**No deaf child left behind – proposal for a central bursary scheme to cover the training costs of Teachers of the Deaf**

**Summary**

This paper proposes the introduction of a bursary scheme to fund the training costs of Teachers of the Deaf in England.

We believe a central bursary scheme is needed for the following reasons:

* there has been a 14% decline in the number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf in England in the past 7 years
* 45% of services in England are reporting difficulties in recruiting Teachers of the Deaf or supply cover over the previous 12 months
* over half of all Teachers of the Deaf are due to retire in the next 10 to 15 years
* research by the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) has uncovered evidence that local authorities are failing to plan for future workforce needs.

A central bursary scheme could be delivered at a cost of £3.5 million over a three-year period. This paper also proposes that work is undertaken to explore with training providers if an apprenticeship pathway for new Teachers of the Deaf can be established, as a long-term solution to the issues this paper identifies.

This paper has been jointly produced by the National Deaf Children’s Society and the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD).

**Key facts**

* There are approximately around 1,050 Teachers of the Deaf across England working in a peripatetic role and/or in resource provisions.
* 87% are qualified Teachers of the Deaf while 12% are in training. 1% are working as Teachers of the Deaf but are neither qualified nor in training.
* Half of Teachers of the Deaf work in a ‘peripatetic’ or visiting role, providing support to families in the early years and to deaf children and their teachers in mainstream schools. Around 28% work in resource provisions and 18% in special schools for deaf children. Other settings that Teachers of the Deaf work in will include special schools or colleges not specifically for deaf children, cochlear implant centres and charities.
* 56% of peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf are over the age of 50 and hence are due to retire in the next 10 to 15 years.
* There are more than 45,000 deaf children across England.
* Over 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents who have no prior experience of deafness. These parents rely on advice from specialist Teachers of the Deaf to support their child’s language and communication skills.
* Around 80% of deaf children attend mainstream schools, where they may be the only deaf child enrolled. Teachers of the Deaf play a key role in helping all teachers to understand how to differentiate the curriculum and provide effective support, as well as directly providing one-to-one support to children.

 **Background**

Teachers of the Deaf are teachers who have gained an additional qualification (usually known as the ‘mandatory qualification’) in teaching deaf children.

In England, legislation requires that teachers of classes of deaf children (i.e. those in resource provisions or special schools) must hold the mandatory qualification or be in training to gain the qualification within three years. Peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf aren’t required to hold the qualification but it is strongly recommended in statutory guidance.

As a low-incidence disability, deaf children are spread unevenly through the school population. Most mainstream teachers will not be teaching a deaf child at any one time and may only do so occasionally. They will have relatively few opportunities to apply any knowledge or expertise they have previously acquired on effective practice in teaching or supporting deaf children.

In addition, most deaf children (over 90%) will be born to hearing parents who have no prior experience of deafness. Teachers of the Deaf play a key early intervention role in providing advice to families on language and communication in the key developmental years.

It can be argued that peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf are a response to the ‘low-incidence’ problem. In other words, they are a flexible resource that can be deployed where the need is, recognising the unpredictability around where the need will arise.

Evidence commissioned by the Department for Education[[1]](#footnote-1), reports from Ofsted[[2]](#footnote-2) and an international literature review[[3]](#footnote-3) have talked of the importance of the Teacher of the Deaf role.

*The mandatory qualification*

The mandatory qualification is usually acquired after two-years of part-time study, leading to a post-graduate diploma. There are four providers of the qualification across England – Mary Hare/University of Hertfordshire and the Universities of Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester[[4]](#footnote-4). Most will be working as an unqualified Teacher of the Deaf whilst undergoing training.

The mandatory qualification is one of the few mechanisms available to maintain the status and quality of Teachers of the Deaf, as well as the support available to deaf children. It provides parents of deaf children with assurance that the support their child receives will be informed by expertise in deafness – this is an assurance that is not available to parents of, for example, children with autism.

*How many Teachers of the Deaf are there?*

The Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE) carries out an annual survey of local authorities to ask about the number of Teachers of the Deaf.

As far as we are aware, these are the best available figures; this data is not collected by any government body.

The chart and table below look at changes in the number of Teachers of the Deaf in employment who are a) qualified and b) in training since CRIDE began in 2011. These figures focus on numbers of Teachers of the Deaf who work in a peripatetic role and/or in resource provisions. Figures for Teachers of the Deaf working in special schools are set out later.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **2010/11** | **2011/12** | **2012/13** | **2013/14** | **2014/15** | **2015/16** | **2016/17** |
| **Number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf** | 1,062.1 | 1,063.7 | 1,031.9 | 999.2 | 995.75 | 932.38 | 913.75 |
| **Number of Teachers of the Deaf in training**  | 91.6 | 74.3 | 78.4 | 72.1 | 123.2 | 114.8 | 123.6 |
| **Total**  | 1,153.70 | 1,138.00 | 1,110.30 | 1,071.30 | 1,118.95 | 1,047.18 | 1,037.35 |

In summary, this shows:

* a 14% drop over 7 years and 2% in 1 year of the number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf
* whilst there has been a rise in the number of Teachers of the Deaf in training, this hasn’t been enough. There has still been a total 10% drop over 7 years and 1% in one year in the number of Teachers of the Deaf who are qualified or in training
* the decline in numbers of Teachers of the Deaf over the past 7 years has averaged at 2% per year.

The number of vacant posts at any one time has been relatively stable, averaging 45 over the past 7 years.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **2010/11** | **2011/12** | **2012/13** | **2013/14** | **2014/15** | **2015/16** | **2016/17** |
| **Number of vacant posts** | 34 | 44.5 | 40.8 | 45.8 | 45.6 | 60.9 | 44.65 |

Given what we know about the reductions in numbers of Teachers of the Deaf, it could be considered surprising that the vacancy rate is not higher. However, we are aware of a number of instances where local authorities have simply over time ‘deleted’ posts when they have been unable to fill them. In other cases, posts have been ‘frozen’, pending a review of the service.

Figures around the ‘theoretical caseload’[[5]](#footnote-5) also provide cause for concern. This is a crude measure but it allows for comparisons over time. In 2017, the theoretical caseload for each Teacher of the Deaf was 60. This was an increase from 2015 when it stood at 49 and from 2013 when it stood at 44.

Finally, there is also compelling evidence around the age profile of peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Number of peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf** |
| **Aged 49 or under** | 276.8 (43%) |
| **Aged between 50 and 59** | 307.55 (48%) |
| **Aged between 60 and 64** | 54.5 (8%) |
| **Aged 65 or over** | 3.8 (1%) |
| **Total** | 642.65 (100%) |

We have no reason to believe the age profile is dissimilar for other types of Teachers of the Deaf.

Figures in the above section do not include numbers of Teachers of the Deaf working in special schools for deaf children. This data is collected on an ad-hoc basis by CRIDE. Figures from 2016 suggested there are around 251.7 Teachers of the Deaf across the UK working in special schools for deaf children. Provisional figures from 2018 suggest this has fallen to 213.6. This indicates that the trend towards fewer Teachers of the Deaf exists across the sector. This is also supported by Department for Education figures which show that the number of deaf children in special schools is falling, as well as recent closures in special schools for deaf children.

*Numbers currently in training*

From contacting the four training providers, we understand that 113 teachers graduated as Teachers of the Deaf in summer 2018 and that 96 are expected to graduate in summer 2019, and 94 in 2020. Anecdotal evidence from training providers suggest there are concerns about numbers for future courses. Some report that they are receiving fewer enquiries, with many prospective teachers citing the cost of training as a barrier.

*Why central action is needed*

We believe that the above figures point to a looming crisis in the numbers of the Teachers of the Deaf. However, there is little evidence that local authorities are taking action in response. There is little incentive for local authorities, particularly smaller ones, to be proactive in ensuring there are sufficient numbers of Teachers of the Deaf being trained to meet future needs. Many will not be able to meet the financial cost of training new staff whilst also employing someone who has yet to retire.

In 2016, NatSIP published a paper on the supply of specialist teachers of children with sensory impairments.[[6]](#footnote-6) This identified the lack of funding to cover the costs of training as a major factor inhibiting the supply of Teachers of the Deaf.

In light of this and given the alarming figures shown earlier, we believe a national systematic approach and the establishment of a central bursary scheme is needed to address this issue.

**How a central bursary would work – detail**

*How many Teachers of the Deaf are needed?*

Identifying the ‘optimum’ numbers of Teachers of the Deaf is challenging. There is little research on what is an appropriate caseload for a Teacher of the Deaf.

We know that the reported number of deaf children is rising. This may be down to better reporting by local authorities - many of whom are still unable to identify how many deaf children live in their area. However, it is also likely there has been a genuine demographic increase. There is also good reason to believe that the population of deaf children is becoming more heterogeneous – i.e. we are seeing more deaf children with additional needs (children who previously would not have survived beyond birth) and from families who have migrated to this country.

We also know there is considerable unmet need. For example, relatively few specialist education services provide support to deaf young people in post-16 settings. We also know that some children with mild or unilateral hearing losses are not getting the support they once did.

We take the view that we will know we have the optimum number of Teachers of the Deaf when there is no attainment gap between deaf children and other children and where deaf children, on average, make expected progress in line with their hearing peers of the same starting ability. However, currently, deaf children underachieve throughout their education – at GCSE level, on average, deaf children achieve a grade less than other children in each subject. Again, however, there is little research on how many Teachers of the Deaf will be needed to ensure that every deaf child across England reaches their full potential.

This paper proposes a ‘stem-the-tide’ approach which would look to cover existing costs of training new Teachers of the Deaf, whilst funding additional numbers to stem anticipated reductions in the next three years. The below sets our modelling on how many places would need to be funded.

We know that:

* Over the past 7 years, the average number of teachers starting a Teacher of the Deaf course has been 98 (most of whom are already working as a Teacher of the Deaf).
* The average number of vacant pasts over the past 7 years has been running at 45 a year.

However, the above doesn’t take into account the ongoing downwards push on numbers of Teachers of the Deaf. We can make two projections around future trends.

* Scenario A: There has been an average 2% decrease in the number of Teachers of the Deaf over the past 7 years. If this continues, we can expect to see a decline of roughly 20 Teachers of the Deaf in each year over the next three years.
* Scenario B: 581 Teachers of the Deaf are due to retire in the next 10 to 15 years. Assuming they retire at a steady rate over the next 15 years, this equates roughly to 39 Teachers of the Deaf a year.

As the following table shows, this indicates a need to fund between 133 to 152 places a year or between 399 to 456 over three years.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
| To maintain existing numbers in training  | 98 | 98 | 98 |
| To address existing number of vacant posts | 45 (or 15 a year) |
|  |  |  |  |
| To address scenario A | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| To address scenario B | 39 | 39 | 39 |
|  |  |  |  |
| Total | 133 to 152 | 133 to 152 | 133 to 152 |
| Total over three years  | 399 to 456 |

*The cost of training*

The below table provides figures for the cost of a two-year post-graduate qualification.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Training provider | 2018/19 costs  |
| Mary Hare/University of Hertfordshire | £7,800 |
| University of Birmingham | £8,004 |
| University of Leeds  | £8,000 |
| University of Manchester | £7,600 |
| Average  | £7,851 |

This paper assumes that the above fees will rise by around 2% a year. If so, the average yearly or ‘unit’ cost between 2019 and 2022 of a course will be £8,169.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| Average  | £7,851 | £8,008 | £8,168 | £8,332 |
| Average per year |  | £8,169 |

The above does not include the additional costs involved in training as Teachers of the Deaf. In particular, it does not include travel/accommodation costs for candidates nor does it include any costs around supply cover for schools/services. This paper assumes that these costs will be covered by schools or services.

*The cost of a bursary*

The table below calculates the potential total costs

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Year 1  | Year 2 | Year 3 | Total  |
| Scenario A – funding 133 places a year  | £1,086,510 | £1,086,510 | £1,086,510 | £3,259,530 |
| Scenario B – funding 152 places a year | £1,241,726 | £1,241,726 | £1,241,726 | £3,725,177 |

Settling midway between the two scenarios, the total costs of a bursary over a 3 year period would be **£3.5 million.**

*How the bursary could be issued*

We propose that the fund run for at least three years, with decisions on any further expansion taken in 2021, following a review of how the fund has worked and the impact it has had. By this time, it is possible that the funding costs can be recovered through the apprenticeships fund (see later).

In line with the approach taken for the Educational Psychology Funded Training Scheme, we would suggest eligibility criteria along the following lines:

* have already qualified as teachers
* have at least one year’s experience of working as a teacher
* can provide two references
* are resident in England
* have been accepted at one of the four training providers in England
* will commit to working as a Teacher of the Deaf for two years post-qualification or to repaying part of the training costs if they leave within two years.

If agreement is in place before the end of 2018, we anticipate it should be possible to start issuing grants for courses starting in September 2019. We anticipate though that the bulk of applications would come in 2020 and 2021.

We propose that a panel of representatives from the National Deaf Children’s Society and BATOD be set up to review applications to the bursary and approve them against the above criteria. The National Deaf Children’s Society would take the lead in reporting to and updating the Department for Education on how the bursary is being spent. We would cover these administrative costs through our own resources.

Working with BATOD, the National Deaf Children’s Society would also meet the costs of promoting and disseminating information about the fund to prospective Teachers of the Deaf. We would look to the four training providers for support from this. Where possible, we would also look to link up with existing information portals for prospective mainstream teachers, including those run by the Department for Education.

**Other points and considerations**

*Apprenticeships*

We anticipate that the need to continue to fund the training costs of new Teachers of the Deaf will continue beyond three years. We are keen to explore whether the training costs could be recouped through the apprenticeships fund. We are not aware of any reason why teachers cannot train to be Teachers of the Deaf as level 5 apprentices.

The main barrier to this is that the training providers would need to revamp the training framework. A body, representing services and schools, would also need to agree on the standards that the Teacher of the Deaf apprentices would be working to. We believe that the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) could fulfil this role – the Department for Education may want to explicitly ask NatSIP to explore this in their current review of the mandatory qualification.

Initial discussions over this with training providers have been encouraging. However, we anticipate it will take time for the training providers to make the necessary changes.

*Sharing costs with schools/services*

We considered whether the bursary could be run on the basis that costs be shared between the Department for Education and local authorities and/or special schools/resource provisions. We do not believe this would be an effective approach for the following reasons:

* There is a national need for new Teachers of the Deaf. Given that deafness is a low incidence need, it is important that there is maximum flexibility in where they work and in what settings.
* Given wider pressures on local authority budgets, it may be a challenge for some local authorities to make this commitment.
* Our past experience suggests that local authorities, particularly smaller ones, are not always well-placed to take a long-term view on future staffing needs in this area.

We also considered whether the bursary fund should cover the training costs where local authorities or providers were already planning to cover these costs. As set out earlier, around 100 teachers are already training to be Teachers of the Deaf and most of these will be funded by the local authority/provider. Initially, we proposed that we would only take applications from individuals or from small services where an argument was convincingly made that they could not cover the training costs themselves. Ultimately, however, we concluded that it would be very difficult to distinguish between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ candidates in this way, and that some services/providers may try to work around any such criteria.

We are also aware of the wider spending pressures that services are subject to and that even large services and schools are struggling to cover the training costs of new Teachers of the Deaf. On this basis, we propose that the fund seeks to cover the prospective costs of training new Teachers of the Deaf over the next three years.

*Existing review of the mandatory qualification*

The Department for Education has already asked NatSIP to carry out a review of the content of the mandatory qualification. However, our understanding is that it is unlikely that any major changes will be made to the actual content of the course until 2020. We feel that waiting until the review is complete risks leaving it too late to address the emerging shortfall in numbers of Teachers of the Deaf.

As set out earlier, we recommend that NatSIP be specifically tasked with looking at whether the qualification could be taught as an apprenticeship to help support the future sustainability of this qualification. This would require some work for the sector to develop a set of standards for apprentice Teachers of the Deaf. It would also require buy-in from the training providers.

1. Carroll, J. et al (2017) SEN support: A rapid evidence assessment. Department for Education. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-support-in-schools-and-colleges](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-support-in-schools-and-colleges). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In the Ofsted Communication is the Key (2012) report, Ofsted stated when deaf children progressed well, it was because services were underpinned by a good understanding of the need for specialist services for deaf children and a strong commitment to maintain them. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communication-is-the-key> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A review by Marc Marschark stated that: “The learning styles and needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing students differ sufficiently from those of their hearing peers to require specialised programming and teaching methods or strategies if children are to achieve their full potential. Special assistance thus is also required for teachers.” [www.ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/1\_NCSE\_Deaf.pdf](http://www.ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/1_NCSE_Deaf.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The qualification can also be acquired at the University of Edinburgh. There are no training providers in Wales or Northern Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Theoretical caseloads for peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf are calculated by dividing the number of permanently deaf children living in any given area and in non-specialist provision by the number of visiting Teachers of the Deaf who are qualified or in training for the mandatory qualification. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/supporting-the-si-workforce/report-on-the-factors-promoting-and-inhibiting-the-successful-supply-of-specialist-teachers/1040-a-report-on-the-factors-promoting-and-inhibiting-the-successful-supply-of-specialist-teachers](http://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/supporting-the-si-workforce/report-on-the-factors-promoting-and-inhibiting-the-successful-supply-of-specialist-teachers/1040-a-report-on-the-factors-promoting-and-inhibiting-the-successful-supply-of-specialist-teachers) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)