

Articulating the specialism – mainstream

The role of the Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) supporting in mainstream settings.

We use the term 'deaf' to refer to all types of deafness from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary deafness such as glue ear.

What is a QToD?

A QToD is an experienced teacher with an additional mandatory qualification (MQ) in childhood deafness who has the skills, knowledge, and expertise required to provide quality support to deaf babies, and young people from 0 to 25 years¹ and their families, in the home and in educational settings (mainstream and specialist provisions).

How do QToDs work to ensure the best outcomes for deaf CYP?

The premise of an effective QToD role is to share a depth of understanding of both the needs of deaf CYP and how to meet them. This specialist support focuses on two key outcomes as a route to social inclusion, ensuring all CYP have fair and optimised access to education and that all CYP have opportunities to develop their own agency, voice, and independence. Achieving these outcomes requires inclusive practice such as:

- Family-centred practice
- Partnership-working with educational professionals
- Multi-agency working with partners in health, social care, and third sector organisations
- Direct teaching.

¹ The upper age depends on the legislation within each UK nation and the local funding arrangements.

Why do deaf CYP need to be taught by QToDs?

Deaf CYP, regardless of their levels of deafness, have a right to specialist input from a QToD. The needs of deaf CYP are complex and can be wide-ranging. This is also the case for CYP with a complex profile where deafness may not be seen as their primary need. Being deaf is associated with major obstacles for CYP acquiring and developing fundamental skills. These obstacles can be reduced, or removed, if deaf CYP receive appropriate teaching input in an appropriate teaching environment. Some deaf CYP will have a statutory document outlining their needs and the support needed to achieve their potential (in line with guidance as relevant to the nation in which they live), but the majority will not. QToDs are specialist professionals with experience and expertise in these areas:

- Impact of deafness on all aspects of life
- Social, emotional, and mental health needs (SEMH)
- Language acquisition
- Specialist assessment
- Policy and practice – legislative frameworks
- Facilitating inclusion
- Communication
- Literacy
- Habilitation – independent living skills
- Social, sports, and leisure – supporting deaf CYP to have opportunities to participate in these areas
- Preparing for adulthood.

Where are deaf CYP taught?

Deaf CYP may be taught in a variety of settings. These include family homes; state, private, and voluntary settings for children aged 0–5 years; mainstream settings (primary and secondary); specialist/enhanced provisions attached to mainstream schools; special schools for deaf CYP;

local authority-funded trust and free schools; other special schools; post-16 provisions, and university. They may also work with children who are electively home educated or in health settings. A QToD may be working directly with deaf CYP in any of these settings.

What are the statutory requirements, both for deaf children and the QtoD?

Deaf children have a right² to specialist input from a QToD from identification. QToDs are crucial in effectively delivering governments' commitments to supporting deaf children and upholding their rights under legislation, policy, and the international conventions. This includes ensuring deaf children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) including Article 23 (support for disabled children), Article 28 (right to education) and Article 30 (minority language rights, including BSL/ISL) are upheld in the teaching of deaf children. QToDs are also central to ensuring that deaf children's rights under Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability (UNCRPD), which commits governments to recognise the right of people with disabilities in education, are realised.

Teachers employed as ToDs who do not already hold the MQ in childhood deafness are required to gain the qualification within a specified period^{3, 4}.

Health authorities have a duty to inform local authorities (LAs) when deaf children are identified. LAs contact the deaf child's family to offer support. Specialist input may be identified as part of a statutory document. The various governments of the UK have long recognised the need for mandatory training, and this dates to the early 1900s.

Other supporting information

Supplementary information about how QToDs work can be found via this [link](#)

QToDs work collaboratively with

- Stakeholders to identify needs and advise on and provide appropriate support

² NDCS website: [Understanding your rights as a deaf young person](#). Accessed 10th July 2025.

³ Scottish Government [Guidelines](#). Accessed 10th June 2025.

⁴ [UK Government Guidelines for England and Wales](#).. Accessed 10th June 2025.

- Parents, other professionals, and deaf learners to develop a clear understanding of the nature of deafness and provide a range of evidence-based information via written text, face to face, audio, or video
- Class teachers, support staff, and other specialists to provide and modify materials to match needs, such as access to information, communication, and mobility, and supply training and advice on the use and adaptation of curriculum materials, alongside providing appropriate curriculum advice and support for deaf learners, to embed normal working practices required for reasonable adjustments in public examinations
- The team around the CYP to ensure:
 - transition between educational phases is effective across a wide range of ages and contexts, ensuring that appropriate specialist equipment is in place in any new settings and that staff have the necessary training, knowledge, and skills to facilitate its use and inform staff of appropriate teaching methodology for cognition, learning, and social development
 - regular training and support to stakeholders, using evidence-based strategies to facilitate the successful inclusion of learners with sensory impairment in educational settings
 - improved physical learning environments using a range of interventions, such as improved room acoustics, lighting, or greater access to assistive technology
 - preparation for adulthood from the earliest years
 - support for young people in applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) funding
- Social, emotional, and mental health needs
 - working with deaf CYP to develop their self-esteem and maximise their independence and use of specific assistive technology to teach and promote independent learning and self-advocacy skills
 - work collaboratively and train stakeholders to improve the social and emotional development, independence, and wellbeing of the learner

- Language acquisition
 - work in partnership with parents/carers through early intervention to promote the development of language (all modalities)
 - teach, develop, and/or plan challenging, well-organised programmes across the age and ability range of deaf CYP including those with additional needs
- Specialist assessment
 - carry out, interpret, and report on the outcomes from specialist assessments used with deaf learners, which informs target setting, monitors the efficacy of current provision and teaching delivery, and guides decision-making. Drawing on the specialist assessment of others such as audiologists, and speech and language therapists to inform their own assessments and advice.
- Policy and practice
 - embedding national and local legislation, guidance, initiatives, and research in own teaching and other work with deaf children, parents, and settings.

Further information and guidance can be found on the following websites:

- [NDCS website](#) Education and learning
- [BATOD website](#) – Being a Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People
- [BATOD/NDCS Specialist Deaf Curriculum Framework](#)
- Council for Disabled Children (CDC):
 - [Blog](#)
 - [Training and guides](#)

Statutory

- England
 - [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Code of Practice](#)
 - [Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 Section 32 Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [Scottish Government – Additional Support for Learning Act Code of Practice](#)

- [Special Education Needs Code of Practice – Northern Ireland](#)
- [Additional Learning Needs Code of practice for Wales](#)

UNCRC

All CYP's rights are detailed within the UNCRC⁵, and the following articles can be specifically used for deaf CYP.

- Article 2 – Non-discrimination
- Article 3 – Best interests of the child
- Article 4 – Implementation of the Convention
- Article 5 – Parental guidance and a child's evolving capacities
- Article 12 – Respect for the views of the child
- Article 13 – Freedom of expression
- Article 15 – Freedom of association
- Article 17 – Access to information from the media
- Article 23 – Children with a disability
- Article 24 – Health and health services
- Article 28 – Right to education
- Article 29 – Goals of education
- Article 30 – Children from minority or indigenous groups
- Article 31 – Leisure, play, and culture

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⁵ *UNCRC Accessed 11th June 2025: https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf