

Identified challenges

Sabine Crumbie, a recently Qualified Teacher of the Deaf, shared her reflections on d/Deaf learner's transition into Further Education

This article derived from my final INSET (inservice training day) presentation and rationale as part of my PGDip in Deaf Education at the University of Manchester. It reflects on my personal experience of working with deaf learners in Further Education (FE) over the last eight years. During this time, I observed and identified challenges that some deaf learners are experiencing each academic year when transitioning into FE. Every cohort is different, and every deaf learner has individual learning needs;

hence they experience these challenges differently. In addition, FE services across England work independently and uniquely, which will again impact the transitioning process.

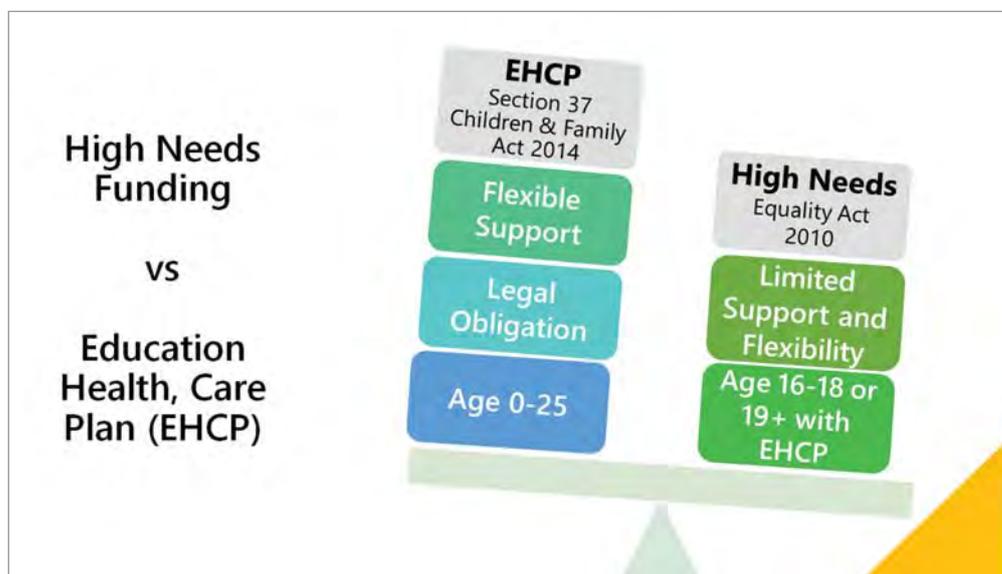
Interestingly, FE is the most common destination for deaf young people, with an estimated 70% for this pathway (CRIDE, 2019). Considering strategies that could support deaf learners in the transitioning process '**towards greater independence**' is key (Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DH), 2015). This process requires the participation of the deaf young person. It is closely linked to the preparation for '**own decision-making**' once they turn 16, under the Children and Families Act 2014, highlighting the importance of listening to children and young people as specialists in deaf education. A specialist Post-16 institution needs to work '**collaboratively with mainstream and special settings to develop and share expertise and approaches**' (DfE and DH, 2015).

The focus is on deaf learners with no other complex needs, who are too able for 'Level 1' but have not made an informed decision about their vocational course or are not ready for 'Level 2'. As a result, these students struggle from the start of the academic year, may change course at eight weeks or feel the need to drop out.

Education route and funding

The process of funding is complex and specific information on funding in England can be found on the DfE website <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2021-to-2022>

With FE currently the most common pathway after completing key stage 4 and compulsory schooling, 10% of deaf children, Post-16 and up to Post-19, live in England



(CRIDE, 2019). There are difficulties of data extraction, and the response rate of services to this survey constrains the estimation.

Funding affects FE support including access to a Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD). Some deaf learners transition with an education, health and care plan (EHCP), while others will not and rely on high needs funding (HNF), guaranteed under the Equality Act 2010. High needs funding is ensured under the Equality Act 2010, and is provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for 16–18-year-old learners or 19–25-year-old learners to develop what has been agreed in the learning outcomes in an EHC plan (DfE and DH, 2015). The college will send a copy of the young person's personalised plan (young person with special educational needs (SEN) support but no EHCP) or provision plan (with an EHC Plan) when applying for HNF. Core funding (sometimes called 'Element 1') is allocated to institutions through the 16–19 national funding formulas. Top-up funding (or 'Element 3') is paid from the high needs budget of a local authority where a learner resides.

An EHCP has a legal comeback and follows section 37 of the Children and Families Act and the SEND Code of Practice. Once an EHC plan has been prepared, it must maintain the plan – and as such, has a **legal obligation**. So, it's worth considering if deaf learners that are not on an EHCP may benefit from a plan? Are they aware that they can apply for an EHC plan when they turn 16? HNF allows limited support and flexibility. Not every college can support all outcomes of a personalised plan or provide support beyond, eg employment-related support. So, QToD's need to be aware of the challenges, preparation, and related support needs of deaf learners in the first few weeks of attending FE.

Identified challenges and considered strategies

Decision-making

The SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 (2014) uses a young-person centred approach; this concept appears to be a challenging idea for professionals and one that requires more time and effort by the professional to ensure a child's or young person's voice is heard (Hellowell, 2015). Previously, the young person may have received too much support, limiting the decision-making opportunities. For a deaf young person to decide the next step in life and eg course choice, they must have received clear and concise information. College visits early on in the transition process will establish a positive collaboration between college and feeder schools. This will also ensure enough time for the deaf learner to access information, including course content and outline, to make an informed decision about the chosen course and future career. Discussions on course choice will encourage deaf learners' participation, decision-making and planning for transition to FE. Emphasis needs to be on **participation in the preparation for adulthood** eg attending taster days for a course such as 'Animal Care Level 2' or 'Art & Design Level 2'. A realistic taster session will allow deaf learners to experience the fun and practical elements and establish the link to the theoretical context.

Resilience

Research confirms that resilience is not an achieved outcome or a response to a specific experience but instead develops over a lifetime (Walsh, 2003). Moreover, resilience is connected to significant characteristics, such as perseverance, self-belief, mentoring adults, and positive peer relationships (Young et al., 2008). A fast-paced learning environment directed by changes, deadlines and tutors that may not be deaf aware will require some initial resilience and repair strategies. These strategies are hopefully established before leaving key stage 4 and transitioning to a new environment. With the correct intervention and collaboration, this is something that deaf learners can achieve.

Exam experience

Deaf learners will have sat exams at key stage 4; some deaf learners transitioning into FE do not recognise or fully understand the role of a scribe, language modifier or communication professional as promoted by the Joint Council for Qualifications (2020). Deaf learners may be unsure of their exam access arrangements, causing unnecessary stress and a barrier to completing initial diagnostic assessments and re-sitting GCSE maths and

English exams. Establishing a good partnership with the secondary school and planning for and providing intervention between July and September could form a learning outcome that deaf learners could revisit before transitioning.

Communication and social skills

Transitioning from a familiar key stage 4 environment into FE can be a daunting process. Deaf children and young people are at heightened risk of communication barriers, impacting their emotional well-being and health (NDCS, 2017). Course and timetable differences can lead to isolation, making socialising with deaf peers challenging. However, a buddy system consisting of deaf learners from previous cohorts and access to a **'sensory social club'** (online and face-to-face) for new deaf learners could support the development of communication and social skills. Continuous professional training (CPD) from QToDs could provide FE college support staff with knowledge and skills that would have been part of the Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support for Deaf Learners, not available UK wide.

Life skills

Essential life skills that may not be obvious and directly associated with FE are necessary for deaf learners before they transition into FE, such as travel and money management skills. Some deaf learners may have had little or no confidence in travelling alone on public transport. They may struggle to manage spending money for course materials and lunch; so additional support requirements are essential to ensure access. Although recognising a college's responsibility of inclusive education, this does not reduce the much-needed support for course work. Hence deaf learners' participation in preparation for adulthood is crucial. Organising a trip including planning the route, checking timetables, and calculating spending money could support the development of those life skills. Family

Further Education Checklist for Deaf Learners			
	I am confident	I am almost confident	I am not confident
Term 1			
Decision Making			
Course choice?			
Taster Day?			
Level 2 Ready			
Some subject vocabulary?			
Some content knowledge?			
Life Skills			
Travel to College?			
Bus, Train & timetable?			
Secure with Money?			
Communication & Social skills			
Communication with peers?			
Interaction with peers?			
Exam Experience			
My exam access?			
Communication Professional?			
Scribe?			
Language Modifier?			
Resilience			
Determined?			
Self-belief?			
Peer relationship?			
Self-Advocacy			
My Support Needs?			

FE Checklist

SMART Targets

Specific – What do I want to achieve (who? what? where? when? why?)?

Measurable – How will I know that I have achieved my goal (evidence)?

Achievable – What do I need to do to achieve my goal (steps)?

Realistic – Can I achieve my set goal (skills? resources?)?

Time – What is my deadline (timeline)?

Specific –

Measurable –

Achievable –

Realistic –

Time –

discussions and involvement will add to this, so when deaf learners start their FE experience, life skills are in place. INSET training for college staff could provide an opportunity to raise the profile of deaf learners in FE as it is often assumed they have 'arrived' and have no problems as learners at this level. The identified challenges and suggested strategies encourage reflection on transition practice and improve the current outcomes.

Raising standards

The specification for mandatory qualification requires QToDs to assist '**older learners with developing knowledge and skills they will need in adult life, further or higher education, post-school training opportunities and employment**' (DfE, 2018). INSET training, FE familiarity as part of the QToD's mandatory qualification and later CPD could support this. This would raise aspects of FE, which some QToDs may not have encountered or considered. A QToD's reflection on skills needed by deaf learners for FE and identification of long-term approaches of acquiring those early on is fundamental. Once deaf learners have understood those, they will then be able to use strategies such as a checklist (see image) and self-reflection against the areas, taking ownership and responsibility for their learning. This ensures an improved transition process for deaf learners, who will be well informed and prepared. Consequently, reducing the numbers of deaf learners swapping courses or dropping out. Identification of challenges, implementation of strategies and support encourage sustained learning and course completion, leading to employment in the future.

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Sabine Crumbie is a newly Qualified Teacher of the Deaf.

BATOD Training Bursary Information

BATOD has launched a new Training Bursary to support professionals working with D/deaf learners who are not QToDs or ToDs in training.

This bursary allows BATOD members to access education/training related to deaf education, to develop their skills and knowledge. The member would be otherwise totally self-funding, due to no financial support from their educational establishment or LA.

Download this document for further information and the application form:

www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BATOD-Training-bursary-information-.pdf

Any questions - contact Jill Bussien via bursary@batod.org.uk



Increase your skills

Check the BATOD website calendar for courses that expand your knowledge and skills as a QToD, ToD in training, audiologist, speech and language therapist or support staff.

Links to many of the provider websites.

www.batod.org.uk
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student's
understanding of
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