

British Association of Teachers of the Deaf



EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into attainment of school pupils with a sensory impairment – Call for views

The Committee is holding a short inquiry to consider how the attainment levels of school pupils with a hearing and/or a visual impairment can be improved. We invite you to give us concise and specific suggestions about what could be done to improve the attainment of children with a sensory impairment.

Response on behalf of BATOD Scotland.

There is a national shortage and aging profile of qualified Teachers of the Deaf. These teachers have a deep knowledge and understanding of a child or young person's level of deafness and the implications for their social and emotional wellbeing and educational needs. They provide vital support to children and families from diagnosis to school leaving age and assist parents to manage equipment and develop good communication skills with their children from the earliest stages.

In order to raise attainment we must increase the number of qualified staff in all areas of Scotland to ensure equity for deaf children and young people across the country.

The government can support this in the following ways:

- Provide ring-fenced budgets for training Teachers of the Deaf. (ToDs)
- Ensure children and young people with ALL levels of deafness (mild to profound and those who have a cochlear implant) have access to a qualified ToD throughout their education.
- Increase the number of ToDs to allow an increase in contact time deaf children have with the teacher.
- Ensure increased and improved liaison between Health and Education regarding sharing information.
- Provide funding for training teachers of the deaf and support staff in BSL to a high level. (Currently all courses, even at university level, are self-funded.)
- Regulate qualifications and pay scales for Communication Support Workers.
- Encourage the training and use of electronic note takers in schools.
- Encourage SQA to develop BSL national qualifications to a 'Higher' level as an option for BSL users.

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- Recognise that children who have a more severe hearing impairment may benefit from a reduced number of subjects in order to learn the additional BSL skills and/or subject specific vocabulary required to access the curriculum and achieve higher qualifications.
- Increase the number of resource bases in schools for those who require a high level of support and/or alternative communication and peer support.
- Provide funding to purchase appropriate technology.
- Advise that all those managing a service should have appropriate training to understand the issues affecting deaf children and young people.
- Ensure all tertiary education students have access to Disabled Student Allowance. (Currently provided for university students but not college students.)
- Increase ToD and suitably qualified support staff input at 0-3 years for Early Intervention.
- Introduce input from ToDs for deaf young people 16-18 years old in college as many drop out of courses due to lack of support.
- Ensure all new build schools comply with current acoustic guidelines. (Not open plan.)
- Ensure an acoustician is employed to check compliance and to advise on new builds.
- All sectors of education to have mandatory Deaf Awareness training on a regular basis. (Perhaps delivered by a 3rd sector organisation.)