

Press release issued March 4th 2021

BATOD statement on the impact of face coverings for deaf children and young people and deaf teachers

BATOD is calling for everyone to be aware of the significant impact of face coverings for deaf children

Since the start of the pandemic, the Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD) profession has striven to support the learning, emotional and access needs of deaf children and young people (CYP). The negative impact of the use of face coverings, which are of course necessary for health reasons, is that they affect access to and understanding of those around them. The changing guidance issued to UK schools is causing tremendous concern for deaf CYP, their families and QToDs. Exemptions are in place but not everyone is comfortable removing their face covering.

Use of face coverings in the learning environment reduces the opportunity for speech reading, understanding facial expressions, sound quality, accessing communication from others - peers and teachers - even with optimum personal hearing devices and assistive listening technology. This will have a life-long impact on their academic potential, employment prospects, and social and emotional well-being. The pandemic has heightened these difficulties and increased the need for QToD input. However, the lack of clarity in the current guidance compounds the challenge for QToDs in supporting mainstream colleagues.

BATOD is concerned about the very real risk of increased mental health difficulties for deaf CYP. Pre-covid times, statistics showed that around one in three deaf CYP had mental health difficulties mainly as a result of challenges around communication. QToDs have been working to help children understand why face coverings are needed and finding solutions. Use of clear face coverings is helpful for many deaf CYP but there has been a lack of investment and provision of clear face coverings for use in education.

QToDs are highly specialist teachers trained to provide guidance about the needs of deaf CYP from birth to higher education. Deafness is a 'low incidence high



need' disability and the level of need of a deaf child does not always equate to their level of deafness.

Martine Monksfield, President Elect of BATOD, states "As a Deaf QToD coming into the President role, it is hugely disappointing to see deaf children and young people being excluded in education with little thought or solutions for accessibility to communication and learning with face coverings."

Educational professionals, deaf CYP and their families and QToDs need to continue to work together to coproduce risk assessments and find solutions to reduce the negative impact of the use of face coverings. BATOD would like to see greater collaboration and involvement with the relevant government departments in all four nations in order to ensure deaf CYP's outcomes and life chances are not further impacted by the pandemic.

BATOD has issued updated advice on the practical issues raised by face coverings. It can be found here: <https://www.batod.org.uk/march-2021-batod-update-about-face-coverings-in-education-settings/>

Notes:

BATOD is the sole professional association for Qualified Teachers of the Deaf in the UK representing the interests of Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (and those in training) and the children and young people they teach. Strong links are maintained between BATOD and government and voluntary bodies, especially the National Deaf Children's Society, and the Association plays a key role in NatSIP (the National Sensory Impairment Partnership), to contribute to policy development in this field.

There are currently at least 1,529 teachers employed as Teachers of the Deaf (qualified or in training) working in a peripatetic role, resource provisions, special schools for deaf children and/or special schools/colleges not specifically for deaf children. 50% of Qualified Teachers of the Deaf are due to retire in the next 10 to 15 years which is why working to assure the future supply of Qualified Teachers of the Deaf is crucial.

78% of school-aged deaf children attend mainstream schools. 6% attend mainstream schools with resource provisions, 3% attend special schools for deaf children whilst 12% attend special schools not specifically for deaf children. 22% of deaf children are recorded as having some form of additional or special need.



British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

64% of severely or profoundly deaf children communicate using spoken English or Welsh only in school or other education settings. 9% use British or Irish Sign Language. 22% use sign language alongside spoken English or Welsh.

Full BATOD membership is open to all Qualified Teachers of the Deaf and those in training. Association membership is open to allied professionals and others with an interest in deaf education. Special membership is open to Communication Support Workers, specialist Teaching Assistants, audiology technicians and other support workers.

More information about membership is here on our website:

<https://www.batod.org.uk/memberships/>

The home page is here: <https://www.batod.org.uk>

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