Assessment

2016 FEAPDA congress report
Setting up a subnet
Stagetext

Assessment
School for Deaf Children 5-16 years

Hamilton Lodge offers a full curriculum to deaf children aged 5-16 years in our school.

We take a "child-centred communication" approach at Hamilton Lodge and we support the development of both English and British Sign Language.

We focus our curriculum development on courses and accreditations that match the needs of individual pupils.

We offer a range of GCSE, Entry Level, Functional Skills, Pathways, Unit Award courses and Signature sign language qualifications.

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Students receive direct teaching from Teachers of the Deaf from Hamilton Lodge to support their chosen courses as well as support with life skills, driving theory courses and English & maths.

New Specialist Provision for Deaf Children with Complex Needs

In 2016, Hamilton Lodge opened this provision to ensure that deaf pupils with more complex needs could access our education.

With support some pupils are able to transition to our core provision but some require a different curriculum and care package to meet their needs.

Our new specialist provision is tailored to meet the needs of those pupils. It is now fully open with a specially adapted residential house and a specialist team to ensure that these pupils have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum at Hamilton Lodge as well as a comprehensive care package.

The provision is based within the school and pupils are well integrated into our school family.

HAMILTON LODGE SCHOOL & COLLEGE
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More and more frequently, BATOD, and Teachers of the Deaf in general, are being asked to describe what it is which makes their role unique and indispensable – often in the context of financial cuts. The future of the profession depends on our being able to itemise clearly the complex range of knowledge, skills and understanding which Teachers of the Deaf bring to their role - whether that be in the peripatetic, resource base, special school or other context. It is not sufficient, although hugely important, to be able to point to the recently reconfirmed mandatory qualification.

One crucial aspect of the role is assessment and this edition of the magazine looks at a range of aspects of this topic which is a vital element of the role of every Teacher of the Deaf in ensuring that appropriate support is provided to deaf children and young people. It is not that Teachers of the Deaf are the only professionals who can undertake these assessments but they are uniquely placed to bring to bear the results of a whole gamut of assessments on their understanding of the support needs of deaf children and young people.

The range of assessments discussed in this edition includes those relating to audiology, cognitive development, literacy, mental health and, very importantly, considers the purpose and value of assessment and its moral and ethical underpinnings.

As you will have read in the magazine and elsewhere we are currently working on a specification to tender for an updating of our website. Please don’t forget to register to use the members’ area of the website allowing you to access all the content including the notice board which alerts you to new information which will be of both relevance and interest to your work (click on the News tab at the top of every page).

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Shaping practice, influencing change

Stuart Whyte considers the vital importance of addressing inequalities and ensuring that deaf children are not ‘just managing’

In my last Presidential remarks, I mentioned Dana Suskind’s book Thirty Million Words (Suskind 2015). She commented on research from the mid 1990’s by Betty Hart and Todd Risley that some children heard thirty million fewer words by their fourth birthdays than others. It was clear that the children who heard more words were better prepared when they entered school. The same children, when followed up as 8 to 9-year-olds, had bigger vocabularies, were stronger readers, and gained higher test scores.

A child’s future should not be determined by their hearing loss, but data shows that deaf children are at risk of not achieving the same attainment level as other pupils. As Teachers of the Deaf we continue to strive to close this achievement gap, but what about the political landscape we find ourselves in – will inequalities continue to drive disparity in learning?

Two former UK Prime Ministers recently pitched into the Brexit debate. In an interview with the New Statesman Tony Blair, the former Labour leader, said “It can be stopped if the British people decide that, having seen what it means, the pain gain cost-benefit analysis doesn’t stack up.” A subsequent article by the Times reported that John Major, the former Conservative leader, said that Parliament, not the government, should make the final decision on any new deal with the remaining members of the EU and there was a “perfectly credible case” for a second referendum.

There is no doubt that Brexit will challenge Britain’s economy. The Autumn Statement, delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 23 November, showed that the UK Government intends to undertake actions to support people that are ‘just about managing’ – the JAMs.

Early identification of hearing loss, appropriate audiological intervention, language support and opportunities for imaginative play are vital to providing a sound foundation and later progress. Neil Leitch, chief executive of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, was disappointed that the Autumn Statement did not mention additional support for the Early Years sector:

“The early years play a vital role in supporting children’s learning and development – particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds – and yet despite much Government rhetoric on the importance of closing the gap and improving children’s life chances, the increased investment needed to achieve these goals has not materialised.”

It is clear that socio-economic factors influence educational attainment and health outcomes. England was the first European country to pursue a systematic policy to reduce socio-economic inequalities in health. An initial review in 2011 of the English strategy by Johan Mackenbach advised that reducing inequalities would require large-scale policy change in many fields and he advocated:

- political party programmes that clearly articulated change
- more research into the differential effectiveness of policies
- the systematic testing of policies before they are widely implemented
- focused policy efforts, based on careful alignment of targets, commitments and delivery.

He noted that policies “need to focus exclusively on strategic drivers of health inequalities” and to ensure that the right people are reached for change to be induced (Mackenbach 2011).

A recent rigorous analysis by Hu et al. (2016) compared trends in health inequalities in England both over time and between countries. The analysis used ‘highest level of education’ as an indicator of socioeconomic position, a common socioeconomic indicator used in measuring health inequalities in European countries. Their study could not detect a favourable effect from the English strategy on national trends in educational inequalities and general health outcomes.

The March 2016 edition of BATOD’s and NAATD’s peer reviewed journal Deafness and Education International included a paper on monitoring the achievement of deaf pupils and looked at approaches and outcomes in Scotland and Sweden. The study by Rachel O’Neill (BATOD member and ToD Course Co-ordinator at Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh) and Ola Hendar (University of Copenhagen) showed that deaf pupils continue to be under-represented amongst the high attaining pupils and over-represented in the low attaining group at the end of secondary education in both countries. Marschark et al. (2011) suggested that the lower achievement levels of deaf children may be attributed to late diagnosis, failure to establish a fluent first language in the early years, lack of access to the curriculum, having an additional impairment, and possibly having teachers or support workers who don’t have the correct skills or experience. Of prime importance, Steve Powers – like Suskind, argues that support from parents is a crucial factor in the success of deaf young people (Powers 2011).

Let us continue to work in partnership with families, colleagues and other professionals and focus our efforts to favourably affect and influence inequalities by using information from robust assessments to help deaf children do more than ‘just manage’ but to get ahead.

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Assessment lies at the heart of our educational system and provides us with the opportunity to gather essential information about the pupils with whom we work. It allows us an insight into the particular characteristics of learners that may be used to inform our practice to ensure we are able to optimise future learning possibilities for individuals. At a broader level it provides information about a student’s attainment over a particular period of schooling and contributes to the information used to determine the effectiveness of schools. There is, however, a clear connection between assessment and the rights of children and there is much debate around issues of equity, inequity and social justice. Educational assessment policy and practice has powerful social consequences for educational stakeholders, in particular the children and young people in our care (Elwood, 2013). I would argue that the potential social consequences are extended for vulnerable children including all those with any level of deafness.

Whilst the immediate consequences of assessment may be evident for an individual and their learning community, there are likely to be other less obvious ramifications that extend well into the future. For example, individual exam results, when viewed as part of a wider cohort’s outcomes, may lead to the close scrutiny of a school by Ofsted; results of an 11 plus exam may secure a place for an individual in a grammar school but equally may not; local testing may be the tool used to determine pupil allocation to an ability set, enrolment on an intervention programme or, within a different arena, eligibility for a cochlear implant. More subtly, engagement in the assessment process may serve to undermine or raise an individual’s confidence or a profession’s identity.

There is therefore an ethical dimension inherent in assessment; we have a duty of care to the pupils we work with to ensure that assessment results are fair, accurate and reliable and that the pupil is accurately portrayed. As assessment is a key component of a ToD’s workload it is vitally important that we take some time to consider whether or not we are undertaking assessment in an ethical manner both as a profession and within our individual practice.

To support this process, I have spent some time searching through the library for guidance and would like to share with you some of my findings. This is by no means a summary of the entire field of educational ethics, which is vast, but rather thoughts from a number of authors that provide a useful way to think about the ethics of educational practices. As specialist teachers working within schools we will have significant influence over the young people we work with and whilst we all work within institutional frameworks the ethics of our practice ultimately lies with us, the individual undertaking the assessment (Wickwire, 2003). This brings with it significant responsibilities and rights to make decisions regarding the pupils in ways that may be immediately evident and ways that may not. It is essential therefore that we give any assessment we plan to undertake due consideration. I hope the following will support your reflections on your own ethical practices.

So what is ethical practice? Kitchener (1984) described five important principles inherent in the ethics around professional practices: beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice and fidelity.

**Beneficence** – contributing to the wellbeing of the pupil both in the short and long term

**Non-maleficence** – ensuring that the pupil is not harmed, hindered or placed at risk

**Autonomy** – ensuring the pupil is able to have their voice heard, respected, and are supported to become independent

**Justice** – being fair, providing equal opportunities, being respectful and treating the pupil with dignity

**Fidelity** – being trustworthy and honest with the pupil.

In summary do good, do no harm, support independence, be fair and be trustworthy. These seemingly simple statements, however, may be difficult to follow at times and particularly as the consequences of our actions through the assessment process may not be immediately evident. As specialist teachers and professionals we have an ethical responsibility to consider carefully what we do and to ensure we are cognisant of all the potential consequences both short and long term.

Informed and mindful consideration is particularly important when approaching the assessment of deaf children. A deaf child enters the formal stages of education having already experienced a significant amount of “testing” to determine the nature and cause of their hearing loss and to monitor their general development and in particular their language development. The child, along with their parents/carers,
will have met a variety of different professionals and each encounter will have involved being asked questions about the child’s history and development as well as agreeing to further assessments of their child which the child will then have experienced. All of this is important in monitoring progress and ensuring he or she has the best possible opportunities to develop and make good progress as a successful well-adjusted child and in particular to ensure they are making the expected levels of progress in their language development. However, such scrutiny may also have unanticipated negative consequences for the parents/carers and the deaf child. It is vitally important that we recognise this.

What might this mean for ToD assessment practices?
So as Teachers of the Deaf what should we reflect on when we are preparing to assess a deaf child? It might not be an easy process, particularly if there are pressures from different agencies but this does not mitigate our responsibilities. Information may be required for a particular purpose but care needs to be taken to ensure that in acquiring the data we adhere to the principles of ethical engagement. We need not only to consider the immediate concerns but also to reflect on a holistic view of the present, the past and possible future consequences of what we are planning, however insignificant the immediate assessment may seem. The following steps provide a very useful set of guidelines to follow with respect to ethical educational assessment (Wickwire, 2003) – they offer a useful set of guidelines around which to construct an ethical process.

a Selection of the assessment instrument or instruments
In this initial stage we need to clearly identify what it is we want to find out and then identify an appropriate assessment tool. We need to think about the context in which the assessment will be undertaken, ie when and where, and identify the resources that will be required to ensure the assessment is executed accurately. We need to select the most appropriate tool that will result in the highest quality results and that will provide the most benefit for the pupil. Information regarding the rationale for selecting a particular assessment should be recorded.

b Preparation for assessment
In preparing for the assessment, consideration should be given to ensuring the assessment can be delivered in an accurate, reliable and equitable way.

The pupil should understand at an appropriate level the reason for the assessment, what they will be required to do, how long it will take and how the information obtained will be used. They also need to be adequately prepared for the assessment content.

If a pupil is reluctant or unwilling to participate, this should be acknowledged and accepted and the assessment should be reconsidered. Continuing may cause the pupil undue stress which does not meet the requirements of ethical practice. Results obtained from a pupil unwilling to participate are unlikely to provide accurate data and therefore have no value in informing future planning or provision. It is important to understand why the pupil is unwilling to be involved and this information should then be used to reconsider how the assessment information may be gained at a different time or in a different manner.

c Administration of the assessment, with monitoring
When scoring and reporting the outcome of assessments there is an ethical responsibility on the assessor to ensure the results have been recorded accurately and with clarity. Consistency across assessors and across provision is extremely important in securing reliable and valuable information. Practitioners and services should consider how they moderate the process of test delivery, data collection and the presentation of results to ensure the reliability of the information collected.

d Interpretation of the assessment results
The interpretation of the results needs to recognise only the factors that might have influenced the results provided the appropriate guidelines were followed during the assessment. It is important, therefore, that the interpretation of assessments is undertaken by a practitioner who has sufficient understanding of both the pupil and the assessment method to be able to draw accurate and reliable conclusions. The pupil, parents and professional colleagues trust us as specialist practitioners to carry this out with integrity and we should not be reticent about liaising with other professionals to ensure we accurately interpret results. Clearly this need to be done with appropriate regard to confidentiality.

e Communication of the assessment results
In communicating the results, it is important to emphasise the implication of the results for future learning and provision in order to enhance the pupil’s progress and outcomes. The report needs to be clear and the results accurately reported along with the contextual information surrounding the assessment process and details of how the results have been interpreted. The document should be meaningful and include potential implications not only for the child but also other stakeholders for example parents/carers, teachers and senior leadership team members.

In all aspects of communication from the initial decision to undertake the assessments to the report and the implementation of the resulting initiatives the communication should be respectful, knowledgeable and executed with full professional integrity. Consideration should be given to ensuring the nature of the communication to ensure that the content is accessible and understandable for all stakeholders.
f Application of the assessment results
The application of actions taken as a consequence of the assessment process should serve the pupil’s welfare first and foremost, enhance their learning experiences and support their successful progress. To achieve this the results should be considered together with reliable information from a variety of different sources. The extent of the changes to the pupil’s learning situation should be guided by the confidence practitioners have in the accuracy of the results; that is whether they are a reliable representation of the pupil’s learning and learning skills and whether they provide sufficient evidence to justify the recommended actions.

g Evaluation
The final stage is to develop a system to evaluate the efficacy of the process both on an individual and professional level. Quality assurance processes should be established that include both formative and summative evaluations of the different stages outlined above. They should consider the ‘reaction, learning, behaviour, results and output’ p357 (Wickwire, 2003) of all those involved in the process from which recommendations for future practice should be developed.

As the culture of assessment within the education system develops and in particular the increasing level of high stakes assessments that aim to judge institutions, rather than individuals, we need to be mindful of the vulnerable children in our care. The consequences of being swept along in the educational machine without due regard to an individual’s welfare maybe life-long. As Teachers of the Deaf we need to be able to use our specialist knowledge and understanding to provide an evidence based rationale for all assessment that is valuable and ethical and will support the pupil as they negotiate the system. We need to be particularly mindful of the additional load we bring to bear and remember that ultimately the ethical responsibility lies with each of us as individuals.

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References
Dynamic assessment

Wolfgang Mann considers how combining teaching with assessment can improve the measurement of deaf learners’ learning potential

Assessing deaf students
It is unquestionable that the varying needs of increasingly diverse deaf learners in special schools as well as mainstream programmes pose a challenge to both researchers and practitioners. This is particularly true when it comes to language assessment. There has been progress in developing standardised tests that are (more) appropriate for deaf children who use sign language eg in the form of sign language assessments. Research shows that norms used for hearing children do not apply for deaf populations and may lead to overidentification of these children as having a language impairment. In addition, most standardised tests, regardless of the modality, suffer from certain limitations: a) they provide information about a child’s learning outcome but not the learning process, and b) they provide little opportunity for children to contribute significantly to the assessment process. These limitations create the need for alternative methods of assessment that could help reduce the bias of previous or different language experiences when assessing deaf children. One such method is dynamic assessment.

Dynamic Assessment
Dynamic assessment (DA) is an interactive approach that combines teaching and assessment within a single procedure. Its aim is to measure learning potential rather than learning outcome. In other words, DA is more interested in what a child can learn than in how much a child knows. However, DA does evaluate the enhanced performance that results from teaching. This is usually done in the form of a test-teach-retest approach.

DA draws on Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, which is based on the idea that a child learns through social interaction and develops higher mental functioning through collaboration with a more experienced peer or adult. You may have heard the term ZPD or ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ which describes what a child is capable of doing with proper assistance compared to a child who works alone (‘Zone of Actual Development’). Advocates of DA have applied Vygotsky’s ideas of promoting higher functioning within the ZPD when describing the mediated interaction, or ‘learning’ that takes place during the teaching phase.

Historically, most DA measures were motivated by limitations when assessing children with special educational needs or children with inadequate or different educational experiences. One crucial difference between ‘static’ and dynamic assessment instruments is that DA generates data that indicates what a child can do in the future, given that s/he receives the support that is most appropriate for his/her needs. Furthermore, DA evaluates not only cognitive skills or language proficiency but also behavioural and motivational factors during the teaching phase – elements that are considered critical for learning (Tzuriel, 2001). While the concept of combining teaching and assessment with measuring a child’s learning may not seem something completely new to many ToDs, DA offers a more structured way of doing this.

Research on the use of DA with deaf students, so far
Given the potential of DA for use with deaf language learners, it comes perhaps as a surprise to learn that little research has been carried out on this subject. There is some work that was carried out throughout the 90s (Olswang & Bain, 1996; Tzuriel & Caspri, 1992) and in the early 21st century (Lidz, 2004), focusing on the use of DA for assessing deaf children’s cognitive skills. What these studies found was that standardised tests generally tend to underestimate deaf children’s abilities, who perform better during mediation compared to a pre-test.

Ten years later, this early work was extended to the use of DA within a language learning context by a study from New Zealand, which applied DA procedures to explore deaf children’s narrative language learning in English (Asad et al, 2013). Findings suggest that DA differentiates well between deaf children with poor language as a result of language learning difficulty vs. children with poor language as a result of lack of input due to hearing loss. This work was further extended by myself in collaboration with Elizabeth Peña (University of Texas at Austin) and Gary Morgan (City University) by exploring the use of DA with signing deaf children, aged 6-11 years (Mann, Peña, Morgan, 2014; Mann, Peña, Morgan, 2015). Here we compared children identified as either stronger or weaker language learners according to teacher or speech and language pathologist report. All children received two scripted, mediated learning experience (MLE) sessions targeting vocabulary knowledge that were carried out in ASL. At the end of each session, the mediator rated a child’s response to the mediation and the level of support they require. What we found was that students in the two groups exhibited notable differences with regards to their learning pace, information uptake and effort required by the mediator. In addition, we noticed shifts in strategic behaviour by the weaker language group during the second mediation. Our findings suggest that the mediator ratings are highly sensitive to language...
learning abilities in deaf children who use sign as their primary mode of communication. These findings suggest that the use of DA procedures in a vocabulary context was helpful in understanding children’s strategies as related to learning potential.

Looking ahead
So far, DA has been used mainly with hearing populations from non-mainstream backgrounds. Extending this work to the diverse population of deaf learners offers a perspective of its application to identify language learning potential in groups where little normative data is available. As the research I described above has shown, DA is not exclusive to one modality (sign or speech). For instance, in our work, we offered participants, who struggled with signing, the choice to switch to English, which some accepted.

An improved understanding of children’s learning strategies and responsiveness to mediation can enable practitioners to form assumptions about how a student may respond to a particular type of intervention in the future. This, in turn, can inform targeted interventions focusing on deaf children’s strengths and weaknesses. Now after reading this article, you may think: what’s so special about DA? That is exactly what I am already doing in my classroom. What makes DA different from traditional teaching is that it provides information in a short and structured way on how the child learns.

Structured in this context means that the mediation follows a script. In our case the scripts for the two sessions were designed to teach children to understand the reasons for using categories, the fact that they could class objects in various ways, and to make connections between the particulars of each session and the way these groupings could be applied to language (Mann, Peña, & Morgan, 2014). They incorporated the five mediation strategies by Feuerstein and colleagues (1979, 1980) extended by Lidz (1991): intention to teach, mediation of meaning, mediation of transcendence, competence, and mediation of transfer. For an example of each strategy, see Mann, Peña & Morgan (2014). In addition, the mediator completed two scales to measure participants’ response to mediation and the level of support required: the Mediated Learning Observation, which is used to observe and record participants’ learning behaviour during each session (MLO; Peña & Villarreal, 2000) and the Modifiability Scale (based on Lidz, 1991), which measures child responsivity, mediator effort, and the child’s ability to transfer new knowledge.

The information that DA measures provide can be used to complement current norm-referenced and descriptive testing practices. This enables practitioners to identify specific difficulties a child may experience when approaching a new task and allow them to make more valid conclusions regarding language-learning ability in this target group.

Those interested in reading more on DA are encouraged to have a look at Lauchlan & Carrigan (2013). Improving Learning through Dynamic Assessment. A practical classroom resource. London: Jessica Kingsley. Contact me for a discussion about how the suggested resources could be adapted for use with deaf children. Also, contact me about the possibility of getting involved in a forthcoming research project that explores deaf children’s information seeking and evaluation strategies during online reading.

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Assessment through the ages

Ted Moore presents a view of how deaf children and ToDs have been assessed over the years

I have chosen three types of assessment relating to deaf education:

1 The Teacher of the Deaf

a Two questions from the NCTD Diploma Examination (1942):
• It is vital to the well-being of deaf children that they should be enabled to take their place in normal industry. What do you regard as the most important factors to ensure the attainment of this objective?
• What points should be considered in choosing a school desk for a deaf child? What harmful effects may unsuitable desks produce upon posture? (Source: The Teacher of the Deaf Journal, August 1942)

My comment: What now constitutes ‘normal industry’? What sort of work are deaf school leavers now able to take on?

Have you ever had the opportunity to choose children’s desks?

b A question from the NCTD Diploma Examination (1949):
• Analyse and describe the methods that should enable senior deaf students to substitute correct pronunciation for habitual inaccuracies in their speech.

c From the University of London Institute of Education Examination for the Diploma in the Teaching of Deaf and Partially Hearing Children (1966):
• Write short notes on three of the following:
  – Input, output and gain in hearing aids
  – Harold’s listening level*
  – Binaural listening
  – Selective amplification.

* Harold’s levels were cited by Darcy Dale and were the product of a PhD study into ‘The effect of variations in intensity on the capacity of deaf children and adults to hear speech with hearing aids’. He was involved in speech tests eg Kendall Toy test and M/J word lists.

d From my own initial ToD course at London University (1973):
• Describe the welfare services that exist to help the hearing handicapped.

My Comment: I’m very sorry but I’ve forgotten what the answers might or should have been.

2 Assessment of the Causes of Acquired Deafness.

Manchester Schools for the Deaf and Dumb (1881) 69 cases:

Causes of deafness as recognised now:
• Hereditary disorders
• Genetic disorders
• Prenatal exposure to disease
• Noise
• Trauma
• Disease
• Other causes.

My comment: Note how many ‘illnesses’ and ‘diseases’ have now been largely eliminated i.e. whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever. In particular, I remember having many children in my classes who were deaf through rubella. The vaccinations that became available in the 1970s cut at least a third off the population of deaf children attending schools and units.
In the past, probably pre-1970, the assessment of deaf children’s speech was based on ‘error analysis’.

For example:

- **Omissions**: [kæ] for /kæt/ (cat),
- **Substitution**: [dəʊ] for /təʊ/ (toe),
- **Distortion**: [ɓi] for /bi/ (bee),
- **Addition**: [sti] for /si/ (sea)

Most teachers would undertake lessons based on a whole class approach, which might have been of some help, but didn’t take into account the differences of individuals’ articulatory sound systems.

Sibley Haycock, in ‘The Teaching of Speech’ (1933), states that one of the first principles in the teaching of speech should be:

> “Each class should have a programme of speech work designed to satisfy the expressive needs of its pupils and to implant them the habit of using speech freely for purposes of self-expression”.

But this involved teaching a whole class the same thing regardless of the capabilities or the system that individuals were using.

In the 1970s it became apparent that taking a sample of an individual’s speech, then assessed in terms, not only of accepted norms, but of an individual’s own system, was a much better and necessary way of enabling a child to expand on his/her ability to make contrasts between phonemes.

The outcome would be to assess a person’s speech using a phonetically balanced word list and then identifying what sounds that person was making in initial, medial and final positions. What rules was the person using?

For example, for the word ‘pea’, a subject might say [bi] and for ‘me’ might say [bi] as well, thereby making no distinction between ‘p’, ‘b’ and ‘m’. The result might be that the teacher/therapist would try to expand that particular person’s system by working on the contrasts between the phonemes starting with them being used in initial positions.

**My comment:** Are ToDs ‘teaching’ speech articulation to deaf children anymore? Have the developments in hearing aid technology, including cochlear implants, and Newborn Hearing Screening made ‘speech teaching’ redundant?

**In conclusion:** Since ToDs set up a ‘College of Teachers of the Deaf and Dumb’ in 1885 and instituted a diploma as a qualification for membership, there have been significant changes in how deaf children are taught and supported. Over time huge changes have taken place with regard to attitudes, medical/health care, technology, teaching priorities and legislation.

All these factors have had a crucial impact on how deaf children have been assessed, with Newborn Hearing Screening and cochlear implantation being significant steps forward.

In educational terms the assessment of all children continues to be a debatable issue. However, it remains imperative that every deaf child is able to participate in society by being able to communicate effectively in the community in which they live. Only by individual and thorough assessment can this be achieved.

**Ted Moore is a former President of BATOD.**
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Audiological assessment

Brian Shannan outlines the role of Teachers of the Deaf in audiological assessment, embedding nuance and the caveat in the assessment process.

Audiological assessments used to establish degree and configuration of deafness can include ABR, OAE, VRA, PTA, tympanometry and otoscopy. However, it is the assessments beyond the clinical setting that are a key component of this test battery but these can often be overlooked. This article will discuss some of the assessments used by Teachers of the Deaf and how these contribute to building a functional profile of the deaf learner that shapes the audiological management and intervention process. The limitations of these assessments and the need for alternative tests mean that we must critically appraise the assessment data and use nuance and caveats rather than bold statements when reporting back the results.

Building a profile of the deaf learner’s listening experience in the classroom is a central component of any audiological test battery. Spoken communication reaching the listener is conditioned by the properties of the classroom; the room ‘couples’ the talker to the listener in the same way that an ear mould couples a hearing aid to an ear canal (Boothroyd, 2004). Therefore, any profile of the deaf learner requires the incorporation of an assessment of the learning environment which should include a measurement of reverberation, noise levels and classroom volume.

It is recognised that late reflections in enclosed spaces compromise the process of speech perception. Reverberation time is strongly influenced by the volume, shape and finishes within a room. A ‘dry’ environment is one lacking in acoustic reflections and is objectively characterised by a very short reverberation time (RT60); when sound dies out quickly within a space it is referred to as being an acoustically ‘dead’ environment. A ‘live’ room will generally have a high percentage coverage of hard surfaces from which sound is readily reflected, providing a richer reverberant environment characterised by long reverberation times. By establishing the RT60 and dimensions of the classroom the critical distance can be established. The critical distance is the optimal seating position for the deaf learner in the classroom as it is the area where the level of direct signal and early reflections are equal. It is now possible to measure RT60 in a classroom using free software and equipment costing approximately £800. In addition to RT60, the assessment allows speech clarity (C50) to be measured. C50 compares the sound energy in early sound reflexes with those that arrive later. If a soundfield system is fitted, then both RT60 and C50 can be measured using the soundfield system so the effectiveness of this intervention can be quantitatively measured. Testing in a range of environments has shown that when using the Digimaster 5000 soundfield there is enhanced C50 in the frequency ranges of 1000 and 4000Hz.

The ambient sound environment is defined as the combined acoustical impact from external sources of sound and the influence of building services sound. The criteria set within BB93 are aimed primarily at providing a suitable environment in which to communicate clearly and undertake tasks requiring concentration (Department of Education and Skills, 1993). Ambient noise levels in classrooms are known to be higher than those recommended in the guidelines but these standards do not account for the noise generated in occupied classrooms. Noise levels in the classroom are affected by a number of variables including the tasks that the learners are involved in and the number of students in the classroom. Research has identified six different types of classroom activities and the noise levels associated with them (Shield and Dockrell, 2004). A common method to establish subjectively the deaf learner’s experience in challenging listening environments is through the use of a listening inventory such as the UK LIFE Survey which uses a five point Likert scale to record listening experience. Although well regarded there are a number of limitations with the LIFE as there is no correlation between the learning activity and the noise levels based upon the research data. Furthermore, it does not reflect the nature of learning within a contemporary classroom where the learner is actively engaged with their peers (solo presentations, news, show and tell, active and experiential learning). In LIFE the presumed teaching methodology is either didactic, with the learner responding to questions from the class teacher, or group work. In LIFE there are only three examples of where the participant is asked about listening to their peers and only one of these relates to the classroom.

A further limitation of the LIFE is that there is no attempt to measure factors such as listening effort and confidence. It is recognised that listening to speech in noise not only involves sensory input but also linguistic and cognitive capacity. Although young learners can find determining subjective aspects of listening such as confidence, effort and accuracy challenging it is useful to cross-reference this with speech assessment data to form a holistic picture of the deaf learner’s listening experience. A young learner who records confidence in their listening when speech assessments demonstrate...
otherwise is a powerful diagnostic tool, both for schools and hospitals. We all have experience of the class teacher and deaf learner feeling learning is not compromised by deafness when the research and speech assessment data state otherwise. As part of my PhD we developed a new listening survey (Fife Learner’s Listening Survey) which incorporated interactive learning experiences that are correlated to noise levels and where the deaf learner is asked to rate subjective issues such as accuracy, confidence and effort.

Noise and reverberation levels are pertinent to the assessment process as deaf learners find listening to speech in less than optimal conditions challenging. Listening to speech for deaf learners is determined by attenuation and distortion. Attenuation is a greater factor when listening to speech in quiet whilst the distortion has a greater impact when listening in noise (Plomp, 1978). The field of psychoacoustics informs us that speech perception is influenced by sensory factors, and cognitive and linguistic abilities. Young learners are less able than adults to make use of temporal and spatial cues for separation of signal and noise.

Attention and sound localisation are also subject to developmental refinement. However, some authors can make broad statements about the deaf learner’s need auditory development and then extrapolate that it is not possible to do x or y until the late teenage years. The signal-to-noise ratio threshold is determined by the amount of noise passing through the auditory filter and sensorineural deafness results in broadened filters which make them more susceptible to interference from background noise and consequently poorer signal-to-noise ratios. The impact is at an individual level and influenced by non-sensory factors such as cognitive capacity, linguistic levels, social background and learning environment. Although different parts of the brain develop at different rates beyond the age of ten this needs to be placed in this context. We are all aware of deaf learners with similar audiograms that have different outcomes at a range of ages and stages.

A common method to determine the impact that noise has on speech is through a speech in noise assessment. Speech perception cannot be measured directly but inferred from the response from the deaf learner. Whilst factors such as age and linguistic and cognitive ability need to be incorporated into the judgement process when selecting the most appropriate assessment there are a number of additional considerations. Firstly, is it live or calibrated speech? Is it an open or closed assessment? Is it monosyllabic single words or sentences? Is it an assessment of segmental bottom up information processing or is it influenced by the participant’s cognitive and linguistic ability? A second consideration must be an understanding of the purpose of the assessment. Is the assessment to establish whether aiding would be appropriate or if aiding has been successful? Is it to establish the effectiveness of an FM or soundfield system? Finally, the degree and configuration of the deafness need to be considered. A deaf learner with bilateral normal/mild pure tone audiogram levels up to 2000Hz but severe/profound beyond could perform well in most standard speech assessment but this could mask the challenges in discriminating second formant transitions, which are essential for speech perception both in quiet and noise. The choice of test is key in the process.

MCHAS referenced a number of open speech assessments suitable for paediatrics but one of the challenges when used in a comparative method (aided vs unaided, with and without FM) is to ascertain whether a difference has occurred. A test for young learners is required to be short and reliable, but statistical principles mean that this is unreliable. The variability of scores based on the binomial model reveals that an approximately 450 gradable list is needed to optimise reliability (for review, see Thornton and Raffin, 1978). We need to move beyond the conventional speech assessment to measuring the impact that noise has on lexical, syntax and semantic aspects of listening to provide a more realistic measurement (for review, see Elliott, 1979) (Boothroyd and Nittrouer, 1988) (Stelmachowicz et al, 2000). Furthermore, although signal-to-noise is an invaluable tool a learner can achieve a 100% score in a speech assessment but this can mask the amount of effort used in the task. Models of finite cognitive capacity and ease of language use mean that a comprehensive measure of functional listening requires to include an assessment of working memory and informational processing in conditions of noise and reverberation (Kahneman, 1973, Rönberg et al, 2008).

Teachers of the Deaf play a pivotal role in providing functional assessments of hearing and listening that should be a core element of any audiological test battery. When using a listening inventory to obtain the deaf learner’s experience of listening in the classroom then we need to critically appraise whether it reflects the learning environment of a contemporary classroom. An acoustic survey should also be part of the process. When using speech in noise assessments then it is imperative that speech based noise is used (ISTS is a useful example). The restricted number of presentations available in an open set list means that caution should be applied to any results. The modern learning environment means that we need to start using a broader range of assessments to gauge listening experience. Acoustic measurements, listening inventories and speech in noise assessments are a core component of any test battery. The caveat and nuance should be the fourth and applied routinely when providing feedback.

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If you ask a teacher of deaf children what is their role, most will mention monitoring and promoting language development, understanding audiology to facilitate the best possible acoustic conditions for deaf children, improving access to the curriculum and supporting the whole child. But how confident are we in our monitoring of language acquisition and development, one of the foundations of our role? And can we use these data strategically to close the attainment gap (Ofsted, 2012)?

In this article, I will look first at language monitoring and discuss ways in which we could reconceptualise our role and improve our performance. Then I will examine the very rapidly changing policy environment in all four countries of the UK in relation to tracking added value over time. I will explore different ways of thinking about this issue, from the viewpoint of our profession, the deaf child and their family, and educational research.

Tracking language development

Most local authorities and schools for deaf children monitor language achievement over time, but when carrying out research on the Achievement of Deaf pupils in Scotland database I discovered that many deaf children were not systematically monitored. Mildly and moderately deaf children rarely had much focus in pupil files. Yet the achievement gap for all groups of deaf children was not significantly different with different levels of deafness (O’Neill, Arendt & Marschark, 2014). Currently most school services keep fairly regular checks on severely, profoundly and implanted children, but not the wider caseload. Of course, in a time of cuts this is particularly difficult to do. In some authorities, mildly deaf children are no longer seen at all because of the pressure on too few teachers of deaf children and a growing number of referrals. Deaf children aged 0-5 are monitored fairly systematically, particularly if they are CI candidates when the CI centres provide detailed assessments which they can share with services.

Surprisingly, there are often gaps in many pupil records in relation to additional disability, audiological information, preferred languages and postcode (useful for finding socio-economic information).

The NDCS guide to assessment (2015) shows useful examples at the end of the booklet about a more strategic service-wide approach to monitoring language acquisition over time. Some services have made a decision to use only standardised assessments ie ones with 100 as the average score per age group. Northumberland, in this NDCS guide, has decided to use a limited number of standardised assessments well. Would it be possible in all authorities to have a rolling programme of spoken or signed language assessments (such as ACE or BSL-P) on a 2-yearly basis, or a BPVS assessment every other year for every child who is visited at least twice a year? There are many advantages to having a regular diagnostic reading assessment such as the YARC or ERT tests, especially if there is no national literacy test in a year group. See details at the end about these standardised assessments.

How we conceptualise assessment influences what we do and our approach. If we focus completely on the

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**Fig. 1 What do we assess and what do we currently ignore?**

- **Linguistic environment**
  - Language models – fluency in speech and sign
- **Acoustic environment**
- **Other people’s views: teachers, parents**
- **Deaf child**
  - Home
  - Community
  - School
child, we often ignore the wider linguistic and acoustic environment the child is in. Figure 1 shows an example of a wider perspective on assessment. If we see language assessments as a way of tracking difficulties the child has, we won’t turn our attention to the language models the child sees; for example, for signing children, the level of BSL or SSE used by caregivers, teachers and support staff. If our focus is an IEP, we develop targets only for the child, instead of changes that could be made in the child’s environment.

We do have assessments which look at most of these aspects, but some are rarely used. A useful exercise for a service for deaf children would be to classify the assessments in the NDCS guide using Figure 1 and find the gaps. What assessment do we routinely use to measure the quality of spoken or sign language in the child’s environment? Turning the spotlight on ourselves is difficult, but where else are children going to hear and see good language models? Maybe Teachers of the Deaf need IEPs and the children will flourish as we achieve our targets?

Currently in the wider educational community, particularly in England, there is a growing rejection of the idea of levels and classification, proposing instead a more principled focus on concepts grasped over time and avoiding labelling because of its negative consequences for many children (Peacock, 2016). But when we classify a child’s spoken or signed language as three years behind chronological age we are not condemning the child. We are devising ways of accelerating progress to close the gap. In fact the assessments are more for us as professionals – by watching and listening to the child we can work out, using our deep knowledge of the language acquisition process, what activities the child needs next. After using STASS for several years I found I could estimate the child’s level after a play session with a child. The assessment is useful evidence in the file, but the framework, once in my head, means I can use informal language sessions to work out next steps.

Measuring added value
We are living through a rapidly changing policy climate just now where conflicting views about assessment are firing over our heads. Schools, heads, local authorities and academy chains are increasingly being held accountable for their pupils’ results. Trying to improve the performance of the achievement of children from poorer homes is a policy affecting all schools in the UK. Figure 2 shows a summary of the different ways individual pupils are tracked across the UK and how schools are held to account.

Most of the work in this area in relation to deaf children has been carried out by NatSIP, which although it is available throughout the UK is an English organisation; this is regrettable because they have produced some outstanding work, especially in sharing good practice. Dr. Nicky Ereaut’s presentation (NatSIP, 19.10.16) is a particularly clear example of using performance data in an English local authority to demonstrate added value. However, England has now abolished national curriculum levels (Oates, 2015) leaving ideological confusion; increasingly authorities are playing safe and buying in more standardised assessments.

Recent policy advice from the Welsh Government (2016) suggests that only by using international PISA tests can achievement in the different countries of the UK now be compared. But within each country we can collect this data on all the pupils on our caseload. Standardised assessments are particularly useful for tracking progress.
over time to monitor the attainment gap.

However, from the experience of the Deaf Achievement Scotland project we noticed:

- with the previous national tests, deaf children were sometimes coached too much
- deaf children were usually entered for fewer qualifications at 16, reducing school leaving scores
- school services for deaf children sometimes received standardised data late and attributed it to the child late, affecting progress scores. Collect standardised scores with the test date.

The Best 8 or 9 qualification monitoring in England and Wales prioritises a group of subjects known to be useful for progression at age 16 (DfE, 2016; Lewis, 2014). Deaf students are likely to be more often exempt from a qualification to allow for additional tutoring, reducing their overall score. In addition, vocational GCSEs, often taken by deaf pupils, are limited in these calculations.

As schools and families adjust to this new regime, the scores of deaf children and other groups with weaker attainment will rise as they are entered for qualifications they previously may not have been encouraged to take.

To measure added value we also need a standard way of recording the additional support our service has offered: the number of hours of QToD or classroom assistant support, for example; the BSL levels of the staff when the child uses sign or the proficiency level in Cued Speech; the acoustic environment improvements we have made. That is, these added value measures are about the whole service and the specific inputs each child has received.

Standardised assessments and systematically using nationally collected and local data are not panaceas. We still need to ask ourselves ‘so what?’ when we look at an individual child and the results. But getting organised at a local authority or national level will pay dividends: we can show that the approaches we are using over time yield results for deaf children. This is also a way of explaining to governments what difference we make.

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Standardised Assessments mentioned

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Speech sounds are complex. Their interaction with noise and reverberation adds further layers of complication. The individual nature of hearing loss increases the complexity even further. Therefore, understanding a child’s access to spoken language is a challenging task but an essential one for Teachers of the Deaf to complete in order to help the children we support.

Audiologists use audiograms to describe hearing loss and program hearing aids. After a hearing test is completed, prescriptive target setting software uses the child’s hearing thresholds to set the gain curves of their hearing aids. Hearing thresholds are the audiologist’s tool for setting up hearing aids but give us little insight into what speech a deaf child can hear. Understanding speech isn’t about hearing pure tones. Speech is a complex combination of phonemes: the vowels, stops, fricatives and nasals identified by frequency and loudness. On top of the phonetic information carried in speech, the ear must also convey the suprasegmental elements of rhythm, intonation and emphasis. In order to understand speech, the auditory system needs to process this information, filter the signal from any background noise and transport it to the brain where it is understood as speech.

Hearing aids are worn in the outside world not in sound proofed audiology rooms. Most of a deaf child’s listening is done in unfavourable listening conditions. Play groups, supermarkets and cars are all noisy places and children often have to listen at a distance from their parents, siblings or friends without access to speech reading. Likewise, at school, classrooms can be very noisy and teachers move around and use unfamiliar words and language. This means the evaluation and management of hearing aids should be approached collaboratively, with input from parents and Teachers of the Deaf, as well as assessments carried out by the audiologist. The assessment of functional listening in the listening environments the hearing aid wearer experiences provides audiologists and teachers alike with valuable information about the child’s hearing aid use.

As Teachers of the Deaf, we need to understand in which conditions the child has good access to spoken language and in which conditions interventions are needed to improve their access. We also need to assess the benefit of the intervention so we are not imposing something on the child that doesn’t help at all.

There is a range of language assessments which look at a deaf child’s communication skills. The NDCS publication ‘Communication in Language and Listening’ provides an in-depth review of the different assessments available along with the steps that need to be completed following assessment to improve achievement.

Language assessments are able to
- monitor development
- inform planning or interventions and monitor their impact
- assess the effectiveness of hearing technology
- identify a listening environment that allows access to spoken language
- inform the statutory assessment process.

Speech perception tests
The simple speech perception test can be used to provide a wealth of information about a child’s listening skills. Word and sentence lists are quick and easy to administer but to get the most out of them you must know what you are aiming to find out. An MJS word list (www.batod.org.uk/content/resources/audiology/refreshe rs/testing/T12-sp-recog.pdf) delivered at conversational level from one metre will give you the percentage of speech perceived under those conditions but, as we know, children rarely have such a good listening environment. When delivering a test, we need to recreate the child’s listening environment. This gives us a much more valuable insight into the child’s listening experience. Further lists can be completed in more favourable conditions to decide what intervention would be most beneficial. These can range from the benefit of a radio aid system to the best way to use a mobile phone.

Traditionally, distance, background noise or lip reading have been compared using word lists. The Functional Listening Evaluation (http://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/func_eval.pdf)
provides a useful matrix which allows the overall effect of each of these variables to be compared. Advances in hearing aids and radio aids are giving deaf children more options in how they are able to use their technology. Here are some of the variables to think about when planning a functional listening analysis.

**Type of word list**
The correct list needs to be chosen for the job. Whether it is picture, single word or sentence, the language content of the test should match the spoken language the child is asked to understand.

**Presentation level**
Automated testers or live voice can be chosen. Automated testers such as the Parrot Speech in Noise Tester allow signal and noise to be set accurately to any desired level. However, these may introduce unusual accents for the testee which can add an additional degree of difficulty. Using live voice will give the child a familiar accent and allows the option of lip reading. With practice, it is possible to present lists as accurately as an automated tester.

**Lip reading**
Speech perception lists are phonetically balanced but are not standardised for difficulty of lip reading so really should be used with no lip reading. However, they are a great way to show a child how good they are at it or a teacher how much their student relies on it. Since a hand or piece of paper is not acoustically transparent, a muslin screen should be used to obscure lip pattern.

**Distance**
By measuring the listening distances and recreating them in a test situation it is possible to answer questions such as: Is a child able to sit at the back of a class with their friends whilst using a radio aid or do they still benefit from sitting at the front?

**Signal to Noise Ratio**
In order to recreate different listening environments background noise and teacher’s voice can be measured using a sound level meter in the class room. All measurements should be taken from the child’s ear. When setting up the test, four speakers playing background noise will create a more representative situation than a single noise speaker placed behind the child.

**Hearing aids**
The obvious test is to use speech perception to show the benefit of wearing hearing aids. However, as hearing aid programs become more advanced it is important to know in which situations they are beneficial. For example, is a specific program for listening in noise more beneficial than using the hearing aid’s automatic setting?

**Radio aids**
Testing with and without a radio aid using a signal to noise ratio observed in class is the traditional comparison to make. However, new technologies have now opened up the ways in which radio aids can be used, giving greater control and ownership for the radio aid user. Directional microphone modes allow the child to hold the radio aid and point it at the speaker, particularly useful for older students. Omni-directional modes allow radio aids to be placed on the table during group work so the wearer can access other students’ contributions. A Teacher of the Deaf needs to decide if these new methods of use are effective or do they just collect and transmit too much background noise to have a beneficial impact on signal to noise ratio.

**Other technologies**
Connectivity of hearing aids with other technology is becoming more accessible for deaf children. Streamers and T loops allow mobile phones and tablets to be paired with hearing aids opening up a range of possibilities beyond holding the phone to your hearing aid microphone. Speech perception tests allow children and young people to find the best method of using their tech.

There are many options for using speech perception testing to describe the functional listening of deaf children. They are quick and easy to deliver but the time taken to do these tests needs to be made worthwhile; something needs to come of it. Results should be shared with all interested parties. Audiologists can use real world listening results to add to the hearing aid evaluation process. Teachers can understand the reason for suggested interventions and the benefit they provide. Finally, parents are better informed to make better listening situations for their children.

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Assessment at FE level

Jill Bussien stresses the value of assessment for students in further education and the importance of ensuring that they understand the process.

As Teachers of the Deaf we are trained to work with children from birth to the end of their school life; however, following the recent introduction of the Education, Health and Care Plan, the process will need to refocus and include learners up to the age of 25 years. Learners entering higher education with support from a Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) are not considered here. This article will concentrate on the students who leave school between the age of 16 and 19 years to attend a local college, for courses from Foundation to Level 3 courses.

The expertise we develop as ToDs working with preschool and school age children does not change, but the context does; therefore a rethinking of our skills and the assessment tools we use and how we could use them at FE is required.

At FE, the focus is on vocational courses with progression into employment; this is not necessarily what the student or their parents want. Besides, the student leaving school may not be ready emotionally or academically to enter an FE college. The ethos of an FE college is to work independently in a mature way or to be working toward this. For some students, it can be a shock, especially if they have come from a highly supportive mainstream school, residential school or resource base.

The use of assessments in the FE sector is worth considering; is it just for the proof of academic achievement and to collect certificates or is it a much more holistic process that helps the learner to develop on many different levels and in various ways? The fundamental purpose of all assessment work is to understand the student, then to assist them to develop not only their vocational visions but also their personal dreams for the future. We need to consider the student’s thoughts and opinions. As a child, they were an unaware participant in the assessment, but as a young adult, they are aware of the process and want to know about the consequences and their implications.

At the time of the transition, the assessment process begins in a low-key way for a prospective student with good relationships with the visiting ToDs and the local resource bases. From Year 9, an awareness of the opportunities at an FE college can be introduced to the prospective students and their parents, so that they can make an informed choice. The NDCS booklet on the transition to FE should be provided to assist understanding of the process (new version downloadable from their website).

During Years 10 and 11, the transition continues with the visits to the local college for ‘individual tours’ and ‘open days’ with school staff or parents. It is on these occasions that college staff working with deaf students formulate a ‘pen-sketch’ or ‘informal assessment’ of the prospective student. If there are opportunities, the arrangement of taster days for the vocational courses supported by college staff, provides insight into learning style and support strategies to build the profile of support strategies, language preferences, emotional needs, future travel needs, audiological needs and FM system provision.

By the time of the Year 11 Annual Review, the learner and the parents should have decided whether the young person will remain at school, join an FE college or apply for an apprenticeship. This decision may depend on the local vocational course offer and the student’s preferred subject of study. It is useful for the FE ToD to attend the annual review to ensure the college’s planning is accurate and inclusive. At the annual review, the college may be ‘named’ as the future institution in the EHCP.

After this decision, staff from the college visit the school to see the student’s English and maths teachers, the CSWs and the ToD, primarily for support strategies, exam arrangements and predicted exam results, to continue the development of the profile. The student and the parents will visit the college and decide the final arrangements for support.

The student will need to apply for a course place and be interviewed by vocational staff, to assess and decide the student’s suitability for the course and their potential to complete, achieve and progress. A failure at this stage could lead to an interview with Careers and Guidance Officers. In August, the student’s GCSE results confirm the allocation of a course or trigger the need for discussion and decision.

The student enrols towards the end of August/early September when they and the EHCP become the responsibility of the college. A review of the profile’s information takes place and missing information from other professionals requested. As part of this profile development, the new student is assessed in more depth to provide clear guidelines for vocational teaching staff, CSWs, ToDs, other professionals ie SLTs and for examination access arrangements.

On entry, all FE colleges assess students to ascertain literacy and numeracy levels. If the student has not
obtained GCSE English and Mathematics at grade C, these results direct the placement onto the correct level of Functional Skills courses in literacy and numeracy. To ensure all areas of support are considered, the ToD would normally complete the assessments in consultation with the other staff. Each student would have a unique set of assessments possibly covering literacy and language development, numeracy and development, speech, communication skills, BSL skills, visual stress (Irlen Syndrome), the speed of cognitive processing and memory. There is a continuing review of possible assessments, and the following can be useful for this age group: WRAT4, Access Reading Test, Adult Reading Test, Trog-2, BPVS, digital span, writing speed, reading speed and Raven's Matrices.

The difficulty with assessments for this age group is firstly the age range, as the test’s upper range may be too low to provide a standardised score or age. Secondly, the language of the assessment is English or American English, so it is problematic to administer the assessment to a student whose first language is BSL. However, using these assessments sensibly, they can be useful in acquiring ‘indicators’ to guide staff approaches and strategy development.

The assessment of sign language skills for students, who are not proficient in BSL and may not have obtained BSL qualifications can be problematic. The BSL Receptive Skills Test and BSL Production Test from the Sign Language & Deaf Studies research team at City University, London, can offer an extremely useful assessment tool. Although not intended for this age group, it can provide staff with an insight into language development.

To understand a student fully and to provide appropriate support and guidance, the non-academic aspects of the student’s life ie emotional welfare, home life, social skills, and travelling needs need to be considered. These assessments will probably not be formal unless a specialist professional or service is involved, but an agreement of the needs, based on observations/reports by college staff, the student and the parents.

Assessments in an FE college are intended to assist the student to obtain independence academically and personally, as it may be their final period in formal education, a ‘stepping stone’ to employment or more learning. Complementing the EHCP process, these assessments are not performed in isolation, but with the student as an integral part of the process, as the student needs to have a realistic understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, so they can influence their future.

Jill Bussien is a member of BATOD’s NEC and Chair of adept (the association of deaf education professionals and trainees; adeptuk.co.uk)
Social and emotional delay

Professor Barry Wright describes the importance of assessing deaf children for social and emotional delay

It is common for deaf children to experience a range of challenges in what is essentially a very hearing world. The Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Programme and national guidelines for offering cochlear implants to children are beginning to modify the nature of these challenges. However, other changes to service provision also alter this landscape. For example, large local authority cuts have reduced the availability of youth services and education support services, and with the gradual closure of deaf schools, many deaf children are now in hearing-impaired units or are placed in mainstream schools with additional support. In terms of children’s development, there continue to be large numbers of deaf children with language and communication difficulties, and deaf children continue to achieve less positive outcomes in terms of education than their hearing peers. Educational research in America shows that even with very good communication support in classrooms, deaf children continue to miss important information that allows them to establish healthy informational connections in learning and social domains.

The National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has ten centres around the country run by four NHS Trusts and offers support to generic child mental health services and to schools where deaf children struggle with emotional and psychological problems. Our national meetings continue to show significant numbers of children who are struggling emotionally and psychologically. This is sometimes related to language and communication problems, but is often related to isolation, social anxiety, educational anxiety, performance anxiety, low mood, attentional problems and separation anxiety. There continue to be relatively steady numbers of children and young people who are referred with significant social and emotional developmental delay compared to their hearing peers.

The impact of social and emotional delay

When we have tried to understand this, it is often in the context of children who have had early reduced communication experiences or language delay, and is often associated with empathy skill delays, which can be shown by assessments described below. Whilst most of these children catch up in terms of their empathy skills, they are regularly running two or three years behind their age equivalent hearing peers. On the face of it, this may seem as though it is not too much of a problem. However, if a child is always three years behind their peers socially and emotionally then they often want to play games or do activities that are seen as childish by their friends. Perhaps more importantly, some of those children withdraw into themselves and become very quiet and shy, because they feel they cannot play with their peers and they simply stop trying. Another way that this delay is made manifest is that whilst some children go through the terrible twos and the frightful threes at the ages of two and three, deaf children may have these developmentally appropriate experiences when they are six and seven. They therefore stand out from their peers. Similarly, when empathy skill development allows us to share and collaborate with others, and this then facilitates friendship, social bonding and cooperative play, deaf children may still be wanting to do their own thing and become very frustrated when they cannot. If they struggle to see the point of view of their peers, this makes them stand out developmentally in terms of social interactions and social development and can lead to rejection and low self-esteem.

Assessment for social and emotional delay

It seems important to be able to assess for these kinds of delays. Clinical or Educational Psychologists will often use cognitive assessments to check on the intellectual development of deaf children to be able to gauge whether emotional delays are commensurate with this. They would typically use tools that are suitable for use with deaf children such as the WNV, SON-R or Leiter tests. This avoids verbal intelligence testing which can be low in those with language impairments. Language therapists will also have assessments of language and communication. These can also be done in BSL using the BSL receptive and expressive skills tests designed by Herman and colleagues. Many services try and assess social development and this can be done in differing ways. The first is using questionnaires that can be filled in by parents or teachers (and some by young people) such as the Social Skills Improvement System rating scales (Gresham et al, 2010) or the Social Responsiveness Scale (Constantino et al, 2003). Whilst there are some questions in these that are not appropriate for deaf children they give a lot of information about how children socialise and interact. The content rather than the scoring is therefore important. Some teams use theory of mind tests and there are lots of these for different ages ranging from asking an 18 month old: ‘where is the teddy?’ to see if they point to show you where to look, through to false belief tests and more complex tests for older children. More commonly, services are using the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (Lord et al, 2000). This is a play and interaction based assessment involving lots of different activities with a child. It comes
in five different modules designed for different levels of language and developmental abilities ranging from toddlers to 18 year olds. It gives lots of rich information about emotional and social understanding and responsiveness. It is important to be trained to use this assessment. The National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is currently engaged in a piece of work funded by the Medical Research Council to adapt the ADOS2 and the SRS2 to be more helpful with deaf children. This research will try and understand the differences between social and emotional developmental delay in a deaf child compared to this kind of delay associated with autism in a deaf child. Making this distinction can make a big difference to the interventions or the education provided. We continue to seek children and families to support us with this research. We are looking to meet deaf children with autism, deaf children without autism and some hearing children with autism and carry out new and friendly assessments, in order to make clear comparisons and see how deaf children with autism present. If you are able to help us with this research by going through some simple assessment procedures with us, or you just want to hear more about the research then please contact helenphillips4@nhs.net

Development and the importance of parenting support
There is, so far as we are aware, no reason why deaf and hearing-impaired children should not be able to learn social and emotional skills at the same rate as hearing children. Early access to language (any language) and communication seems an important factor. Another key factor is the awareness of adults around the child that social and emotional development is important. Deaf children often miss incidental learning around social and emotional aspects of life, and the adults around children should proactively try and fill these gaps in their experiences in friendly ways. In 2013, Mary Pat Moeller and others published a very important article in the Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education entitled ‘Best practices in family-centred early intervention for children who are deaf or hard of hearing: an international consensus statement’. The reason this is important is because it drew from experts all over the world, but also from parents, deaf professionals, and early intervention programme specialists, and was therefore a very important piece of work that consulted widely. They established ten clear foundation principles for early intervention. Several of these are designed to support the social and emotional development of deaf children. One of them specifically enshrines the importance of social and emotional support to families where there is a deaf child. We could perhaps use checklists from these benchmarks as assessments of local or regional provision to see what we are offering and where we can improve.

We are currently putting in a European commission grant bid involving six countries across Europe to try and take this work forward. In particular, we would like to focus on the social and emotional development of deaf children, and to think more broadly about preventing negative outcomes such as anxiety, low mood and social isolation. We will seek the advice and support of Teachers of the Deaf nationally if this bid is successful.

Professor Barry Wright is the Clinical Lead of the National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
Assessing memory in deaf children

Isabel Gregory examines ways to overcome problems in communication in order to test successfully the memory skills of deaf students

I am an Educational Psychologist. I have worked with deaf children with a range of difficulties in many contexts for the past 20 years. Currently one of my roles is as part of the ‘Sound Advice’ team at the Ear Foundation that offers multi-professional assessments for deaf children. When assessing a child, there are always a number of complex factors that have to be considered. Among these, the assessment will almost always involve a consideration of the part memory plays for that child. It can be difficult to talk about memory in isolation, but it may be vital in a consideration of the difficulties a child faces.

For me, writing this has been an interesting experience, as it allows me to reflect upon the ways in which I assess a deaf child’s memory. I will try my best to describe this.

Memory

Memory as a subject is hugely complex and it is understood in different ways. In assessment, I have found that using the information processing approach to memory offers me a good way of thinking about it. In this model, memory is seen as the process by which information is encoded, stored and recalled. Information is encoded at the point we are exposed to it, we make it into a discrete code that we are able to take to the next stage, storage. At the storage stage the information code is stored for future use; when we need that information again we use recall to bring that information back out and use it again. It is worth noting that memory has become a huge area of interest and research, with many different models and theories. The way in which you approach memory depends very much on why it is significant in the particular situation. Therefore, it is important to define how I am understanding it here. If it is something that interests you there is a huge amount of information out there to explore.

One way of assessing memory has often been by using digit recall. This is present in many assessment batteries. It involves the assessor reading out a string of digits, usually one per second, and then the child having to recite them back. In 1956 Miller put forward the idea that the adult short term memory had the capacity of the magic number 7, plus or minus 2. Try it yourself now – how many random digits can you recall? I am yet to meet anyone who can remember a complete mobile phone number straight off (although I have met a couple who claim they can!).

The ‘magic number 7’ was based on the belief that there are a certain number of ‘slots’ in which we hold information. Things have developed and been elaborated since then, but it has influenced the ways we understand and assess short term memory – looking at the number of ‘units’ of information a person can store. If this is outside of the normal range (using the ‘magic 7’ for adults this would be less than 5 or more than 9) it would highlight an area for consideration. Of course, adults are different from children, so in our assessments a child’s digit span would have to be compared with what a typical child of that age is able to do. Sometimes presenting the digits and asking the child to repeat them backwards is also used to get more information about their processing ability.

Deaf Children

Deaf children are not of course a homogenous group. They will differ in a large number of ways: communication mode, their degree of hearing loss, the age of identification, the type of aid or implant, how long they have had an aid or implant, how well they are using it, the kind of school they are in, family circumstances etc. The assessment of a deaf child has to consider the huge amount of variability with which they can present and the impact of this (this is before taking into account any additional disabilities). Therefore, it is vital that they are assessed in a way where the assessor has taken time to understand the child and also has familiarity with the areas being assessed and the tools used to measure them.

When we are thinking about memory in deaf children, we have to consider the impact of the first part of this memory model: encoding. Encoding has been understood as the way in which information is processed by us. It comes to us through our sensory input which we then encode for storage in either auditory, visual or semantic ways. When we recall information, we access the store and retrieve it, expressing it an appropriate way. Already we can see that when we consider memory in deaf children we have to take into account that they will have a different experience of remembering from hearing children, depending on their degree of deafness, their aided threshold and the amount they make use of auditory information. The sensory input used for getting information is different as they will not have the same exposure to auditory input. How they store information will be affected by how it is encoded. All this must be taken into account.

The other vital thing to consider is the reason for which the child is being assessed. Any assessment should be based on a specific or specific questions about the child. This is important in ensuring the assessment can be tailored to the needs of the child as presented at that time. Its usefulness will depend on the extent to which it answers these questions.

Examples of possible assessment questions:

● Why is he not making the progress we expect?
Her language is developing slowly; is there any reason for this other than her deafness?
She finds maths really difficult and we don’t understand why.
Is she being taught in the right way?
Does he have any other issues other than his deafness?

Once you have identified the questions you are answering, you can then consider what possible role memory could play in this and how you are going to go about assessing it.

Assessing deaf children’s memory

When you are asked to carry out an assessment and you have identified the question to be answered you will need to consider the role memory might have. You will also have some background on that child; this may be paperwork, conversations with parents, other professionals or the child’s teacher. It is very rare that you are presented with a child with no background to them at all. Before you even meet the child, you will have begun to gain an understanding of them and identified the possible role that memory could be playing in their problem. Even better, you may even have the chance to ask further questions and explore any ideas you have been developing about the child’s memory. Sometimes you will have also had the opportunity to observe the child in class or with their parents. The assessment process begins long before many people realise.

Informal assessment

When you first meet the child, you are unlikely to go straight to a formal assessment. A period of time is spent talking with the child and getting to know them and helping them relax into the situation. However, this is not a straightforward chat as already you are developing and exploring ideas as to any difficulties the child is presenting. Whilst chatting with them about their journey, their school and the things the child is are playing with, huge amounts of information become available to you that help refine your ideas about the child’s strengths and difficulties and the role that memory plays. When I meet a child and their parents I will be thinking about many elements whilst we are talking. Often it is based on looking for things that stand out to me as not being part of typical development. I will be considering the child’s language, communication, interpersonal skills, processing abilities, reasoning skills, memory, verbal comprehension, language comprehension, social skills, ability to communicate with strangers, understanding of the situation, hyperactivity, attachment... the list goes on. In addition to this I will be carrying out an informal assessment of their memory skills and seeing if this is an area which concerns me. This will be through questions like:

- What is the name of your teacher?
- How did you get here?
- What did you do yesterday?
- What computer games do you like?
- Oh, I know that, what do you play as?
- What level are you?

How old are you? So, what did you do for your last birthday?
Did you see where I put the pens?
I showed you my car in the car park – do you remember what colour it was?

None of these questions is planned but somewhere in that initial conversation I have with a child will be some form of informally gaining an idea of what their memory skills are like. It is based on a combination of experience and understanding of developmental psychology. I am sure that if you work with deaf children and you think about it, you will be employing strategies like this all the time – you might just not be aware of it!

Formal Assessment

When these initial things have been explored, you will already be on your way to understanding how the child’s memory is functioning and if it is an area where you should already have concerns. It can be important to carry out formal assessments. These give an objective picture of the child’s memory skills, limiting any possible bias of your interpretation.

Earlier, I discussed the way in which memory can be assessed using digit recall. If we consider this for deaf children we can see how it is flawed. The stimulus is auditory so we may not be assessing their memory ability but this may be more about whether or not they can hear the stimulus. Thus, we have to go about this another way to ensure that we are considering their memory skills, not their ability to hear.

We therefore have to look at other ways to explore a deaf child’s memory skills. I often use standardised assessments that do not have a language component to do this. Sometimes this involves touching a number of blocks in sequence or may involve copying hand shapes in sequence. What is important to consider is that we are still looking at memory, but we cannot equate it to an auditory digit span as the memory system is working through different processes; one assesses an auditory code, the other a spatial code. Therefore, we can see if this is in the normal range or not by comparing it to standardised scores for that particular assessment.

What this will tell me is if that child has a specific difficulty with their memory. If I have a score of auditory memory and spatial memory it can show if the issue is actually to do with memory, or that the child’s memory appears to be a factor due to the way in which they are expected to code the auditory information. This gives the opportunity to highlight the difficulty in the classroom many deaf children face when they are expected to process a lot of auditorily presented instructions. By showing the difference in these scores we can give clear reasons for visual stimulus or alerting teachers to the difficulties of these long lists of information. Often the child not remembering a verbally presented stimulus will be highlighted as a memory issue when it may actually a communication issue.

I have tried to give an overview of how I explore the issue.

Continued at bottom of next page
Never have specialised assessments, and the data from them, been of more use than at the present. Not only do they have their ongoing vital uses which we all know of such as identifying individual needs, informing parents and mainstream teachers and planning, they are also an integral part of the local area inspections – the new joint inspections of education, health and social care for children with SEND.

These inspections of the local area will affect all services in England within the next five years. They focus and report on three primary questions relating to the quality of arrangements for supporting deaf children and young people.

The three basic questions the inspectors will be asking are:

- How effectively does a local area identify children and young people with SEND? (When evaluating effectiveness the inspection team will be considering (i) the timeliness of the identification and (ii) the quality of identification and assessment information.)
- How effectively are the needs of children and young people assessed and met?
- How effectively are local arrangements improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND?

The answers for all of these are dependent on looking at relevant data and how this shows we are effective in our work with deaf children.

Why use specialised assessments?

You are probably thinking – why should we use specialised assessments when we are already drowning in school based tracker systems and end of Key Stage assessment results? The good reason is that we are specialists who can show precise results in areas specific to deaf children and young people. This data can be used to accurately show progress in specific areas and clearly define future action.

What assessments can we use?

Useful assessments open to ToDs to use are listed, with information concerning their pros and cons (and prices!) in the on-line NDCS Assessment Resource

www.ndcs.org.uk/assessments

This covers all the areas of communication, language, listening, literacy, mathematics, cognitive development and social/emotional development. Some of these produce standardised ‘hard’ data, but some also cover more ‘soft’ but equally valid data for social and emotional development, which is important and appropriate.

How do we know what kind of information the inspectors will want?

NatSIP has written Quality Standards for Services (2016) and a linked Quality Improvement pack and self-evaluation tool which looks at how ToDs can review their practice. www.natsip.org.uk

The tool has statements linked to the three questions which you can use to judge your assessment procedures by.

How do I know about the timeliness of the identification?

On some occasions there are actual timelines that should be followed, for example the standards that say:

- Following referral of a deaf child or young person, having received consent from parents, an assessment of his/her needs is undertaken by a qualified specialist teacher for hearing impairment. The timing of the initial assessment will be determined in consultation with parents and would usually be undertaken within at least three working weeks of notification of diagnosis.

I would like to acknowledge useful discussions with my mother Susan Gregory during the preparation of this paper.

Dr Isabel Gregory is an Educational Psychologist.
Where a child or young person is not making progress in line with other children or young people and/or it is clear that they experience difficulties in particular areas of development despite receiving appropriate support and interventions, specialist assessments undertaken by teachers with the mandatory qualification are used promptly. A written report should normally be provided within ten working days of the assessment which describes the assessment results in a way that can be clearly understood by parents, and suggests strategies for addressing any difficulties the child or young person is experiencing.

What about usefulness and quality?
The inspectors will be looking at specialist assessments (both standardised and non-standardised) to make sure that it has been used to:

- identify needs and any gaps in the child or young person’s learning and development
- establish a baseline set of challenging but realistic targets with particular focus on developing language and literacy and promoting access to the curriculum and independence in learning
- identify the support/provision required to address the needs and meet targets
- identify the reasonable adjustments required under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure the child or young person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage when accessing teaching and learning or participating fully in the life of the education setting
- monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and other education, health and social care support provided
- identify areas which require further exploration by other professionals.

Who else should be involved in these assessments?
Best practice would involve the individual child or young person, and their parents and carers, in the process of assessing their needs. They should know about the results of the assessments in plain English as soon as possible and be clear about any criteria used to make decisions.

Often the best person to carry out the assessment under the guidance of the ToD, is the parent/carer for early years children, or the teaching assistant who works most frequently with school age children in the classroom.

How do we show progress and attainment?
To show progress it is important that you get a good baseline measurement, which means choosing your assessment and continuing with it for several years – not chopping and changing. Using more modern versions of tests also has to be treated with caution as they are often re-standardised and cannot be used to compare results. It is advisable to start a new version with new children and continue using older versions until the older children leave.

Ideally progress should be evaluated using national assessment data as well as teacher assessment and specialist assessments. It is very hard to use comparative data with a low incidence need like deafness; however, we are very lucky in having the NatSIP national outcomes benchmarking exercise to compare outcomes with national benchmarks. This is the gold standard for inspectors, so do use it.

Assessment as a tool can show what is working for our deaf children and young people, what we can do to help them and in what direction we should go next. But it can also be used to inform others – inspectors, LA officials and professional partners – of our successes and our challenges. Make sure you have the information at hand to present the case!

Tina Wakefield is Educational Consultant at the Ear Foundation/NDCS.

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Deaf children’s writing

Debra Proctor gives an evaluation of the assessment of the writing skills of deaf children

Evidence suggests that the development of writing is intrinsically linked to language acquisition. It appears that the challenges deaf children encounter, in the writing process, are linked to this.

‘Without a full face to face language in place, deaf children often do not have the requisite basis in place for age appropriate cognitive and literacy development’ (Mayer, 2007, p413).

However, these challenges are not taken into account through mainstream assessments. In fact the use of mainstream assessments can make it a greater challenge to identify areas in need of support, as the steps of progression are often not small enough.

So, how can writing progress be demonstrated most effectively? And how can information be used formatively to provide support for the writing process?

Mainstream assessments clearly have their place and allow professionals to ascertain how the child is progressing in relation to peers and within the national context. They support decision-making when considering the optimum way to deliver English lessons.

However, we need to consider that writing for deaf children, and in particular deaf children with a mixed language repertoire (i.e. sign language and mixed spoken languages), poses many challenges. Challenges which mainstream assessments do not account for. In order to complement what is already known about a child’s writing, we need to look towards assessments which do take account of such challenges.

Current mainstream assessments are heavily weighted towards the grammar of writing. This is especially true since the introduction of the Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar Tests (SPAG). Therefore areas such as the use of suffixes, expanded noun phrases and the use of tense are prolific. Deaf children who use sign language as their main method of communication, or have a significant language delay, are being required to write in a second language or indeed a language which they have not yet mastered in face-to-face interaction. Therefore, when assessing the writing of these children, we are often assessing their use of a language which they have not used in any other context.

Presently it is widely known that, for deaf children, the acquisition of syntax, morphology and lexical knowledge is delayed in comparison to the acquisition of vocabulary, rhetorical skills and content knowledge. During the 1970s researchers began considering the limitations of teaching writing at the sentence level and by the 1980s learning to write was being characterised as a socialisation process (Kress, 1996). In this sense writing becomes a way of making and sharing meaning just in the same way as drawing, signing or speaking. A way of representing and communicating thought. By focusing upon this content and process, Albertini and Schley (2003) argue that a writer will learn to communicate more effectively. Furthermore, they suggest that although grammar should not be ignored, it should be regulated. Despite it being one indication of the quality of writing, there are other dimensions such as content and organisation which need to be assessed. Perhaps, in order to accomplish this, so that meaningful information is gleaned, there is a requirement for assessments which are more pertinent to deaf learners than those used in mainstream.

Koutsoubou, Herman and Woll (2008) explain that during the production of writing, many processes occur simultaneously; these include meaning construction, decisions on information, the formation of language, editing and monitoring. If we are to consider English as the second language, this process becomes more complex. This is due to the fact that some of these processes are facilitated by the writer’s first language which in many cases for deaf writers is sign and even if it is not, they often do not have a strong grasp of the spoken language. Considering those children who sign, we find that English has a patently different syntactic structure from that of sign language, in that English words do not always necessarily map onto signs. One sign may represent a variety of words, which can change meaning based upon context.

The analytic assessment by Burman (2008) focuses upon information and grammar and was initially based upon use with profoundly deaf children whose first language was British Sign Language. Later the assessment was validated for non-signers too. Burman (2008) produced a more sensitive scale for grammar, taking into consideration deaf children’s issues around writing, and essentially using smaller steps of progression. This scale has been ordered in degrees of difficulty for deaf children and marks are awarded accordingly. The analytic assessment is simple to administer, assess and analyse. Establishing numerical data from the test is manageable and allows for clear identification of areas requiring improvement. Importantly, due to the nature of the task, it also does not place undue stress upon the child.

This assessment tool reveals progress as it makes the criteria far more pertinent to the child allowing for progress to be demonstrated in a meaningful manner. With the assessment being divided into grammar and message quality (information), it also allows for comparison to the RAPT (Renfrew Action Picture Test)
surrounding deaf children and support the case for specific methods of delivery. A combination of mainstream and deaf specific writing assessments, alongside a detailed ‘picture’ of a particular child’s language acquisition need to be collated in order to most effectively demonstrate progress. Although this progress may not be entered into the school tracking system or indeed reported as part of SATs data, it will be a useful source of evidence of progress to share with the child, their family and of course inspectors. Moreover, the ecological language planning profile, may not demonstrate writing progress, but it should be used to support the mainstream assessments. This will help teachers, inspectors and parents comprehend the issues which impact upon deaf children’s writing as well as determining future targets. Such targets may not initially seem related to writing and lean more towards language, however, without an established language base, it is problematic for deaf children to develop writing skills.

In conclusion, there appears to be much scope within this area for development. For instance, should a national body address the issue, it would give more strength and validity to deaf specific writing assessments within the mainstream. The development of a nationally recognised and accredited battery of deaf specific writing assessments would serve to highlight and recognise the issues deaf children encounter and accredit them fairly. Perhaps, one day, allowing us to enter such data into school systems or indeed as SATs results. With the flux in mainstream assessment procedures at the moment, this is an optimum time to produce a body of deaf specific writing assessments to stabilise and standardise assessment procedures.

Debra Proctor is a Teacher of the Deaf in the Durham Sensory and Physical Team. This work was undertaken as part of a critical study for the award of MA Deaf Education (ToD) at the University of Leeds during 2016.

References

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SHE’S STRUGGLING TO HEAR.

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The assessment of BSL in deaf children

Katherine Rowley, Ros Herman and Bencie Woll look at the importance of assessing language development in signers

The above are real young deaf people referred to the Sign Language Assessment & Reading Clinic at City, University of London, a unique clinical provision run in association with staff from DCAL, and highlight the importance of assessing deaf children’s language development in BSL. Assessment findings are important when making recommendations about educational placement (Jake), and to inform decisions about language interventions (Leila). Without properly developed sign language assessment tools, delivered by staff with the necessary skills, it is clear from these cases that the wrong decisions can be made.

Language assessments allow us to measure and monitor children’s communication skills against normative developmental milestones. This is particularly crucial for deaf children since we know they are at risk for language development (Herman, 2015). A huge variety of tests is available to assess developmental outcomes in spoken language, and many are increasingly used with deaf children who communicate using spoken language. However, very few language assessments exist for deaf children who are sign language users. Even though research on sign language acquisition continues to grow, much of this is on ASL rather than BSL, and there are still many gaps.

Developing appropriate assessments and deriving deaf norms present a number of challenges. Test development relies on a complex range of knowledge and skills: knowledge of sign linguistics and sign language acquisition, fluent signing skills, and skills in assessment design. In practice, few individuals possess all these skills, and so test development works best when deaf and hearing people share their expertise through a team approach. With regard to test design, the purpose of the test must be clear: eg what aspects of sign language will be tested, and why? What type of testing method should be used? How will responses be scored?

Test materials must be carefully selected and piloted, firstly with deaf adults and then with deaf children from the target age group to ensure they are culturally, linguistically and developmentally appropriate, and that the assessment method will achieve the test aims. Further piloting with children who are native signers is then necessary, in order to determine the level of difficulty of the measure. Since most deaf children are not native signers, finding sufficient native signers presents an additional challenge. Indeed recruitment involves substantial time and effort, especially as deaf children are increasingly scattered in mainstream schools and are therefore difficult to trace. Further issues include decisions about inclusion of deaf children with additional needs, obtaining parental consent, scheduling visits to assess children and avoiding over-researching children.

To develop norms for assessments, scores are used from testing large numbers of children. This is important to even out individual differences that occur in typical development. Given the small population of deaf signing children, large sample sizes are simply not attainable. One way of increasing sample sizes is to test the same group of children repeatedly over time as some researchers have done, eg Woolfe, Herman, Roy & Woll (2010), when adapting the MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory to BSL. However, with this approach, there is the small risk that
an individual child with an unusual pattern of development carries greater weight if multiple scores from the same child are included in test norms.

The use of new technologies is starting to influence language testing (Enns et al., 2016; Haug, Herman & Woll, 2015). Computer or web-based tests make set up, administration, scoring and score reporting easier and a number of computerised assessments for deaf children and adults are now available on the DCAL Assessment Portal – eg the BSL CDI (Woolfe et al., 2010), the BSL Receptive Skills Test (Herman, Rowley & Woll, 2015) and the BSL Vocabulary Test (Mann & Marshall, 2012) https://dcalportal.org/tests

The assessments we have to date are essential in identifying deaf signing children with delayed language development or specific language difficulties (Herman et al., 2014). The next challenge is to use assessment findings to develop interventions. Dynamic assessments seek to bridge the gap between assessment and intervention (Mann, Peña & Morgan, 2014) and exciting new work is currently under way to develop appropriate interventions for deaf BSL users to be delivered by deaf staff (Hoskin, in press).

Katherine Rowley is a Researcher at and Bencie Woll the Director of the Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre, University College, London and Ros Herman, Reader in Deafness and Communication at City, University of London.

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Hoskin J (in press). Language Therapy in BSL. Bulletin of the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists
To quote those who attended, this was an ‘excellent’; ‘thought-provoking’; ‘informative’; ‘practical day’; which had ‘lots of opportunities to ask questions and discuss ideas’ and ‘plenty of real life examples’. As always, it was aimed at improving the specialist skills of those working with deaf children and providing them with an opportunity to network with others working in various types of settings.

The Textile Centre in Huddersfield once again proved a good venue because of its accessibility, the quality of rooms and catering and the attention of staff. The focus of assessment was taken from the suggestions of delegates from last year’s Study Day and was a popular topic with 73 delegates attending. This year for the first time there was also an exhibition of manufacturers, training providers and voluntary bodies from eight organisations. The exhibitors were very positive about the venue and the amount of interest shown by delegates. The Diamond sponsor, GN Otometrics, gave a short presentation during the morning describing the Aurical Hearing Instrument Tester. Everyone felt that the exhibition provided a hub for the whole day.

A range of workshops were organised, though unfortunately two had to be cancelled at short notice because of illness. We were very grateful to Gill Edgington who repeated her workshop in the afternoon and to Michele Eaton (a committee member) who, at very short notice, facilitated a group discussion on the issues encountered when assessing pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Following the AGM held at lunchtime we were also very pleased to welcome two new members to the committee.

The following report of the day is based on summaries from committee members who participated in the workshops.

**Trish Cope; Educational Consultant, Ewing Foundation: Assessment; Potential and Pitfalls**

“You don’t fatten pigs by weighing them!”

Trish introduced the Study Day by giving a very comprehensive overview of assessment – both the possibilities and the pitfalls. After putting testing and assessment into an historical context, Trish went on to look at assessment in the context of learning with particular reference to the many, and varied, government initiatives in education over recent years. She then discussed the place of assessment in the context of learning and the contribution the Teacher of the Deaf can bring to the assessment process. The importance of assessment in contributing to the overall learning experience of the child was evaluated and the different types of assessment reviewed. The importance of using results to inform and plan for the child’s learning was emphasised. As well as looking at the positive side of assessment and testing, Trish also gave an insight into...
the possible pitfalls of testing – but summarised with the thought that assessment is a vital tool which, if skilfully used, can contribute to high levels of achievement. However, there are no recipe books for success. Good achievement requires highly skilled, reflective professional Teachers of the Deaf!

Gill Edgington; Principal Service Lead for Paediatric Audiology, Bolton: Paediatric Audiological Assessment

Gill gave us a fascinating insight into the world of the Paediatric Audiologist. Starting by commenting on the speed of progress in technology in hearing aids, she went on to give us an overview of the various tests available to the Paediatric Audiologist and a degree of insight into how these may not have progressed at the same rate! Gill went through the battery of tests used by audiologists pointing out the practical difficulties which can be encountered in each of these and which can have an effect on the results and subsequently on hearing aid fitting. These are not necessarily always obvious to the Teacher of the Deaf! She also covered the difficulties in assessing children with complex needs and children with Auditory Neuropathy and emphasised the importance of feedback from parents and Teachers of the Deaf as vital components of the assessment process. Discussion around Speech Audiometry and Parrot Plus, as well as the use of FM systems at home and with pre-school children, ended a really useful and engaging workshop!

Ania Likierska; Teacher of the Deaf, Sheffield: Assessing the Needs of ‘new-to-the-UK’ Families

Ania introduced the workshop by sharing the story of Roma families throughout history. The group was asked to read a profile of a child who had moved to the service in Sheffield and make notes about what the priorities would be for us as Teachers of the Deaf. Of the number of children on the peripatetic caseload in Sheffield who receive the highest levels of support (which involves weekly visits), 67% are within the newly-arrived from the Czech Roma community. The specific issues that had been identified in Sheffield were:

- Undiagnosed loss
- A moderate to severe loss with no previous amplification provided
- Teenagers with no language either oral or signing
- Poor communication in their home language
- Additional needs
- Children who have never been to school
- Several children with hearing losses in one family.

Ania explained that in Sheffield the sudden influx of Roma families had led to a re-assessment of how the children and their families were supported. This resulted in the following changes to provision:

- Multiple home visits when needed
- Setting up of groups to meet particular needs and signing provision
- Support for families to facilitate attendance at appointments
- Earmould impressions taken in schools with more than five deaf children (rather than requiring a visit to the clinic)
- The employment of a Roma translator working as a Teaching Assistant
- Raising deaf awareness within the Roma community, as well as police and others whom the Roma community may come in contact with.

Ania was very engaging and knowledgeable about this issue and able to share a number of strategies to help families with EAL and deafness.

James Mander; Clinical Audiologist, Ewing Foundation: Using Current Technologies to Improve Speech Discrimination

James promised a presentation with a ‘hands-on’ element and he didn’t disappoint. Firstly he introduced us to directional microphones available now in hearing technology and explained the ‘mind-blowing’ potential it has for users, looking at speech in noise, clear speech and music. Then he showed us the benefits of using data logging which is accessible from the clinical audiologist or cochlear implant centre. Using data logging gives us the ability to review the child’s listening environment and look at how many hours they may be listening to speech in noise.

We then discussed the benefits of using LENA (Language Environment Analysis) which uses a talk
pedometer to measure a deaf child’s natural environment. This technology can be used to look at the interaction between the main care-giver and the child and to monitor the noise levels. James described one example when LENA picked out an electronic sound in the background which turned out to be a noisy fridge which was interfering with the interaction between child and care-giver.

The final part of James’s presentation introduced us to using multi-talker network and sub-net communication with radio aids and we were able to try out the system and discuss how it could be used in the classroom (see the article on page 37 of this magazine).

This was a thought-provoking and stimulating presentation looking at speech discrimination or rather the ability to identify words in noise.

Suzanne Harrigan, Speech and Language Therapist, Ear Foundation: Using the Nottingham Early Assessment Package (NEAP)
Suzanne led the group through an update to the NEAP and NEAP for children with Complex Needs.

The package has been available and in use for a while now but with the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme, early amplification, deaf children new to the country and children who have a diagnosis of additional needs, the package remains particularly relevant and useful for early assessment purposes.

So, Suzanne posed the question: why assess very young deaf children?

For some children, there is a need to balance what benefit the child gets from hearing aids with what the potential benefits might be from cochlear implants. Furthermore, assessment informs good practice and needs to be time-effective. It also needs to be easily understood by those using it. As NEAP is pre-verbal it is not based on English.

Suzanne led the group through some parts of the assessment and the group explored it together. The CD ROM is quick and easy to use and the menu provides a tutorial, examples as well as the range of assessments available.

The Complex Needs package is adapted from the original NEAP and is aimed at enabling Teachers of the Deaf to become skilled observers of language and communication which is emerging or established and also informs planning.

Trish Cope: Education Consultant, Ewing Foundation: Linking the Assessment of Language to Listening
Trish Cope led a workshop during the afternoon which followed on from her talk earlier in the day which had highlighted the importance of assessment for Teachers of the Deaf as, without good assessment, how do professionals know what the starting points for teaching are or what support and intervention will be effective? If Teachers of the Deaf are to provide a distinctive contribution to the education of hearing-impaired youngsters, it is imperative that they are actively involved in assessment.

Discussion in the workshop centred around the core skills which were most important for Teachers of the Deaf to focus upon and there was agreement that these must include, primarily, developing listening skills, followed by language (and literacy) development and emotional well-being and social awareness.

The delegates examined a number of video clips focusing particularly on the underlying skills required for listening and attending which were identified as including the detection of sound, followed by discrimination – not just of individual sounds but as occurring in running speech – identifying sounds, memory and understanding of meaning and context. As Teachers of the Deaf we need to be clearly identifying, monitoring and assessing these skills.

A number of assessment tools were also examined and evaluated. An example of the results from the Reynell Developmental Language Scales was used to emphasise the importance of ‘stepping back’ and examining closely how the results indicate underlying causes as well as surface difficulties. This then allows us to identify key areas for development and
suitable strategies to ‘scaffold’ support whilst still encouraging independence.

Trish provided an interesting and thought-provoking session.

**Zainab Patel; Apple Regional Training Centre Manager: Reaching All Learners with iBooks**

Zainab Patel gave a fantastic presentation. Initially guiding us through the accessibility functions on iPads, such as the speech reader and subtitle functions, she moved on to the fabulous ways iBooks can be used to support children and young people with a hearing impairment. The Apple Centre together with Essa Academy, Bolton, have taken various topics such as The Vikings, An Orchestra or The Respiratory System and turned them into books with a wonderfully ‘techy’ twist. Each iBook has functions that can make learning fun and focused for the individual. Each page contains ‘extras’ such as more detailed photos, video clips or sound clips.

Zainab led us on to a brief discussion about using iTunesU courses to create your own digital library. For example, the Early Years Specialists in Bolton are creating an animal sounds iBook, so one page might contain a picture of a dog and a photograph, its sound representation (woof woof), a video clip of a dog barking and an opportunity for the child to record themselves making that sound. The iTunesU courses enable you to set the targets you want to address with each particular book, for each individual pupil and then provides evidence to indicate whether these have been met. Zainab really enjoyed speaking to us and would love the opportunity to support you in your iPad endeavours, zainab.patel@essafoundation.co.uk

**Michele Eaton; Head of Tameside Sensory Support Service: Brainstorming EAL Assessment**

This group shared some of the issues they have encountered in relation to supporting and assessing children who have English as an additional language (EAL).

Initially, Michele shared her own experiences within Tameside. They had found that assessments are presented in English and there is no equivalent in the child’s home language so that teachers can sometimes assume the child has a lower ability than is the case. They had used a support worker or Teaching Assistant to interpret but there were disadvantages to this. The lack of access to suitable assessment means that it is difficult to identify progress and when no apparent progress is made, it isn’t easy to pinpoint the next steps and evaluate intervention. It is also difficult to assess speech and language in the child’s home language. Another issue is the assessment of whether children are wearing their hearing aids consistently or at all.

Then four smaller groups discussed their personal experiences and shared strategies that worked well. During the plenary the groups described a range of ideas to support the inclusion of EAL learners. However, it was agreed by all that the following were the most important aspects to consider before any formal assessment can take place.

- History and aetiology
- Meeting the families and finding out as much background information as possible
- Respecting the cultural lifestyle of the family
- Using resources that stimulate and engage the pupil
- Building up a relationship of trust with the pupil
- Using our specialist skills effectively.

The group felt an hour had not been enough and they would have liked opportunities to explore this further.

The evaluations of the day were overwhelmingly positive about the venue, speakers and the range of workshops. Following the success of the day, the committee has booked the Textile Centre for the 2017 study day which will be held on Wednesday 8th November. Once again the topic for the day will be determined by the suggestions of those who attended this year and the committee is looking forward to the continued success of the BATOD North study days.

Trish Cope is Secretary of BATOD North, a former NEC member and Education consultant in deaf education.
Setting up a Roger ‘SubNet’

James Mander takes you through the ‘what, where, when and how?’ of setting up a subnet in a classroom

The Roger transmitter and receiver wireless system from Phonak is being used in schools in the UK. Within the Roger Inspiro and Roger TouchScreen transmitters there is the facility to create a ‘subnet’ with a student or students. A subnet can be best described as a sub communication network that temporarily breaks away from the main Multi Talker Network (MTN).

In diagram 1, the MTN is working as the main teacher’s voice is broadcast wirelessly to the students wearing their Roger receivers with the teaching assistants (TA) contributing to the lesson.

In diagram 2 the subnet is activated and a separate communication corridor to an individual student or students is established. This can be useful during the parts of a lesson when the TA needs specifically to speak to a child. This subnet ensures that individual instructions, commands or comments are heard only by that child rather than rest of the class students under the MTN. If required for small group work another child wearing receivers can also be added.

At the end of the subnet session the child and the TA re-join the MTN under the main teacher.

Points of note
- Subnets can work with a mixture of Roger transmitters i.e. Roger Inspiro working with a Roger TouchScreen
- The soundfield is not affected by a subnet.
- Multiple subnets can be created in one classroom.
- If there are any issues use the Roger Upgrader software to check that the transmitters have the latest firmware.

Set Up
Setting up a subnet with Roger Inspiro
A For the TA’s Inspiro assign a subnet key function on the menu screen; to simplify follow OK/Settings/Config/Left SoftKey/. Select the Subnet/EndSub function and press. Press the return key to go back to main menu.

B To create a MTN, use the main teacher’s Inspiro to connect to all the Roger receivers and transmitters in the classroom. Remember to press Connect within
10 cm of the Roger unit you wish to join in the MTN.

C To create your subnet between the TA and the individual student(s), move close to the child’s receiver(s), holding the Roger Inspiro within 10 cm of the receiver, and press the Subnet softkey followed by the Connect button. The screen will confirm connection and check with the child that the subnet is working.

Press ‘Connect’ again with the second receiver on the bilateral user or with another child’s receiver(s) that needs to join the small group.

D To end the subnet session move within 10cm of a receiver and press the EndSub left softkey followed by Connect. Then press Connect to all the other receivers under that subnet. (By pressing ‘Connect’ button the child is re-joining the MTN.) Check with the child that s/he is listening to the teacher.

E Remove any MTN setting and start new – press OK/Network/Create new network; confirm with Yes.

An optional feature is to change priority talking between the main teacher and TA. Press OK/Settings/Modes/MTN mode/ Equal or Primary Talker.

Setting up subnet with Roger TouchScreen

1 To create a MTN by using the main teacher’s TouchScreen press Network followed by Connect to all the Roger receivers and transmitters in the classroom.

2 To create a subnet between the TA and the individual student(s) move within 10 cm of the child’s receiver(s) holding the Roger TouchScreen and tap the SubNet left softkey followed by Connect. The screen will confirm connection and check with the child that the subnet is working.

Repeat for both receivers if there is a bilateral child. If required repeat again for another child who you want to join the subnet.

3 To end the subnet session move within 10cm of the student’s receiver(s), tap Network and then tap Connect. Press Connect with all the other receivers under that subnet. (By pressing ‘Connect’ button the child is re-joining the MTN). Check with the child that he/she is listening to the teacher.

4 To remove any MTN setting and start a new one – locate NewNet icon, tap NewNet and confirm with Yes.

As before, an optional feature is to change priority talking between the main teacher and TA. Press Settings/Network Mode/Primary or Equal Talker.

James Mander is a Clinical Audiologist with the Ewing Foundation.

Please contact me with your experiences of the subnet as I intend to write a follow up article and expand this subject further. jamesm@ewing-foundation.org.uk

Telephone: 07939 669653

I wish to acknowledge Peta Fain for her assistance with this article.
Introduction
Oxfordshire Special Educational Needs Support Service (SENSS) is a countywide teaching and advisory support service for children and young people. As Post-16 Coordinator for the Sensory Impairment Team, I lead the team that supports young people with sensory impairment attending colleges across Oxfordshire. The team works in partnership with schools, colleges and local training providers to secure good outcomes and a positive future for children and young people with sensory impairment.

I am a passionate believer that all young people with sensory impairment, eligible for the team’s involvement, should be supported by staff who have a great depth of knowledge and understanding of sensory impairment and its implications, not only within education but in the wider environment.

For many years, Communication Support Workers (CSWs) have played a key role in supporting children and young people in education. However, being able to recruit staff with the appropriate qualifications and experience has proved to be a major challenge in Oxfordshire in recent years and I believe this increasingly to be an issue nationally.

One of the workstreams from the 2015-16 NatSIP grant programme was to develop regional centres to provide training for staff to run the Supporting Teaching and Learning with Specialism for Deaf Learners qualification. NatSIP worked in partnership with Signature to pilot the course at three different sites with the aim of increasing the number of qualified CSWs nationally.

I was asked if I would be interested to be part of this pilot by running a course at a centre in Oxford. As part of my preparation for developing and delivering the course I visited two other centres which had recently piloted a similar course, collating information and talking with those responsible for delivering the course. These visits proved to be really informative.

SENSS has a long established partnership with ‘City of Oxford College’ (Activate Learning) in Oxford city centre and they agreed to the course being offered from the college in the new academic year. Together we advertised and promoted the course for 2015/16.

Course Requirements
Course requirements were:
- 4 GCSEs or equivalent, preferably including English and mathematics at minimum Grade C or equivalent
- An interest in communication and language

This qualification was listed as appropriate for learners aged 19+, suitable for those who work, or wish to work, in education, supporting learners with a hearing impairment.

To be a CSW, students need to have additional sign language qualifications (minimum BSL level 2). Whilst this course did not provide sign language training there were sign language courses available locally that students could join.

For SENSS, the primary reason for running the course was to stimulate an interest from students who might then be prepared to gain sign language skills, hence developing the skills set needed for the CSW role and increasing local capacity.

Course Content
The aim of the course was to provide learning support practitioners with the essential underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills in order to effectively fulfil the specialist role in the education sector. It is a level 3 qualification.

Signature provided course specifications which contained information about the six required units:
1. Preparing to Support Learning with Children and Young People
2. Work with others to Support Learning
3. Professional Practice
4. Communication Methods
5. Communication Support Strategies
6. Accessible English for Deaf and Deafblind People

Louise Morton shares her experience of developing and delivering a pilot course, accredited by Signature at the City of Oxford College, Oxford in 2015/16.
Assessment evidence for units 1-5 was portfolio based. Evidence for the portfolios took the form of:

- Written assignments
- Case studies
- Group presentations
- Photographs
- Developed and modified resources
- Observation reports by an assessor
- Specific tasks related to each unit
- Developing resources files.

Unit K318 was a one hour written exam and in addition to these units, each student was required to produce a reflective journal where they could record their observations, feelings and experiences. It was also an opportunity for them to reflect on information they had gleaned through the media and a suggested reading list.

A quote from one of the student’s reflective journals read:
“Today was a light bulb day where I felt like all our learning came together and I was putting these skills into practice all day … A really positive day for me!”

Another course requirement was the completion of a minimum of 40 hours work placement with deaf learners. Work placement opportunities included Primary, Secondary and Post-16 settings. Each student was observed twice during their work placement by an experienced practitioner.

There was a tremendous amount of support for this course from various avenues and I was able to call on a number of guest speakers, both from the City of Oxford College and from SENSS, who were able to share their knowledge and expertise. This meant that the students received a balanced, well-rounded and informative study programme.

Outcomes
The course was advertised in August 2015 with a start date of 16th September 2015.

There were ten successful applicants enrolled on the course with a range of experience and knowledge, some having never worked with deaf learners before.

With a lot of hard work and study, all ten students were successful in achieving the ‘Supporting Teaching and Learning with Specialism for Deaf Learners’ Level 3 qualification. As a result of their achievements, six are now working as fully qualified CSWs, two are working as Teaching Assistants in local schools, one has moved out of the area and one is still seeking employment.

At the end of the course I asked all the students to complete an overall evaluation in order for me to improve my teaching practice. The feedback was extremely encouraging and everyone stated that they had enjoyed the course and had gained a greater depth of skills and understanding as a result of it. They also made a few suggestions regarding future topics that could be discussed as well as offering comments about the written exam which I fed back to Signature.

On reflection
It was a real privilege to be involved in this pilot. I really enjoyed being able to draw on and share my own experiences of working with deaf learners as a CSW in the early part of my career. If I have the opportunity to deliver this course again, I would make some adjustments and deliver some aspects of the course in a different way. Overall, I feel it covered most of the key areas applicable to supporting deaf learners. I think some of the suggestions that came out of the evaluation are worth considering and implementing and I would endeavour to do that.

The SEND reforms have created a real opportunity for change. Education, Health and Care Plans are person-centred and focus on outcomes that deaf learners want to achieve. In order for this to happen there needs to be high quality of support available to them. Communication Support is a specialist role and needs to be given the recognition it deserves. It’s not just about being able to sign, although sign language at an appropriate proficiency is a vital skill that all CSWs should possess. It is about the detail: the language acquisition, barriers to learning, appreciating that much of what hearing people take for granted is often not accessible for those with a hearing impairment, plus many more areas that we had an opportunity to reflect on and discuss when we met during our weekly sessions.

The training of CSWs to a high standard should be a priority if we are going to secure the best outcomes for deaf learners who use sign language. I very much hope that this course will be adapted for the new educational landscape so that it can continue to contribute to ensuring that there is a highly knowledgeable and skilled cohort of Communication Support Workers available within the wider workforce.

Louise Morton is the Post-16 Co-ordinator for Sensory Impaired Students in Oxfordshire Colleges.
A musical journey of sound, music, and voice
helping little ones learn to listen and communicate

Children should begin developing communication skills during the very first year of their lives. For families with children experiencing hearing loss, BabyBeats activity by Advanced Bionics is a motivating, fun program to foster listening and communication development in natural settings, both before and after using hearing aids or receiving cochlear implants.*

Do you want to know more about BabyBeats? If you are a professional working with babies with hearing loss, and you are interested in supporting running a BabyBeats group with your families, please email us at spp.uk@advancedbionics.com

* The BabyBeats resource has been developed for children at the start of their hearing journey, including children wearing hearing aids and/or awaiting cochlear implants or those who have already received Advanced Bionics devices.
Decibels was founded as a charitable company limited by guarantee in April 2005 with the aim of promoting the arts-based education and training of deaf and disabled children and young people. The board of Decibels has recently undertaken a strategic review to set the charity’s course for the coming 10 years. Inspired by the work of Sir Ken Robinson, we are currently developing a programme of work which prioritises initiatives which encourage deaf and disabled people to be creative.

The Decibels Year of Sound began with a highly successful and creative event at the House of Lords and was hosted by Lord Michael Berkeley of Knighton CBE who is the Honorary President of Decibels.

Lord Berkeley gave a very welcoming address to a wide variety of different deaf and hearing people, including Stuart Whyte, the President of BATOD, and touched on the fact that he was very profoundly hard of hearing himself.

Ken Carter, the Founder and Executive Director and a former Teacher of the Deaf, took on the role of Master of Ceremonies for this event. He wasn’t sure whether he should address Michael as Lord Michael Berkeley of Knighton CBE or should it be ‘Berkeley’? When he was a teacher at the Oratory School when Michael was there 55 years ago, the staff were obliged to call pupils by their surname and not their first name. He posed the question about whether this had changed over half a century? He stressed that Decibels was to be more than the measurement of sound. It was about Music, the Arts, Film, TV, Drama and Performance and the use of innovative technologies for deaf and disabled people who are challenged by speech, language and communication.

The theme of the event was ‘Exploring sound’ in its many forms and in our respective lives. He stated that he loved the word ‘Exploration’. It mainly comes from having been born in Tavistock and going to school in Plymouth. He asked the audience whether anyone knew of any famous person from Tavistock? It was Sir Francis Drake who was the first person to circumnavigate the globe. What about Plymouth? Charles Darwin set sail in...
the ‘Beagle’ from Edgecombe and he later wrote *The Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection*. He said that his two exploratory heroes now are, firstly, Vinton Cerf who was the architect/inventor of the Internet and Deafax’s Honorary President. He is hard of hearing and his wife Sigrid has been profoundly deaf most of her life until she had a cochlear implant two years ago which now allows her to hear most things. Decibels hopes they will join us at future events.

His other hero is Michael Berkeley, an eminent composer, musician and broadcaster who is now profoundly deaf and following in Beethoven’s footsteps.

Paul Townson, the Chairperson of Decibels, then introduced Ruth Montgomery and mentioned his visit with his wife Thelma to Budapest (Hungary) to hear and watch her play so magnificently with a group of deaf and blind young musicians. He mentioned that Ruth had been sponsored by Decibels. Ruth then gave a very brief professional overview of what she was going to play accompanied by her brother Edward Montgomery, a piece which was written by Sir Lennox Berkeley who was the father of Michael Berkeley.

Ruth then introduced Eloise Garland who is a singer, musician, deaf and awareness raising activist who is in her final year at the City University, London. This was followed by Danny Lane who introduced himself and Music and the Deaf as well as the 4ORTE group consisting of Sean Chandler, Eloise Garland, Ruth Montgomery and himself. Their performance spoke for itself and was quite outstanding. They are truly great deaf role models.

Caroline Parker, MBE was the next deaf performer and performed a funny rendition of Wuthering Heights by Kate Bush. She livened up the guests and also the Peers at the House of Lords.

Caroline Parker MBE performing Wuthering Heights consisting of Sean Chandler, Eloise Garland, Ruth Montgomery and himself. Their performance spoke for itself and was quite outstanding. They are truly great deaf role models.

The next speaker Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq has great passion for Art so she communicated about Art and Music for the audience and how she wants to work more closely with Ruth Montgomery and other deaf musicians.

The BA (Hons) TAEDS (Theatre Arts Education & Deaf Studies) Board of Studies course at the Institute of Alice Taylor and Rachel Merry performed two Shakespeare monologues.
Education, University of Reading was well represented. Ilan Dwek, who is an outstanding Lecturer in Signed Theatre on the course and is deaf himself, introduced two of his third year students, Alice Taylor and Rachel Merry to perform two ‘Monologues of Shakespeare’. Alice performed as Margaret from Richard III – and was voiced by Rachel; and Rachel performed as Tamora from Titus Andronicus – voiced by Alice. They received rave reviews for their respective performances and helped to celebrate Shakespeare’s 400th Anniversary in style.

Helen Lansdown was then introduced. She is the CEO of Deafax and a former English Graduate of Reading University. She has gone on to lead Deafax – www.deafax.org – into some exciting and ground-breaking areas of technology and deafness. Her latest initiative is Signly which has enormous potential and delivers smart signed content directly to the user’s mobile device. Guests were invited to check out Signly on a number of social media outlets eg Facebook.

Ken Carter wound up the event by thanking Michael Berkeley for hosting this memorable event, all the House of Lords staff, speakers, performers, interpreters (Sheryl Gale, Keren Seabrook and Phillipa Henderson who were first class) guests plus Riccardo Mancuso, Karen McCrory, Polly Goodwin (Lord Colin Low’s Parliamentary Assistant) and especially Debbie Flory who did a great job on the administration side of this historical celebration of Decibels Year of Sound.

For more information about Decibels, please contact Ken Carter at Room 119, Building LO 24, Learning Hub, Institute of Education, University of Reading, London Road, Reading, Berkshire, UK RG1 5AQ. Work tel. 0118 931 3240, Home Tel. 01491 576281 ken.carter@decibels.org.uk, www.decibels.org.uk

Ken Carter is the Founder and Executive Director of Decibels.

“On behalf of Niamh, Rachael and myself, we would like to thank you profusely for your invitation for us to come to the event today. We all had a wonderful time and were so interested to meet the friends of Decibels and also to hear some stories about yourself from some of your friends too! We really cannot thank you enough for a fabulous day out and also pass on our thanks to Lord Michael Berkeley. Also, please pass on our congratulations to all of the performers. The music was beautiful and we felt that the Shakespearean monologues were particularly powerful with the signing and words combined. A definite highlight for us though was the performance of Wuthering Heights; very funny and we had never seen anything like it before!”

Aiyana Tandon, Niamh Green & Rachel Martin – Leighton Park School in Reading
My journey began, a little like Charlie in ‘Charlie and the Chocolate Factory’, when I won a Golden Ticket.

My Mr. Willy Wonka, however, was Phonak’s very own Tony Murphy and the prize was to see round, not a chocolate factory, but an entirely different kind of factory, certainly less fattening – Phonak UK in Warrington.

Some five years ago, I attended one of Phonak’s Focus Days. At the end of the day, there was a prize draw. Amazingly, I, who never win anything, won the ‘Golden Prize’. This generous prize gave me free flights, an overnight stay, a bottle of champagne and a visit to Phonak’s factory where the hearing systems were made.

Now I have to confess that if it had been to a chocolate factory, I would have booked the next available flight. However, I decided to hold off to see if I could combine the trip with something else. Some weeks later, I noticed that the Ear Foundation organised courses in Phonak’s building, metres from Tony’s desk. The course that had jumped from the page was on ‘Theory of Mind and the pragmatics of language’ to be delivered by Lyndsey Allen who I later discovered to be an Auditory Verbal Therapist, something I had never heard of. Before too long, I was winging my way, courtesy of Phonak, to Manchester and I was collected at the airport by a driver from Phonak in a very smart car, so kindly organised by Tony.

Little did I know that this course would start to sow the seeds in my mind that would begin a new journey for me. I had never heard of ‘Theory of Mind’ and the day was wonderful – so informative – and I began to realise I needed to update my training. It is so hard to get people to come to NI because of so many funding issues. I learnt so much from this one day that when I returned home, I tried hard (unsuccessfully) to request funding to be able to bring Lyndsey Allen over to NI to deliver the same training to my colleagues.

I have been head of a service since 2005 and gradually over the past 11 years it has become harder and harder. The constant and draining staffing problems have worsened rather than improved and the time for me to spend doing what I truly love (working with deaf children) had gradually been eroded. I tried several times to withdraw from being in the Head position but I was told each time that the choice I had was to either resign completely or stay on in the position of HoS.

Then just over two years ago, the subject of AVT was raised again, this time by some of the families I see. I told them that I understood that it was really the same as I have been doing with them but it did begin again to make me think about it all. I also began to feel more and more disheartened with what I was doing and so I decided to resign my post and just hope and pray that something would turn up so that I could continue to work in some way with deaf children. I set my resignation date for October 2014. At the same time, AVT came up again with various families and I contacted Louise Honck from AVUK who was coming over to NI regularly to deliver therapy here. In July 2014, we arranged to meet in a small café at the airport before she flew out again. Louise’s enthusiasm, professionalism, incredible knowledge and skills were so evident even in that short meeting over a coffee that I became envious of what she had. ‘This is what I would love to do when I finish in October’ was going through my mind and I began to make plans. I realised that over the years with all the progress that has been made with hearing aids and cochlear implants including all the research that has been carried out on the brain, I had simply not caught up. This is what I wanted.

As I sat there, however, little did I realise that within a very short time, a matter of weeks, while away on holiday in Venice, all my future plans would be on hold and I would be lying in a hospital bed having emergency surgery for a brain haemorrhage. When I returned to Northern Ireland after some weeks, it was in a wheelchair, as weak as water – and plans now changed to the more mundane – how I was going to begin to get back on my feet and well again. My manager called to say the resignation was not going to happen as I needed to be in good health to be able to finalise my arrangements.

Thankfully, my health returned quite quickly and within six months I went back to work albeit very slowly and I also began to re-think my future. Maybe I was too ambitious to be thinking of AVT – I should just keep doing what I knew and just go towards the end of my career without giving myself any more to do. So AVT was dismissed from my mind and I just worked on...

But then three things happened – firstly, as my brain repaired and my health returned, I became incredibly
thankful for my health and to God. With a new look at life, through changed eyes, I became aware that most days I was thinking that life is for living and enjoying to the full as well as following one’s true passion in life, not putting up with second best. My wonderful husband gave me a picture of a small boat and underneath was a quote from Mark Twain – “In twenty years’ time, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the things you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Secondly, I visited a family who told me they had paid a considerable sum of money for a Skype session with AVT. However, it was her next comment that left me asking myself questions – she turned to me and said ‘And do you know, it was worth every penny?!’

What was she learning that I was not already giving her? I felt so many emotions – upset, annoyed, greatly offended and very, very curious. What was I not doing?

Then thirdly, I heard Part 1 training in AVT was coming to Dublin. My first thought was – yes! My second thought was – no! I don’t think I should take on anything when I am still recovering and, at times, struggling with fatigue.

But with all that just happened, I could not let it pass and I applied to attend Part 1.

Part 1 was wonderful and actually helped my fatigue because it gave me so much joy – six months of a fantastic combination of theory and practical – wonderful teachers and mentors in Louise and Frances Clark who were both so professional yet encouraging and most of all, inspiring. The one thing they ask when you do it – you must go in prepared and willing to think through and possibly change what you are doing. In February of this year, I then decided the time had come and I would resign (again!) as HoS and do AVT full time. It is expensive to do AVT Part 2 training and I was so thankful that this was made possible by the bursary scheme set up by AVUK and funded by Ovingdean Hall Foundation. I simply needed to apply. What a fantastic resource!

I have now left the Education Authority (this time, I HAVE left!). I greatly miss my wonderful colleagues and friends both in my team (especially in the team) and across NI but I am also excited about the next stage. I am purposely trying not to advertise myself as I am so very anxious not to step on anyone’s toes or to upset any of my colleagues but word of mouth spreads and some parents have contacted me to ask me to take them on. Uppermost in my mind is how I will use AVT to support my ToD colleagues in what they already do so effectively. Anything that I do will be to support their work (and this I will be making very clear to any families I see) and that this is collaborative working with their ToD and not me off on a tangent. AVT is nothing if it is not collaborative. If we can work together to help each other to enrich the lives of the deaf children we work with and if language develops and the gap closes and parents are guided in the way they want and need, as a result of all of us working together, it will be a job well done.

All in all, I can now look back on those dark days in the hospital in Venice with thankfulness. Life is for living. And enjoying to the full. And following your passion.

Soon after I finished as HoS, I contacted Paul Simpson and I told him that I have now left the Education Authority but that I intend to stay on as a BATOD member. After the many years as a ToD, BATOD NI as a whole, the committee here in NI and BATOD in England have been a tower of strength, knowledge, support and a guiding light for me. I remember 25 years ago, as a newly appointed, terrified Peri in what was then the Southern Board going along to the BATOD NI meetings and watching with awe all the Teachers of the Deaf there and wondering if I would ever rise to their great heights of knowledge and experience. And then as a HoS, I found just being there, learning new things and even chatting over a coffee meant I had that lifeline when I wondered what has possessed me to apply for the HoS post! The few years I was Northern Ireland representative going across to BATOD NEC for the meetings were so helpful to me, giving me a great deal of information as well as learning new ways of doing things. Rebecca Millar and Mary Gordon are still tirelessly going across to BATOD NEC, catching flights at unearthly hours, and despite their work and other commitments they continue to be a valuable link with the mainland for us all. Janice McKillop from my team bravely stepped forward a few years ago to take her turn as Chair and she did such a good job that I felt proud of her for being in my team. The committee meet here regularly to plan and sometimes it can be so discouraging for them when people don’t turn up. There have been a few years now when attendance has been very low and it has been hard to find a willing Chairperson.

I’ve come to realise that BATOD has always been a close-knit community both here in Northern Ireland and in England and it is vital for Teachers of the Deaf here to maintain that. From my point of view, I will still need them in the next part of my journey. And Paul Simpson has been such a wonderful source of wisdom and starting point to all my questions and enquiries. I have a nickname for him – to me he is the Fount of all Knowledge so I just call him the Fount. He says that puts him under pressure but he has never yet failed me!! Paul, I will still need you to be there for me in the coming years.

I will always be grateful to BATOD for the invaluable input it has been for my career.

Rosemary Gardner is a Teacher of the Deaf and trainee Auditory Verbal Therapist (in August 2016 she retired as Head of Service in the Southern Region of Northern Ireland’s Education Authority).
Redcat Access Soundfield System
- Simple-to-use solutions right out of the box
- Portable and ultra-light
- Inclusive - all students naturally hear their teacher's voice clearly and audibly
- No installation and easy set up

955 Access Classroom Amplifier
- Digital FM delivers superior voice clarity without dropout or interference
- 4 speakers evenly distribute high-quality audio
- Easy and quick installation
- Flexible solution to grow with your needs
The power of signing in poor rural communities

Isobel Blakeley shares her delight in meeting deaf young people who live far from our modern resources but whose lives are transformed by simple sign language.

Did you see the Unreported World BBC documentary in December 2014, ‘Patrick Speaks’? Here is the youtube link if you didn’t:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHfC6jqBhkk

This BBC4 documentary gave us a momentary glimpse into another world, far away from the hearing aids, cochlear implants, Speech and Language Therapists, Teachers of the Deaf etc world in which we live. It is humbling to realise that so many deaf children in our modern world have no access to any of this support.

Signing classes in Patongo, northern Uganda, have begun to transform the lives of some of these people, children and adults too.

I will never forget the look on Patrick’s face when he attended his first signing class, and realised that he could understand what other people were thinking. There were others in the group too, old people and children learning alongside each other, emerging out of the social isolation experienced by many deaf people in our world.

When I was in Africa in January 2015, I had the privilege of meeting Patrick and a support worker, Richy, with whom I am still in contact. Here is the latest!

(If you are interested in reading about my meeting with Patrick in January 2015, then you can access my Blog – iblakeley.wordpress.com – one thing leads to another – Part 2.)

Since then, there have been two classes running weekly two-hour sessions in Patongo. Each class has around 120 students – and there are now 240 students waiting to hear if they have passed their first exam! These students are a mixture of hearing-impaired people and local family and friends, many of whom have to walk miles in the inclement weather to reach the classes.

Who pays for these classes I asked? Well, not the students! This is a poor rural community where spare money for recreational activities just does not exist. The two teachers are paid by the UNAD (Ugandan National Association for
the Deaf). So who finances this group I asked? The Finnish Association of the Deaf – thank you Finland!

People in the UK may wonder if there is a trend moving away from sign language use, because of the availability of such good hearing equipment and newborn hearing screening making this available to children from birth. But this is not the case for the vast majority of deaf people in the world. Most have no access to such technology and there is a desperate need for people to come to them to teach them their local/national sign language.

My contact in Uganda tells me that the UNAD is stopping the classes in Patongo, but he is pleading with them to continue for at least another four months.

I expect UNAD is aware of other areas in Uganda that need the service, and the butter can only be spread thinly.

But what a difference a little signing can make to the life of someone like Patrick.

Patrick is now 17 and a young man. Richy has recently bought him eight piglets – out of his own pocket (which doesn’t contain much!) – to help him get started on his own. I wonder if anyone would like to contribute to helping Patrick build a pigsty, or buy some goats? Please contact me on iblakeley50@gmail.com for more information.

Isobel Blakeley is a retired Teacher of the Deaf.

STOP PRESS: Unfortunately, since writing this article, my contact in Uganda has relocated. I am researching an alternative. I need to find someone I can trust who can also help Patrick to manage money, as he has no experience of this. I am hoping to work with a UK charity who has personnel in this part of Uganda.

Nothing is ever simple or quick in Africa!
Imagine if...

- you could find summaries of the latest research on your concerns about how to effectively teach all pupils
- researchers worked with teachers to produce summaries giving relevant and accessible advice
- these research summaries were in a searchable database, regularly updated by networks of academics and practitioners working together.

This is the vision of MESH – the Mapping Education Specialist knowHow initiative (www.meshguides.org). MESH is run by teachers/educators to provide access to evidence for you to use to underpin decisions you make about how to teach. MESH seeks to have impact by joining theory and practice. At a time when ever-greater importance is being placed on evidence-based educational practices, MESHGuides have the potential to be a key tool in fulfilling that role in deaf education.

BATOD Foundation (BF) is leading the way for Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) to access unbiased information on a range of topics with the exciting development of MESHGuides (MGs). These web-based sources of information are available all day, everyday – 24/7. We are not advocating ToDs should work through the night but this is an opportunity to have the information readily available when an idea or question pops into your head or you need some inspiration. There is no need to spend hours on a Google search – the information is already collected together for you. MGs allow you to explore and carry out personal CPD where and when you are able to and at your own pace. As practitioners, you can offer your own experiences, case studies and ‘what works’ for inclusion so that ideas and strategies can be shared with others and benefit you too.

One of the challenges that BF faced was making ToDs aware of the recent research – especially in deaf education – that could affect their teaching practices. Although the two Study Day conferences looking at acoustics and assistive listening devices attracted good attendances, actually reaching out to the majority of ToDs and associated professionals was a big challenge. Budget, time restraints and personal/family demands meant that many found freeing themselves up to join in CPD opportunities limited their involvement in what was on offer. Often using the huge range of current internet and IT possibilities takes up too much time and the breadth of information is distracting. A MG that collected unbiased information and research and evidence of good practice into one place, accessible whenever it was needed, could save professional colleagues hours of tedious reading, following trails and collating data. It seemed to BF that MESHGuides could be the way forward and so ‘MESHGuides: Information at your Fingertips 24/7’ became the development pathway to meeting the BF objective of making ToDs and associated professionals aware and able to tap into up-to-date information and opportunities via translation research (research into practice).

Early in 2016 The Big Lottery Fund accepted a proposal from BF to provide a series of workshop/study days around the country introducing professionals in deaf education to MESHGuides and assessing the interest in producing MGs focused on deaf education. Six days were organised in Nottingham, Exeter, Newcastle, Warrington, Birmingham and Brighton – hopefully reducing travel requirements and allowing ‘local’ ToDs the chance to come along to learn more and offer their opinions about how useful this concept of MESHGuides actually would be to them and their colleagues.

MESHGuides (MGs) are subject and topic led so it is easy to look at specific areas and see how and why classroom practitioners are working in ways that may be new to you. Case studies demonstrate successful practice which could be replicated and so provide classroom practitioners with positive arguments for change. What did our delegates think? Could these be useful to those working to improve the life chances of deaf children and young people? Would MESHGuides enhance the work skills of ToDs and Educational Audiologists?

Overwhelmingly the delegates thought that attending the workshops would be very influential on their
They listed a range of possibilities amongst the reasons why they felt they would be using MGs and made offers to draw deaf education based MGs together:

- impact on EPB? (Evidence Based Practice)
- knowing the resource is there to expand on current practice
- show evidence to others – support advice given to others
- share with nurseries and mainstream schools
- use MGs in daily practice
- use for CPD for others
- use in training
- information source for colleagues/signposting
- collected advice/information will save frustration and time
- implication as a resource to be integrated into working practice
- information seeking – personal research and information

- will be feeding back to my team about the potential of this idea
- ability to provide resources and information on evidence based research – links with others
- will use as basis of research
- an additional resource for training, planning and research
- possible future contribution – MSc research
- write more informed and confident guidelines and be able to reference well.

During each course delegates discovered the current on-line MESHGuide range and were introduced to 'How to build a MESHGuide'. Several delegates actually began to collect ideas to build their own MGs. Amongst the proposed topics were:

Assessment, FM and listening devices, Early communication, Glue ear, Cochlear Implants, Deafness and Autism, SEND legislation, Deaf children in mainstream settings, Teaching grammar to deaf children and Cued Speech.

The final study day, hosted by Hamilton Lodge School and College, focused on autism and deafness. Joyce Sewell-Rutter organises the Deafness and Autism Special Interest Group and she had encouraged colleagues with experience in the autism and deafness arena to join in building a MESHGuide. We developed the outline structure as a table to be seen on this page.

Ann Underwood was BATOD President (2008-2010) and is the Chair of Trustees, BATOD Foundation. Joyce Sewell-Rutter is Ewing Foundation Consultant and facilitator for the BATOD Deafness and Autism SIG.
The National Theatre’s digital initiative: *On Demand. In Schools* which offers free, acclaimed curriculum-linked productions to primary and secondary schools across the country is now fully captioned by Stagetext.

The *On Demand. In Schools* programme enables every primary and secondary school in the UK to access world-class theatre on demand in the classroom. With the addition of captions by Stagetext, deaf pupils now have equal access to the initiative.

Stagetext is a registered charity dedicated to giving deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people equal access to the arts. They achieve this through providing captioning and live subtitling in theatres and cultural venues, as well as captioning full-length recorded productions such as National Theatre Live through their Digital department.

In recent years, Stagetext has noticed the increasing demand for captioned live streamed theatrical performances, as well as the need for subtitled online trailers for productions and exhibitions. Stagetext has worked in partnership with the National Theatre on making a wide range of their digital content accessible through captioning including encore performances of National Theatre Live’s Hamlet and The Audience.

Captions aren’t only useful to deaf audiences. Particularly in the classroom, they can also assist pupils who have English as an additional language, plus seeing the words for those who are studying a particular text can deepen engagement with the work.

The National Theatre is committed to making the very best theatre and sharing it with as many people as possible. Their work is seen on tour throughout the UK, in London’s West End, internationally (including on Broadway) and in collaborations and co-productions with theatres across the country.

Over 2,200 secondary schools have signed up to the free streaming service, *On Demand. In Schools* Secondary, since its launch in September 2015 and the National Theatre has now launched *On Demand. In Schools* Primary with Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic adventure Treasure Island, being the first primary age production (suitable for KS2) to be made available.

Available exclusively to UK schools, comprehensive learning resources produced by teachers and leading artists support each play; teachers can show the full production or watch key scenes over a number of lessons. No special software is needed to access the captioned plays, simply an internet connection, plus streams can be viewed on multiple devices (screens, laptops or tablets).

Sir Lenny Henry said of the *On Demand. In Schools* programme: ‘The National Theatre was founded with a mission to educate as well as entertain and many of us working in the arts can remember an experience at school – a theatre visit, an inspiring teacher, meeting a professional artist – as the ignition to their career or enduring passion for the art form. If we can engage school children in the arts from an early age, the evidence tells us that they will have an interest in, and desire to engage in, the arts throughout their lifetime.’

Melanie Sharpe CEO of Stagetext said: ‘It is fantastic that deaf children and young people can now enjoy high-quality theatre productions in the classroom. We are delighted to be working with the National Theatre to champion equality of access to the arts.’

Alice King-Farlow, Director of Learning at the National Theatre, said: ‘We are delighted to confirm that the *On Demand. In Schools* content is fully captioned by Stagetext, enabling deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing pupils and teachers to access the initiative. Captioning forms an important part of our long-term commitment to sharing our work with as many people as possible and being accessible to everybody.’

To learn more or to sign up to *On Demand. In Schools*, visit the National Theatre website at schools.nationaltheatre.org.uk

To learn more about captioned and live subtitled events near you, visit the Stagetext website at www.stagetext.org

Adam Werlinger is Digital Programme Manager at Stagetext.
On 21st and 22nd October, practitioners working with deaf children and young people from all over Europe met for the FEAPDA Congress in the impressive surroundings of the newly built Centre de Logopédie in Luxembourg. The key role of FEAPDA is to provide on-going training, to support research into the education of deaf children and to share good practice across Europe and the congress is a key element of this work.

More than 150 delegates were welcomed by several dignitaries from Luxembourg, including the president of the Luxembourg parliament and the minister for education, childhood and youth.

Entitled “Inclusion and what it means for deaf education”, the congress programme included a number of keynote presentations, research papers and workshops led by academics and practitioners from across Europe. The sessions provided a valuable insight into practice in many countries, addressing a range of aspects of deaf education, from many different perspectives.

A common theme of the speakers was the changing face of deaf education, challenging the delegates to reflect on what these changes mean in the way that we adapt our practice to work with deaf children and young people.

Thomas Kaul from Germany spoke about his research into inclusion and how this has influenced the development of deaf education. In Germany they no longer talk of inclusion but of joint corporate learning. The speaker reflected on what this means in terms of education legislation, school structures and education practice. He emphasised the crucial role of Teachers of the Deaf as increasing numbers of deaf pupils are in mainstream settings and highlighted the challenges we will face such as funding, training and careful planning of provision by those who have appropriate expertise.

Guido Lichtert continued this theme in his presentation focusing on the importance of specialist knowledge and training on outcomes for deaf children and the need for continuing professional development. He described a research project in Belgium which has looked at how specialist staff require different competencies in different settings – mainstream or special. His overall message was one that many members of BATOD will appreciate - that the more experienced and specialist staff become, the more aware they are of the need for specialist support and understanding.

Guido and his fellow researchers picked up this theme in a later workshop. The team is funded by the EU iCARE project and brings together a range of expertise from colleagues across Europe who undertake research and training to improve children’s auditory rehabilitation in areas such as acoustics, communication and accessibility and integration. As many members of the research groups are not specialists in deaf education or deafness per se, Guido and his colleagues are preparing training to raise specialist knowledge and expertise, to be delivered largely through an elearning approach.

Jackie Salter from Leeds University proposed that the role of the Teacher of the Deaf in the future should be part of a collaborative partnership, as she presented some of her research findings, considering the role of the Teacher of the Deaf in mainstream secondary settings.

One aspect of Jackie’s work was the collation of views of TAs, an area that is unrepresented in much research. She found that the TAs’ key focus was to support the pupils’ acquisition and retention of information, to ensure they follow instructions and complete tasks. TAs identified a lack of knowledge and understanding in mainstream teachers about the needs of deaf children – the technology and the implications of deafness. Importantly, they also recognised the significance of the assumptions teachers make about a deaf child’s abilities, for example the low expectation they may have about cognitive ability based on their linguistic ability.

Jackie’s research demonstrated the limited role of the Teacher of the Deaf in these situations. The ToD will often meet with the SENCo, and there is often a strong
relationship between the ToD, TA and pupil but there may be little specialist input into subject lessons.

Jackie challenged us to think again about the role of the ToD. To ensure the specialist knowledge is in the classroom, on a daily basis, she proposed a new model of working with the Teacher of the Deaf working with the teacher and the deaf pupil rather than directly with the TA. Links with the TA will remain important but the emphasis must be on the ToD/teacher/pupil triangle to promote collaborative rather than advisory practice (see diagram). This will require the management of schools to recognise the need for specialist knowledge across the school – not only in the classroom.

Researchers from Germany and Switzerland presented a joint project examining the state of bilingual education in inclusive settings across Europe. The research confirmed that there is a significant variation in the way that bilingual approaches are implemented across Europe and in attitudes to bilingualism, irrespective of the legal status of the approach. The researchers found that the key barriers to successful implementation continue to be negative attitudes and a lack of appropriately qualified and skilled staff, particularly in inclusive settings.

The research concluded that to improve effectiveness of bilingual education, it would be necessary to secure appropriate legal and political backing, to improve training to specialist staff, and to ensure sufficient funding and resources are available. The next steps also would be to examine the outcomes for children and young people identified through this approach but analysis of outcomes did not form part of this research project.

In her presentation about training Teachers of the Deaf in the 21st century, Wendy McCracken from Manchester University again picked up the theme of the importance of specialist staff in a changing education landscape.

At a time when there are more opportunities now for deaf children and their families than ever before, a Teacher of the Deaf must be an adaptable expert, ready to meet challenges and complexities. Teachers of the Deaf must not only have technical skills and knowledge. They must also be prepared to deal with situations where they feel uncomfortable, to “think outside of the box in an often messy and unpredictable world.” Teachers of the Deaf must be able to identify problems, analyse and theorise, think laterally, understand others’ points of view, be innovative and self-appraise.

So how do we do this? How do we train Teachers of the Deaf to translate research into practice? The foundation
Association business

for all Teachers of the Deaf must be the mandatory qualification. Through this training, Teachers of the Deaf must become experts in language, literacy, technology, communication, promoting mental health and well being, assessing individual needs and creating appropriate plans to develop each deaf child/young person. They must bring evidence to practice – not be influenced by politics but by clear evidence-based research outcomes, so that they can support families to make informed choices. They must also be reflective practitioners, able to consider their own performance and critically self-appraise.

ToDs spend the majority of their time with non-specialists, so they must have exceptional social skills and diplomacy, and be able to advocate and negotiate for the deaf children and families they support. They must have professional vision and be sensitive to the nuances of what other adults are saying and be able to explore solutions to problems raised.

The clear message throughout the presentation was the huge range of skills, knowledge and qualities we require as specialist teachers to support deaf children and their families. These skills can only be gained through the specialist qualification and on-going training and research. We must continue to aim high and believe that we can influence change but we must base our practice on evidence-based research.

On Friday afternoon and for much of Saturday, delegates had the opportunity to attend workshops, facilitated by researchers and practitioners from many countries, addressing diverse issues including technology, safeguarding, career guidance, emotional well being of deaf children and young people, supporting inclusive practice and assessment.

A very popular workshop was led by Leo de Raeve from Belgium. Leo echoed Wendy’s message, emphasising how practice has changed and must continue to change as technology develops and the needs of the children change and he reflected on a number of challenges facing deaf education in Belgium that we would recognise in the UK.

Research in Belgium confirms that with early detection, good intervention and use of technology the majority of deaf children can make good progress.

In Belgium, 94% of profoundly deaf children will have a cochlear implant, so teachers have to take into account the changing support needs of the deaf population. With early intervention and appropriate support many of these children are developing language parallel to that of hearing children, although deaf children still need support for higher level skills and more complex language and literacy.

The majority of deaf children are now in mainstream provision. However, in contrast to practice in the UK, many parents choose to send their children to special school in the early years with a view to transferring to mainstream at a later stage. As there are six schools for the deaf, all children can access a place if required. In each school pupils may receive a range of communication support as required and children also receive SLT and benefit from good acoustics. When children have developed good language skills, they then transfer to a mainstream setting – usually by secondary school. However, recent legislation and changes to
Association business

funding arrangements are now impacting on those deaf children who have made good progress – those who do well may no longer meet criteria for funded support.

In describing the system in Belgium, Leo used research to indicate how and why provision and placements are changing. Twenty years ago the majority of deaf children would have attended vocational training. Now a significant majority are in mainstream education following an academic education and achieving higher qualifications.

In order to meet the needs of these children, models of support must change. Staff must understand the technology and the linguistic and social needs of the deaf pupils. Opportunities must be found to bring deaf children together socially and classroom support must adapt. Previously implanted children had requested communication support, now they are requesting note takers rather than communicators. There are many trained interpreters yet there are not enough trained note takers.

Numbers in many special schools are reducing. Some schools are responding by providing outreach, so maintaining their specialism in deaf education. Others are diversifying, admitting pupils with other needs, so the expertise of Teachers of the Deaf may be lost or diluted in these areas. Special schools are an important source of training and development for Teachers of the Deaf. If there are no special schools for the deaf in future will peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf in Belgium learn their skills?

The first keynote speech on Saturday morning provided an update on medical and technical developments to support deaf children and young people. The presentation reminded delegates of the rapid evolution of technology and medical knowledge since the early days of implantation and of the range of options children and families now have, depending on the level and type of hearing loss.

The final keynote of the conference focused on classroom acoustics. Carsten Svensson stressed the importance of the design process in supporting people who would be using the building – understanding from the start the needs of the children in the school, how the rooms would be used and therefore the factors essential to creating an appropriate learning – and listening – environment. He reminded delegates of the effect of sound in the environment – the impact on children and on teachers and therefore the impact on learning.

The council closed with presentations to Paul and Guido as outgoing President and Vice President. It is clear from the evaluations and feedback throughout the weekend that the conference was very successful and that delegates very much appreciated the high-quality presentations and workshops and the opportunity to meet with colleagues from across Europe. Plans for the next congress will be discussed at the committee meeting in the Spring.

Council meeting

During the conference a short meeting of the council took place.

The meeting began with a presentation from John Harris, co-ordinator of HIPEN. HIPEN is an organisation which focuses on education and training as lifelong learning. It is a European network for professionals working with children and people with hearing impairment of all ages, linked to 14 countries across Europe with a strong membership in Eastern Europe. It is a network of institutions rather than of individuals and supports a wide range of projects. For example, this year they are looking at supporting deaf people from education into employment, career counselling and putting together an e-learning platform using the training and development the association and its partners have already developed.

It is important to develop and maintain links with HIPEN so that the organisations support each other and do not conflict or duplicate areas of work. There may in the future be opportunities to work together on projects. Future collaboration will be discussed further when Paul, Alison Weaver and John meet and will be followed up at the next committee meeting.

For further information about HIPEN please see the website: www.hipen.eu There is a link on the FEAPDA website.

At the council meeting in November changes to the membership and funding arrangements for FEAPDA were discussed, in order to open up membership of the federation, particularly in countries where there are no national organisations. At this council meeting those changes were formally agreed. The next steps will be to have an additional meeting to consider the practical implications of the changes and to amend the constitution.

This meeting also marked a significant change in the officers on the committee. Although the treasurer and the secretary agreed to stand for a further term, Guido Lichtert, the Vice-President, announced his resignation from the committee and Paul Simpson confirmed that he would stand down as President. Guido has been a member of the council since 1986 and has been an officer on the committee since 1997. He has been a committed supporter of the work of the federation and will be greatly missed.

Paul has worked with FEAPDA since 1985. He became President in 2003 and has worked hard during this period to develop the work of the federation, supporting a number of research projects and initiating change. He has overseen the renewal of the website, the changing of the format of the congress and proposed changes to membership. Fortunately, Paul has agreed to continue to remain on the committee as Vice-President. Alison Weaver was elected as the incoming President.

Alison Weaver is a former President of BATOD and the current President of FEAPDA.
Deaf children, the family and education

Sue Gregory continues her exploration of the history of deaf education. This time she focuses on family life and hopes to continue to attract contributions from members.

The next section of the deaf history website aims to reflect the changing nature and complexity of the school-family relationship during the period 1960-2010. In your work with families have you been aware of changes in the relationship between home and school during this time?

We will welcome accounts of individual families, but also of the efforts made by schools to involve and work with families. We would like to hear about successes and failures and what has been learnt. We will welcome reflections on the changes that have taken place and their consequences for families.

Clearly the support of the family is important for the development of children, both deaf and hearing, and for their progress in education. For deaf children, though there may be particular issues for some families who have had no experience with children who were born deaf or deafened in childhood. Also, deaf children may have particular educational needs. Traditionally the need for family support has been recognised and Teachers of the Deaf have often been involved with families from very early on in a child’s life. Also, some schools and services have set up schemes to encourage parents to be involved in their deaf child’s education. Yet little is written about the part that parents play, what they can do to help and support their child, and what schools expect of them.

The period covered by the history of deaf education website, 1960-2010, has been one of great change for parents as well as teachers and pupils. It is interesting to reflect on how schools and services have worked with parents during this time. Changes include the introduction of sign language in some schools with the involvement of more deaf people as teachers and classroom assistants, earlier and earlier diagnosis sometimes very soon after birth, and the changing technology including improved hearing aids and cochlear implants. General education changes have been relevant: the move to integration and inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, the introduction of the national curriculum, the literacy and numeracy programme, and increasing assessment through the development of SATs.

Throughout this period of change, parents will have been involved in many decisions about their deaf child’s education. They may have had to consider the best school placement for their child. They may have chosen a local school or felt that a more distant school, maybe involving residential placement, may have had more to offer their child. They may have had to fight to try to get the placement they felt to be best, not always with success. They may have wondered whether or not they should introduce signing and, if so, how they themselves would learn to sign. There may have been medical decisions to make, including allowing their child to have an operation for a cochlear implant. They may have felt overwhelmed by the new technology which has been introduced for deaf children. What advice and support have they had?

And of course, family life itself will have changed a great deal in this time. Family structure and relationships within families have undergone significant change, as have the various pressures of income and employment. Different parents will have had different aspirations and hopes for their children. Families will have differed in size and a deaf child may have had any number of brothers and sisters or none at all. They may have been the eldest, the youngest, somewhere in the middle or an only child. Their family may have lived in an area that provided the kind of support they wanted and needed but this may not have been so.

Most research on the education of deaf children has focused on the school, the various approaches to education and the achievements of deaf pupils. There have been only a few systematic studies of the impact of the family. Most of our understanding of this area has come from professionals’ own experiences and from the accounts of families describing their situation. A few biographies have been written and some are very revealing.

We hope you will consider making a contribution so the website will reflect the range of experiences of families, teachers and schools. Contributions can be long or short, between 200 and 1000 words. As always, if you have an idea for a contribution but would like to discuss it first, or get some initial feedback, please feel free to contact us at deafhistory@batod.org.uk

Contributions are needed before March 12th 2017.

Sue Gregory is the editor of the history section of the BATOD website.
Awards for BATOD members

Paul Simpson looks at the awards that are available to BATOD members

After several years of receiving no applications, the trustees of the Mary Grace Wilkins Travelling Scholarship have decided to close it in its current form and pass the remaining funds to BATOD.

The original criteria required the applicant to be a member of BATOD and to propose a research project which was not in any way connected to an award-bearing qualification, then submit an article which would be published in the association magazine as well as a detailed report for the NEC.

The members of the BATOD National Executive Council have decided that they still wish the money, now in BATOD’s account, to be used in similar ways but with looser criteria. Members are invited to write to the Steering Group (send the submission to me at exec@batod.org.uk) saying how they would spend up to £1000 on a project involving travel of some kind and with positive outcomes for deaf children. Once again we would require at least one article for the magazine to result from the project. The article would also appear on our website. We would usually award one such prize annually.

There are two other awards which are available to the membership but these are awarded by BATOD’s NEC and cannot be applied for.

The Eichholz Prize has been in existence for many years and has gone through several manifestations over the years. Originally it was for the best student undertaking the BATOD course to train Teachers of the Deaf. Nowadays, as there is no BATOD course, it is awarded following recommendations by the five UK course providers for outstanding (not just very good) students in the view of those course providers. It is possible to allocate more than one such prize per year.

It is the course provider who makes the proposal. Recipients of course have to be members of BATOD to qualify.

There is also an annual prize, which was instituted following the untimely death of a former NEC member, Peter Preston, for the best article on the subject of audiology in the previous year’s magazines written by a practitioner for practitioners.

Both the Eichholz Prize and the Peter Preston Award are worth £100.

Paul Simpson is BATOD National Executive Officer.
References to articles in the Assessment section

**Shaping practice, influencing change**

**Audiological assessment**

**Dynamic assessment**

Increase your skills
Check the BATOD website calendar for courses that expand your knowledge and skills as a ToD or audiologist.
Links to many of the provider websites.
www.batod.org.uk ★ EVENTS

Free to download
• General information
• Acoustics & Sound Field
• Equipment – in general
• Testing ★ Checking
www.batod.org.uk ★ resources ★ audiology
Full document visible and available if you are logged in to the members only area
Regulars

Audiology update

This page features innovations and discussions of what is happening in real-world educational audiology and gives readers the opportunity to highlight issues that they encounter in the workplace.

Update:

Whilst we hear a lot about the impact of technology in the home as well as at school or work for deaf people, the initial setting up can be a daunting prospect. During a recent radio aid fitting, the Ewing Foundation’s Clinical Audiologist was asked to visit the child’s home to set up a Roger Multimedia Hub so they would be able to have good access to the sound when watching television or using the gaming box.

Like most Smart TVs, the family’s LG model supported a SPDIF output. SPDIF is laser optical output protocol developed by Sony & Philips that works independently from the TV’s normal volume control. As the Roger Multimedia Hub only receives input from a RCA phono cable, an eSYNIC Digital to Audio Convertor (DAC) unit (costing around £10) was used between the TV and the media hub.

An optical cable was firmly inserted into the SPDIF socket on the back of the TV and the other end was inserted in the input side of the DAC box. The RCA cable was connected to the media hub from the DAC box output side. The DAC box and the media hub were switched on and the media hub paired to the child’s receiver.

At the end of the set-up, an unwanted clicking sound could be heard on the Roger system during the broadcast of Netflix and from a Blu-ray player. This problem was resolved by selecting ‘PCM only’ from the TV on-screen menu. (PCM stands for Pulse Code Modulation and it is an uncompressed digital audio rather than the default compressed digital audio.)

If you encounter problems with a television in a home or school setting that is linked to a radio aid media hub or a transmitter, explore the TV menu and check the ‘PCM only’ option. As TVs rapidly change there will always be a need to explore the on-screen menu options and this is a good starting point.

The child’s mother has since reported that, for the first time, her son is now enjoying all the nuances of TV comedy shows and films that otherwise he would have missed.

You say:

- A tricky one! Also, it depends on what you mean by ‘assertive’ – are you thinking of home-school contracts to support the school’s audiology policy? This could be difficult to enforce, especially if a Deaf family does not see the need for ‘listening experiences’ in the home.
- Home visits could help – using speech discrimination tests, listening to the TV and music with and without hearing aids to demonstrate the improved access their children can get to everyday family life.
- Deaf families might benefit from information from other Deaf families who advocate the use of hearing aids or have gone down the cochlear implant route to get their views on why they want to maximise their children’s hearing experiences.

The experts* say:

- This can be difficult – as you say, home culture needs to be respected, although your professional judgement may suggest that an alternative would improve outcomes for the child.
- Perhaps a child-led approach would be effective. If the child makes use of their hearing aids in school and can identify the benefits, perhaps they could explain to their parents (with your help) that there are some situations where they would prefer to wear them.
- A home visit to understand the family’s lifestyle would give you a clearer picture of how and when the child would benefit from wearing their aids and a chance to demonstrate their efficacy to the family. This could include integrating other technology eg to access music or games with their siblings.
- Can you arrange a coffee morning for families of children in your provision (arranging an interpreter if necessary) and lead a discussion of their children’s use of personal amplification outside of school?

A reader asks:

Can someone advise me on setting up a Roger TouchScreen with a Roger 11 receiver for use in school (Year 6) and at home, please?

If you can suggest a solution, or would like to pose a question for our readers and experts, please contact Stevie Mayhook: steviem@ewing-foundation.org.uk

* Information provided by members of the Ewing Foundation: www.ewing-foundation.org.uk in consultation with manufacturers/suppliers.
Please inform the National Executive Officer, Paul Simpson, if you know of any meetings where you feel representation on behalf of Teachers of the Deaf would be of benefit. Although there is no guarantee that BATOD would be able to attend every meeting, situations could be monitored and the interests of ToDs represented.

### BATOD was there representing you...

Between the NEC meetings, members of BATOD attend various meetings that are of particular interest to Teachers of the Deaf. This list is not exhaustive. Your representatives at the meetings listed included: Andrea Baker, David Canning, Sue Denny, Elizabeth Reed-Beadle, Paul Simpson, Carol Thomson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>External participants</th>
<th>Purpose of meeting</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>NDCS</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
<td>NDCS, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Manchester University</td>
<td>Conference arrangements</td>
<td>by Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>FLSE</td>
<td>National SEND Forum conference</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Communication Consortium</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
<td>The Angel, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NDCS</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
<td>NDCS, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NatSIP</td>
<td>Reference group</td>
<td>SENSE, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Manchester University</td>
<td>Conference arrangements</td>
<td>by Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>DESF</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
<td>NDCS, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>CRIDE</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
<td>Frank Barnes School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please inform the National Executive Officer, Paul Simpson, if you know of any meetings where you feel representation on behalf of Teachers of the Deaf would be of benefit. Although there is no guarantee that BATOD would be able to attend every meeting, situations could be monitored and the interests of ToDs represented.

### Obituary

We are very sorry to inform members of the death of Dr Bethan Davies, a ground-breaking paediatric audiological physician and a pioneer of multi-agency working.

An obituary can be found here on our website:

[The Association►Members congratulations and obituaries►Obituaries](http://www.batod.org.uk)

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**BATOD’s Birthday Cake**

Carol Thomson, our multi-talented Treasurer, baked this cake for the recent BATOD Scotland conference to celebrate BATOD’s 40th birthday.
### Abbreviations and acronyms used in this Magazine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABR</td>
<td>Auditory Brainstem Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Assessment of Comprehension and Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADOS</td>
<td>Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGM</td>
<td>Annual General Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASL</td>
<td>American Sign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVT</td>
<td>Auditory Verbal Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVUK</td>
<td>Auditory Verbal UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA (Hons)</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts (Honours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BATOD</td>
<td>British Association of Teachers of the Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BB93</td>
<td>Building Bulletin 93 (acoustics in schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BF</td>
<td>BATOD Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPhil</td>
<td>Bachelor of Philosophy (degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPVS</td>
<td>British Picture Vocabulary Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSL</td>
<td>British Sign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSL CDI</td>
<td>BSL Communicative Development Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRIDE</td>
<td>Consortium for Research into Deaf Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSW</td>
<td>Communication Support Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Dynamic Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Digital to Audio Converter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCAL</td>
<td>Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESF</td>
<td>Deaf Education Support Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIE</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSA</td>
<td>Disabled Students’ Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAL</td>
<td>English as an Additional Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHCP</td>
<td>Education, Health and Care Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPD</td>
<td>Evidence Based Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERT</td>
<td>Edinburgh Reading Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>Further Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEAPDA</td>
<td>Fédération Européenne des Associations de Professeurs de Déficients Auditifs (European Federation of Associations of Teachers of the Deaf)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLSE</td>
<td>Federation of Leaders in Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>Frequency Modulation = radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE</td>
<td>General Certificate of Secondary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>Hearing-Impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIPEN</td>
<td>European Network for Professionals working with People with Hearing Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HoS</td>
<td>Head of Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOSS</td>
<td>Head of Sensory Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hz</td>
<td>Hertz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTS</td>
<td>International Speech Test Signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAM</td>
<td>Just About Managing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS2</td>
<td>Key Stage 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Local Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LENA</td>
<td>Language ENvironment Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE</td>
<td>Listening Inventories for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts (degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCHAS</td>
<td>Modernising Children’s Hearing Aid Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MESH (Guide)</td>
<td>Mapping Educational Specialist knowHow initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MG</td>
<td>Mesh Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MJS</td>
<td>Manchester Junior Short (word list)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLE</td>
<td>Mediated Learning Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLO</td>
<td>Mediated Learning Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Master of Science (degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NatSIP</td>
<td>National Sensory Impairment Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDCS</td>
<td>National Deaf Children’s Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>Nottingham Early Assessment Package</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Health Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAE</td>
<td>Otoacoustic emissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Office of Standards in Education – inspectorate in England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCM</td>
<td>Pulse Code Modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Pure Tone Audiometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QTod</td>
<td>Qualified Teacher of the Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAPT</td>
<td>Renfrew Action Picture Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>Radio Corporation of America – electrical connector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Reverberation Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATs</td>
<td>Standard Assessment Tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEND</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs and Disability Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENSE</td>
<td>National charity for people with deafblindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENSS</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Support Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLT</td>
<td>Speech and Language Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SON-R</td>
<td>Snijders-Oomen Nonverbal (test, revised)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAG</td>
<td>Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPDIF</td>
<td>Sony/Philips Digital Interface Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRS</td>
<td>Social Responsiveness Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSE</td>
<td>Sign Supported English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STASS</td>
<td>South Tyneside Assessment of Syntactic Structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T (loop)</td>
<td>Telecoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAEDS</td>
<td>Theatre Arts Education and Deaf Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToD</td>
<td>Teacher of the Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TROG</td>
<td>Test of Reception of Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Vision Impaired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRA</td>
<td>Visual Reinforcement Audiometry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNV</td>
<td>Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRAT 4</td>
<td>Wide Range Achievement Test 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YARC</td>
<td>York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have found an acronym in the Magazine that isn’t explained in this list, then use [www.acronymfinder.com](http://www.acronymfinder.com) to help you to work it out.
**BATOD membership**

BATOD activities are funded from your membership fee and some advertising income. Colleagues who share your Magazine and Journal also benefit from BATOD negotiations with government and other influential bodies – but they are not contributing! Persuade your colleagues to join BATOD and you will receive 10% of their membership fee as an ‘introduction fee’.

Full details of membership plus membership form are available at www.batod.org.uk ► The Association ► BATOD Membership

ToDs in training will be entitled to a £20 reduction in annual membership fee when the Course Tutor countersigns the membership application form for those paying by Direct Debit (applies for up to 2 years; payable at the end of the year).

The BATOD Membership Secretary may be contacted via membership@batod.org.uk

The BATOD Treasurer may be contacted via treasurer@batod.org.uk

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**Officers of Nations and Regions**

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>Secretary</th>
<th>Treasurer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodnireland@batod.org.uk">batodnireland@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Valerie McCreedy</td>
<td>Clare Bateson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodscotland@batod.org.uk">batodscotland@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Fiona Smith</td>
<td>Elaine Harris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodwales@batod.org.uk">batodwales@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Lisa Whitney</td>
<td>Rhian Gibbins</td>
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<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodeast@batod.org.uk">batodeast@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Jo Sayers</td>
<td>Joanne Hughes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodmidland@batod.org.uk">batodmidland@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Jo Smith/Jo Keyte</td>
<td>Pauline Wells</td>
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<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodnorth@batod.org.uk">batodnorth@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Sue Denny</td>
<td>Sandy Goler</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodsouth@batod.org.uk">batodsouth@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Emma Parker</td>
<td>Meryl Hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td><a href="mailto:batodsouthwest@batod.org.uk">batodsouthwest@batod.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Post vacant</td>
<td>Post vacant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**BATOD contacts and Magazine Distribution**

Articles, information and contributions for the Association Magazine should be sent to:

BATOD National Executive Officer: Paul Simpson
Tel/fax: 0845 6435181  Email: magazine@batod.org.uk
...as should Association information and general queries.

Advertisements for the Association Magazine should be sent to:

Elizabeth Reed-Beadle, BATOD Advertising Manager
142 New Road, Hethersett, NR9 3HG
Tel: 01603 812111  Email: advertising@batod.org.uk

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**Journal: ‘Deafness & Education International’**

For full guidelines for submissions and abstracts of papers published in the Journal, plus any other enquiries related to the Journal, please contact Dr Linda Watson
Email: l.m.watson@bham.ac.uk

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**DISCLAIMER**

The Editors and the Association do not necessarily endorse items or the contents of advertisements published in the Magazine and cannot accept responsibility for any inaccuracies.

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Photocopying items may breach copyright.
## Meetings and training Calendar

This page is an extract from the Calendar to be found on the BATOD website. Please note that it is not exhaustive. Items noted on this Calendar may have been advertised within the Magazine or the information reported by telephone. BATOD is not necessarily the organising body.

*Please contact the organising body (column 2) for details of conferences, not the Editor of this Magazine.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Meeting topic</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation</td>
<td>Colourful semantics</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation, Nottingham, UK</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>BATOD Steering Group</td>
<td>Association Business</td>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>TJ Audiology Services</td>
<td>BSA Certificate impression taking (5yrs and older),</td>
<td>Newbury College, Berkshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>Brightening the futures for so many</td>
<td>Prospero House, 241, Borough High Street, London SE1 1GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation</td>
<td>smiLE Therapy: Stage 1 Training</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation, Nottingham, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation</td>
<td>Cochlear Implant Information Day (for families)</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation, Nottingham, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>Best School of Linguistics (BSL)</td>
<td>CSWs and BSL linguistics</td>
<td>Calderdale College, Halifax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>TJ Audiology Services</td>
<td>BSA Certificate Audiometry and Tympanometry</td>
<td>Newbury College, Berkshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>Anne Davies &amp; Queen Margaret University</td>
<td>Steering a True Course: Leadership and Service Development in the Changing World of Audiology</td>
<td>Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation</td>
<td>2 day course: Teaching Assistant Certificate: Supporting Deaf Children in the Primary Years</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation, Nottingham, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 - 2 Mar</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation</td>
<td>Intensive Training Week: Primary Aged</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation, Nottingham, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>TJ Audiology Services</td>
<td>Masking in Audiometry</td>
<td>Newbury College, Berkshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>March</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 - 5</td>
<td>Best School of Linguistics (BSL)</td>
<td>Classifiers</td>
<td>Calderdale College, Halifax</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 - 11</td>
<td>BATOD, Ear Foundation and University of Manchester</td>
<td>Positive futures for deaf children - optimising outcomes</td>
<td>Manchester Conference Centre</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>BATOD National Executive Council</td>
<td>Association Business</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation</td>
<td>Knowing Me, Knowing You: Understanding Theory of Mind in the Primary Years</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation, Nottingham, UK</td>
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<td>April</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>Best School of Linguistics (BSL)</td>
<td>Syntax and grammar</td>
<td>Calderdale College, Halifax</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>TJ Audiology Services</td>
<td>BSA Certificate Impression taking (5yrs and older),</td>
<td>Berkshire - exact location tbc</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>BATOD SIG and Burwood Park Foundation</td>
<td>Deaf Plus Autism and Deafness: Training and Information Sharing Day</td>
<td>The Bridge Conference Centre 251 Hungerford Road London N7 9LD</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>City University</td>
<td>BSL Production Test training course</td>
<td>City University, Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB</td>
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<td>5 - 6</td>
<td>BATOD Steering Group</td>
<td>Association Business</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 - 7</td>
<td>Best School of Linguistics (BSL)</td>
<td>Space and location</td>
<td>Calderdale College, Halifax</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 - 18</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation</td>
<td>Intensive Training Week: Early Intervention – Developing Listening and Spoken Language</td>
<td>The Ear Foundation, Nottingham, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>TJ Audiology Services</td>
<td>BSA Certificate Audiometry and Tympanometry</td>
<td>Berkshire - exact location tbc</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>TJ Audiology Services</td>
<td>BSA Certificate Impression taking</td>
<td>Berkshire - exact location tbc</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>TJ Audiology Services</td>
<td>BSA Certificate Paediatric Impressions (age 0-5 years),</td>
<td>Berkshire - exact location tbc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Calendar on the BATOD website is edited as soon as we know about meetings. Additional information about courses and registration forms may also be linked to the calendar entries.
After more than 70 years we have never lost sight of...

...achieving every child’s potential.

For over 70 years Mary Hare has continued to develop ground breaking programmes using the latest technology to ensure the highest possible standards of educating deaf children.

For more information or to arrange an individual visit, please contact Debbie Benson: (d.benson@maryhare.org.uk or 01635 244215) or visit our website www.maryhareschool.org.uk

‘Professionals’ Open Day, 22nd February 2017
To book your place please visit www.maryhareschool.org.uk/events

Securing the future of deaf children and young people
St John’s
Catholic School for the Deaf

For residential and day pupils aged 3 - 19 years

‘We are thrilled and very proud that our son is going to university. The journey started at St John’s where he has had excellent teaching and the staff really believed in his potential. The support he has had from the school has been amazing.’ - Parent

All students leave with a range of qualifications and accreditations which prepare them exceptionally well for the next phase in their education or the world of work.

‘A nurturing and caring ethos which is promoted throughout school is reflected in the caring attitudes pupils show to each other and adults alike.’
Ofsted 2015

For more information or to arrange a visit please contact:
Mandy Dowson, Parental Support Manager, St John’s School for the Deaf, Church Street, Boston Spa, West Yorkshire, LS23 6DF

T: 01937 842144  F: 01937 541471  E: info@stjohns.org.uk  W: www.stjohns.org.uk

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