therefore not often explicitly considered within commissioning and</i></p>							

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBs	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<i>provision of services for children and families.</i>				<p>- considers vulnerabilities of deaf children in safeguarding training.</p> <p>LAs:</p> <p>- can accurately identify their population of deaf children and young people including those placed in education, health and care settings out of authority.</p>	<p>LAs, ICBs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to support with identifying the population of and commissioning of services to deaf children, young and their families, LAs and ICBs agree upon a definition of a ‘deaf child’ and key characteristics to be recorded and shared (partners acknowledge that differences in definitions around deafness relate to different applicable legislation and national data returns, e.g Child in Need, SEND. These can pose barriers to effective working arrangements without strong protocols in place). - ensure there is a clear protocol for providers of audiological services to inform local authorities when a child is diagnosed deaf. - develop a multi-agency sensory pathway covering health education and social care support (including SEND duties). Pathway is co-produced with key stakeholders including local Deaf children’s groups, Deaf Clubs, 	<p>We need to talk Report 2019 (Children’s Commissioner)</p>

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						<p>Children’s Service Working Group (CHSWG)⁹.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “develop a joint strategic plan in place which assesses the level of speech and language need in their area” (Children’ Commissioner Report 2019) - CHSWG minutes are shared between relevant partners and stakeholders. 	

⁹ [CHSWG](#) Children’s Hearing Services Working Group: are a multi-disciplinary stakeholder forum of professionals and stakeholder representatives in local areas which consider how services can promote the best outcomes for deaf children and their families

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4) Early help services	sch 2(6) Children Act 1989	✓			<p>Parent-carers of deaf children and deaf parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feel supported and informed about key issues and can access advice /services where necessary. - following diagnosis parents are offered practical support promote their deaf child's language development. - there is a clear offer to parents of deaf children training in British Sign Language and speech and language therapy (SALT) input. <p>All partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recognise deaf children as 'disabled children' within existing disability and equality legislation. - understand the vulnerabilities for deaf children in reaching their potential. - can provide universal and targeted services that meet deaf children and their families' needs. 	<p>LAs, ICBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a multi-agency sensory pathway which includes clear information on early help services for deaf children and their families and also for deaf parents to know support that can accessed. - review SALT service and support to parents of deaf children to promote their child's language development as recommended by Children's Commissioner. <p>LAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offer parent-carers of deaf children an early help/statutory social care assessment. - develop a clear protocol for early help assessments to be informed by advice from social care professionals with expertise in working with deaf children/deaf parents (where there is no local expertise, children's social care considers most appropriate solution with relevant partners, e.g. identify and provide on-going training to existing social care practitioner, consider joint 	<p>Best practice Early intervention support</p> <p>Ofsted 2012 Communication is the Key</p> <p>Deafness Support Network early help services (NWest)</p> <p>NDCS Social care position statement</p> <p>NDCS online family sign language courses</p> <p>Coventry specialist family support worker spec 2021</p> <p>NDCS e-learning basic introduction to social care needs of deaf children-</p>
	Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regs 2011	✓					
	Ch1 Working Together 2018	✓	✓				
	s53 Children Act 2004	✓					
	s2CSDP Act 1970	✓					
	S6 s149 Equality Act 2010	✓	✓				
	Article 23 UNCRC	✓	✓				
<p><i>The early years are the critical period for children to develop first language fluency.</i></p> <p><i>Appropriate support ensures deaf children are helped to develop language, communication and social and emotional skills in line with their hearing siblings and peers.</i></p> <p><i>Examples can include family sign language programmes, parenting classes, access to a teacher of the deaf or deaf role models within nursery, school or after school activities.</i></p>							

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBs	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<p><i>Separately Deaf parents of deaf or hearing children often are unable to access mainstream family services due to communication/cultural barriers which are not considered.</i></p>				<p>- have clear routes to seek additional expertise or help where services cannot meet needs.</p> <p>LAs, ICBs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - early help professionals are aware of the social care needs of deaf children when providing support to children and families. - deaf children and young people and their parents aware of their local offer and availability of specialist advice and support when necessary. 	<p>funding /sharing specialist practitioners across partners or regions/or develop clear spot purchasing arrangements).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure there is a clear referral route which consider assistive equipment needs of deaf children and young people to promote independence/safety at home, e.g. through occupational therapy or other arrangements. 	<p>Herts Sensory Pathway (2019)</p>

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
5) Actively seeking deaf young peoples' wishes and feelings	s53 Children Act 2004	✓	✓		<p>Deaf children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have opportunities to self-report. - they are supported to express their wishes and feelings in a range of different ways, e.g. school-based well-being questions, EHC plans. - can access services in ways which meet their diverse communication needs; e.g. book GP independently; contact their social worker, key worker. <p>All partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - know how to ascertain language and communication preferences of deaf children and young people. - their workforce can access specialist language and interpreting support where required. - understand their responsibilities to pay for communication access and appropriate budgetary provision is made for this. 	<p>All partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review contracts with language interpreting agencies to consider deaf children in line with best practice standards. Consider joint commissioning these services. - consider specialist professional advice. <p>LAs, ICBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote communication passports/profiles. - review the resources used to communicate with children and young people to consider whether they are suitable for deaf children and young people. - for children who use BSL as first/preferred language, consider written reports are produced in or translated into BSL. - audit case files to determine how child's language and communication needs are considered and defined. 	<p>NICE 'Child Abuse and Neglect'- 1.1.2/1.27/1.4.6</p> <p>Helping social workers communicate with deaf children (NSPCC)</p> <p>Social care assessments for deaf children: Practice guidance Toolkit (NDCS)</p> <p>NDCS social care position statement</p> <p>Guidance on using BSL interpreters (NUBSLI)</p> <p>NDCS review of apps for communication</p> <p>RNID video conferencing apps</p>
	s7 Children's Home Regulations 2015	✓					
	s9/s54 SEN Regulations 2014	✓					
	Mental Capacity Act 2005	✓	✓	✓			
	s6 s149 Equality Act 2010	✓	✓	✓			
	Article 12, 23 UNCRC	✓	✓	✓			
	<p><i>In direct work, workers should take all reasonable steps to gain the wishes and feelings of a deaf child/young person. Existing practices may need to be changed to enable this to happen. Parent-carers must not be used as 'interpreters'. Deaf children and young people have the right to be consulted about the services they use through their preferred means of communication.</i></p>						

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
					<p>- can demonstrate co-production with deaf young people to inform their service provision and development.</p>		

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
6) Social care assessments	s53 Children Act 2004	✓			<p>Deaf children and young people, parents of deaf children and deaf parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - report being able to fully participate in assessments which meet their language and communications needs. <p>LAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - view single assessments as an opportunity to carefully explore the impact of deafness on the child and family and what support is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of deaf children. - social care assessments take a clear preventative approach, seeking to understanding of the developmental impact of deafness on each deaf child/young person and their family. Assessments recognise strengths and ways to promote age-appropriate language development, social and emotional skills, and ways to promote deaf children and 	<p>LAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop policy and procedure on how statutory social care assessments are undertaken with deaf children and with Deaf parents ensuring they are undertaken by a professional with expertise in working with deaf children/deaf parents. - IT systems record a child's language and communication needs -review social care thresholds to ensure they consider impact of deafness on deaf children and their families. - offer a clear pathway/route for the assessment of assistive equipment in the home for deaf children and young people, e.g. as part of single assessment/ or separate occupational therapist assessment. - ensure SEND protocols include social care advice to inform EHC assessment and that parent-carers offered social care advice/assessment. 	<p>Social care assessments for deaf children: Practice guidance Toolkit (NDCS)</p> <p>Helping social workers communicate with deaf children (NSPCC)</p> <p>Guidelines given for cases involving a deaf parent</p> <p>Best practice guidance for Interpreters in social care settings</p> <p>How-to-book-an-interpreter</p> <p>NRCPD</p> <p>RBSLI</p>
	s17(10)(11),17ZD Children Act 1989	✓					
	sch.2(6) Children Act 1989	✓					
	s2 CSDP Act 1970	✓					
	Deafblind guidance 2015	✓					
	SEND Code 2015 (9.49)	✓					
	s149 PSED Equality Act	✓					
	(Chapter 1, para 28) Working Together 2018	✓					
	Article 30 UNHCR	✓					
<p><i>For the majority of deaf children born into hearing families, deafness presents a barrier to achieving first language fluency and without the right support in place this poses serious consequences for deaf children's language development, social skills, mental health and family well-being.</i></p>							

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<p><i>However the impact of deafness on deaf children and their families varies significantly due to a variety of developmental, linguistic, environmental factors. Statutory Assessments offer an opportunity to carefully consider these factors in order to appropriately safeguard and promote the welfare of deaf children and their families.</i></p>				<p>young people’s participation and prevent isolation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - carry out social care assessments in a culturally sensitive linguistically appropriate manner by specifically skilled professionals with experience in Deaf culture and sign language. - ensure assessments are informed by a specialist sensory social worker and are informed by other key involved professionals, e.g. Teacher of the Deaf, audiologist, speech and language therapist. - eligibility criteria reflects the impact that deafness can have on deaf children and their family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review contracts to provide British Sign Language Interpreters which should ensure that as a minimum BSL interpreters can be either a qualified or a trainee interpreter and must be registered with a regulatory body which provides disclosure checks, indemnity insurance, and requires registrants abide by a professional code of conduct. There are currently two regulatory bodies in England including NRCPD and RBSLI. - deaf young people who BSL as their first language users should be offered to have documents/criteria be translated into BSL and will require a registered Translator. There are currently two regulatory bodies for BSL interpreters and translators in England including NRCPD and RBSL. - develop various options for feedback from children, young people and adults during assessment process. Consult with 	

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
						deaf children, young people and their families.	

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
7) Child Protection Investigations	s46-47, Children Act 1989	✓		✓	<p>Deaf children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have full access to justice in investigations which recognise the additional safeguarding risks that deafness can pose. - have their language and communication needs carefully considered at all stages and their preferences where possible. <p>Deaf parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - where involved, are enabled to fully participate in investigations. <p>All partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand the complexities of investigations with deaf child/deaf parents. - investigations are informed by a specialist social worker with deaf children (deaf adult if required). - other key professionals, e.g. BSL interpreters, intermediaries are fully involved in the planning of investigations. 	<p>All partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a clear interagency protocol how investigations should be planned considering additional specialists required e.g. BSL interpreter and/or deaf intermediary and/or a deaf advocate. Ideally these professionals should have PACE training. - where there is no local expertise in social care with deaf children, as a minimum, advice must be sought externally by the investigating team and continue until conclusion. - establish a central designated list of registered interpreters to verify registration, DBS etc. - establish a central designated list of trained and DBS verified additional professionals e.g. Deaf advocates and deaf intermediaries - co-produce child protection training involving third parties e.g. registered sign language interpreters; intermediaries. 	<p>Helping social workers communicate with deaf children (NSPCC)</p> <p>Social care assessments for deaf children: Practice guidance Toolkit (NDCS)</p> <p>Achieving Best Evidence (para 2.188; 2011)</p> <p>Advocate Toolkit 'Planning to Interview someone who is deaf' (11)</p> <p>how-to-book-an-interpreter</p> <p>NSPCC safeguarding deaf children</p>
	s29 s30 Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999			✓			
	PACE Code C 1984			✓			
	Mental Capacity Act 2005	✓	✓	✓			
	Article 19, 30 40 UNCRC	✓	✓	✓			
<p><i>Deaf children's language and communication needs varies significantly due to a variety of developmental, linguistic, environmental factors. Deaf children may use sign language or spoken language or a combination of both and also use a different language at home to one used at school.</i></p> <p><i>It is therefore critical to gather information about a deaf child's communication needs prior to any formal interviews and establish the child's own preferences if possible. Parents/carers must never be used as interpreters in any investigations.</i></p> <p><i>Where BSL interpreters (and relay interpreters for deaf children with</i></p>							

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<p><i>learning difficulties) are required, they must be involved at the start of any discussions in plans to interview deaf children.</i></p> <p><i>Deaf children may also change their communication to suit the expectation of the adult in a specific situation and not one which they are most fluent or comfortable with. The space where a deaf child will be interviewed must also be carefully considered in terms of the acoustics and lightning and whether additional hearing technology (induction loops) is required along with ensuring the provision of their individual usual communication aids.</i></p>					<p>- encourage qualified and BSL interpreters to have access to child protection training in your area</p>	<p>NICE Child Abuse and Neglect (1.1.2/1.27/1.4.6)</p>

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
8) Moving into adulthood	s19 Children and Families Act 2014	✓			<p>Deaf children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - take an active part in transition assessments and planning considering future needs and wishes. - report being prepared to move into adulthood and have knowledge of where they can seek support. - are considered for a social care assessment to determine any eligible needs as adults. This includes consideration of environmental aids/adaptions, e.g. visual altering devices which promote their safety and well-being. - the full citizenship rights and autonomy of deaf young people are actively promoted. - the dropout rate in Further Education of deaf young people compared to hearing peers equalises. 	<p>Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide tailored support to deaf young people to support to prepare for FE/HE/workplace and adulthood. <p>LAs, ICBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - where there is no local expertise there are commissioning arrangements to provide capacity assessments by specialist deaf health or social care practitioner. - consider commissioning independent or voluntary deaf sector organisations to promote the involvement of deaf young people in transition planning. - offer advocates for deaf young people available to those who wish to have them in transition planning meetings. - direct deaf young people to self-managed guidance and resources specifically created for deaf young people in transition to adulthood. 	<p>NDCS resources supporting successful transitions</p> <p>NSPCC advice to young people</p> <p>NICE Guidance on transition from children to adult services</p> <p>Delivery House Adaptations for Disabled People Good Practice (DCLG)</p>
	SEN Disability Code of Practice 2015	✓	✓				
	Mental Capacity Act 2005, Amendment Act 2019 MCA Code of Practice	✓	✓	✓			
	s2 s9 s59-66 Care Act 2014	✓					
	s23 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996	✓					
	Care and Support Preventing Needs Regulations 2014	✓					
	2 (2.60) Para 6.87; 6.91 Care Act Stat. Guidance	✓					
	<i>Deaf young people aged 16 and over are presumed to have the capacity to make decisions unless there is evidence to the contrary. Where there are concerns it is critical that questions to assess capacity are done in accessible ways in accordance with the young person's language and communication needs.</i>						

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<p><i>Due to the everyday challenges that deafness poses, many deaf young people (without other needs) have delays in social maturity compared to their peers which are not necessarily obvious. Whilst statutory social care support may not be necessary it is important that universal and statutory services recognise this in any assessments/eligibility criteria and how this might make them more vulnerable as they move into adulthood.</i></p> <p><i>In Care Act assessments, language and communication are critical factors to individuals achieving <u>well-being outcomes</u>, e.g. accessibility of services; ability to socialise with other deaf peers;</i></p> <p><i>Also Housing Grants and the preventative duty of the Care Act can support deaf young people with assistive home equipment as they move into adulthood and live independently.</i></p>						

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBs	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
9) Mental health needs of deaf children and young people	Mental health Act 1983	✓	✓	✓	Deaf children and young people: - have equality of access to all mental health support services to children and young people.	LAs, ICBs: - review provision of early intervention support, e.g. digital online, school-based counselling services to ensure these are fully accessible to deaf children and young people, recognising their additional vulnerabilities. This is done in partnership with deaf children and young people and advice from specialist national deaf CAMHS. LAs, schools: - schools promote deaf children and young people's emotional health and well-being. Consideration of the involvement of deaf counselling services/advocates. ICBs: - review local primary health and CAMHS services to ensure there is a clear referral pathway to seek advice and/or refer eligible deaf children and young people to national deaf CAMHS.	Accessing good communication deaf children in a mental-health-assessment Deaf CAMHS service information BSL assessment tools available: https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/sord/resources/ Deaf Advocacy provider
	s6 s149 Equality Act 2010	✓	✓	✓			
	Mental Capacity Act 2005 Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice	✓	✓	✓	All partners: - are aware of the additional vulnerabilities that deaf children and young people have in developing mental health problems.		
	Accessible information standard	✓	✓				
	Health and Social Care Act 2012 - "parity of esteem"		✓		LA, ICBs: - offer a clear pathway to access the national deaf CAMHS when needed. - are aware of the need to ensure that any formal assessments used with deaf young people are validated for use with them and/or are available also in British Sign Language.		
	UNICEF 6, 24, 25, 30		✓				
	<p><i>Deaf children are at greater risk of experiencing mental health problems and for these to continue into adulthood.</i></p> <p><i>There are also complexities in diagnosing due to other factors such as age and onset of deafness co-morbidities, and diagnostic tools based on spoken/written communication.</i></p> <p><i>There must be clear pathways to access specialist deaf CAMHS where necessary.</i></p> <p><i>Early intervention programme to families promoting language and communication in the critical early years</i></p>						

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<p><i>are felt to promote positive mental well-being in deaf children.</i></p>					<p>- introduce communication profiles assessments in mainstream CAMHS.</p>	

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
10) Care-experienced deaf children and young people	s20-22 Children Act 1989	✓			<p>Deaf children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand and contribute to their care plans and care reviews. - are in placements (whether emergency, short or long term) which fully consider their language needs and any cultural needs to ensure access to deaf peers, the deaf community or other appropriate peer group. - are able to communicate their wishes and feelings to staff/carers in their preferred communication, e.g. BSL, SSE, etc. - are aware of their rights to an independent advocate/visitor and that this can be a deaf advocate/visitor if they wish. <p>Deaf parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - whose children are 'looked after' are given accessible information (e.g. in BSL) and where appropriate, specialist advocates for themselves as 	<p>LAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promote communication profiles/passports with deaf child or young person and shared with partners - care plans clearly detail communication profile and how to access specialist support/are in accessible formats for the deaf child or young person. - spot purchase deaf advocates/deaf independent visitors who may provide positive role models, communicate freely with deaf children and young people. - train foster carers who have skills to work with deaf children or actively seek to recruit foster parents who are deaf. -ensure staff receiving deaf child or young person are given deaf awareness training before placements commence. 	<p>Deaf Advocacy provider RAD</p> <p>NDCS Deaf children and young people in foster care</p>
	Children and Young Person's Act 2008	✓					
	s1- 11 Children and Social Work Act 2017	✓					
	s7,22 Children's Home Regs 2015	✓					
	Mental Capacity Act 2005	✓	✓	✓			
	s85 Children Act 1989	✓					
	Children missing from home statutory Guidance 2014	✓		✓			
	Promote the Health and Well-Being of LAC	✓	✓				
	Short Breaks Statutory Guidance	✓					
	Statutory guidance Visits to Children with SEND	✓					
	Corporate parenting duties statutory guidance 2018	✓					

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	IRO Handbook 2010	✓			<p>parents with rights under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>LAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand the critical importance of language and communication to supporting the mental well-being of deaf children who are looked after. - staff/carers have the necessary training as would be expected to support deaf children's daily care and support, e.g. technology regarding care and maintenance of hearing aids/cochlear implants, communication requirements for accessing health appointments. - ensures that itself and its partners are meeting their statutory duties towards deaf children who are 'looked after' children. - consider through their 'sufficiency duty' how its services are able to meet deaf children's needs and what actions are necessary where there are gaps. 	<p>LAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider additional resources which may be required to realise kinship care arrangements - ensure that a deaf child or young person is encouraged to attend local children in care councils. <p>LA, ICBS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agree arrangements to assess emotional and mental health needs of deaf children and young people who become looked after (NSPCC). Assessments are undertaken with formal involvement of regional deaf CAMHS. - (for deaf children/young people subject to care orders) develop a protocol for deaf CAMHS to provide mental health advice and support to carers, professionals within the educational setting and deaf young person. <p>LAs and Police:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure return to care interviews for deaf children are done in 	
	Sufficiency duty	✓					
	Article 20, 25 UNCRC	✓					
	<p><i>Given deafness is a low incidence need, very few deaf children and young people will require alternative care arrangements. Where they do this poses a real challenge for placements to meet deaf children's language and communication and sometimes deaf cultural needs.</i></p> <p><i>Key factors to consider are access to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate language and communication within care settings • appropriate peer group • suitably skilled carers <p><i>Also, deafness can accompany other disabilities which can sometimes result in assumptions or failures to appropriately consider hearing, language and communication needs.</i></p> <p><i>Some deaf children can be placed by health or education in residential settings and lack the stronger</i></p>						

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
	<p><i>safeguards in monitoring their welfare. They may require additional support when moving into adulthood.</i></p> <p><i>Particular attention should be given to deaf children who have come from outside England to the lack of specialist placements in the UK.</i></p>					<p>accordance with communication preferences within care plans, offer registered BSL interpreter.</p>	

Area	Relevant statutory duty/statutory guidance	LA	ICBS	Police	Key Outcomes	Suggested Action	Guidance and reports for better practice
11) Co-production	s19 Children and Families Act 2014 / SEND Regs 2014	✓			Deaf children and young people: - report feeling fully involved in services which they use or may use. - report improvements in participation skills. - feel supported to speak up and expect to be involved in decisions about them. - are represented in forums, e.g. youth councils.	LAs, ICBS: - commissioning SEND services review their commissioning cycle with key partners to ensure it reflects principles of co-production. - involve deaf young people and their parent-carers in recruitment for specialist posts working with deaf children and young people with SEND. Police - involve deaf young people in co-producing public information initiatives	Sunderland Together for children Participation and Co-production strategy SCIE young people NHIR Co-production in research 2021 Dorset SEND and co-production policy INVOLVE org
	2.2 Care and Support stat guidance	✓					
	Article 12, 23 UNCRC	✓	✓	✓			
	<p><i>Co-production is way of working in which moves away from the view of people being recipients of services, requiring significant shift in organisational culture.</i></p> <p><i>Deaf children are mostly into families where they are the only child and often attend mainstream schools with few deaf peers. Deaf children have significant challenges accessing everyday information in hearing worlds and this can result in less opportunities to communicate and activity express their views. This can lead to reduced world knowledge increasing their vulnerabilities to abuse. Active ways to promote participation and empowerment are critically important.</i></p>						

Appendix 1: Self-audit template

Safeguarding partners are invited to use the following self-audit template tool to consider the key outcomes in any or all of the areas shown in the summary table of key outcomes for deaf children and young people. The level of evidence required will be dependent on the relevant duties outlined above. Partners can use a variety of sources of evidence to consider how they the extent to which they are meeting their duties within legislation and/achieving best practice.

Sources of evidence (not exhaustive)

- Multi-agency meetings, e.g. Children's Hearing Services Working Groups (CHSWGSSs)
- Community meetings, formal consultations, surveys
- Sensory pathways/sensory protocols
- Partner policies and procedures
- Information leaflets
- Links to Social Work for Deaf Children group
- Links to local schools
- Online information
- Feedback from individuals
- Case audits
- Service level agreements
- Serious safeguarding incidents
- Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspections
- National and international research studies

Key area:

Key outcome	Evidence type	Which partner/s?	Date	Fully Met	Working towards	Not Met	Progress	Action and Priority