

National Deaf Children's Society invitation to tender for a review of the literature

TITLE	Deaf children with additional needs, including complex needs and disabilities
ABOUT THE	National Deaf Children's Society We're the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for every deaf child.

DEFINITIONS

By deaf, we mean any level of hearing loss. This includes unilateral hearing loss.

The term 'additional needs' is used to refer to children with special educational, learning or support needs and disabilities and complex health needs. This includes (but is not limited to) mental health needs, social, emotional and behavioural needs, specific learning needs, neuro divergent conditions and physical health needs.

BACKGROUND

Estimates suggest that between 25-50% of deaf children have additional needs, most commonly learning disabilities, autism, or visual impairments.^{1 2} The most recent Deaf Children Today (DCT) survey (2025) by the National Deaf Children's Society showed that 32% of respondents reported their child had additional needs, and a further 10% were unsure whether their child had additional needs.³

Deaf children with additional needs - and their families – often experience compounded disadvantages, including more limited access to audiology and educational services, reduced emotional support, and lower confidence in connecting with other parents. Findings from the DCT survey found that these

¹ Cacciato, Kimberly; Kaminaris, Julianna; Shapiro, Allison; Singer, Steven James (2020). Determining Language and Inclusion for Deaf-Plus Children". International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education. 13 (1): 1–19

² Núñez-Batalla F, Jáudenes-Casabón C, Sequí-Canet JM, Vivanco-Allende A, Zubicaray-Ugarteche J. Deaf children with additional disabilities (AD+): CODEPEH recommendations. Acta Otorrinolaringol Esp (Engl Ed). 2023 (6):386-396. doi: 10.1016/j.otoeng.2022.10.008.

³ Deaf Child Today 2025, Early Years Report. National Deaf Children's Society.

parents were 1.5 times more likely to report difficulty accessing audiology and Teacher of the Deaf services, and to rate those services poorly.³ Moreover, parents of children with additional needs were less likely to feel they had the information or emotional support required to support their children and often lacked the confidence to engage with other families. They were also less likely to agree that services and professionals offer a coordinated approach to care.

Despite growing awareness of deaf children's varied needs, evidence on those with additional or complex needs remains limited. Mapping the existing literature will help to clarify what is currently known, highlight gaps in research and practice, and inform future interventions and policy development.

TASKS AND OBJECTIVES

We seek to commission a review to systematically map and describe the existing evidence on deaf children with additional needs, including complex needs and disabilities, in order to identify research gaps, interventions and implications for policy and practice.

The potential objectives are to:

- Identify and collate published peer-reviewed literature that focuses on deaf children with additional needs, including complex needs and disabilities
- Appraise the quality of the evidence
- Describe the characteristics of the evidence, including volume of studies, country of origin, study design and methodology, population characteristics (e.g. age, gender type of deafness, communication approach, socio-economic background, ethnicity, first language), types of additional needs reported
- Summarise key findings related to interventions, outcomes and practice implications
- Highlight gaps in the evidence base to inform future research priorities

Potential review questions/ areas could be:

- What types of additional needs are most studied in deaf children?
- How do additional needs affect access to language and communication (sign/ spoken)?
- How does the intersection of deafness and other additional needs influence language, social, cognitive, communication outcomes?
- How do socio-economic background, ethnicity and first language interact with deafness and additional needs to shape outcomes?

- How do parents and carers of deaf children with additional needs navigate identification diagnosis, support and advocacy?
- How effectively are families supported by health, education and social care systems?
- What models / pathways of service delivery exist for deaf children with additional needs?
- What interventions have been described or evaluated for this population?
- What are the gaps in evidence regarding outcomes and best practices?
How does the diversity of additional needs among children affect their access to and experience of health and education services?

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES AND OUTPUTS

We expect to see the following outputs:

- **Report of the review findings**

A written report summarising the review findings, including background, aims, methodology, key findings, gaps in evidence, and recommendations. The report should be in a form that's appropriate for sharing with stakeholders, and publication on our website. Supporting materials, such as tables and appendices should be included to clearly present study characteristics and findings.

- **Lay summary**

A clear and accessible summary of the review findings, written for a non-specialist audience, to be shared externally with stakeholders, and published on our website. This could be presented as an infographic.

- **Peer-reviewed publication**

The review should lead to a peer-reviewed publication to increase credibility and impact. Open access would be required to ensure broad dissemination and accessibility.

TENDERING PROCESS

Your response to the tender should include the following information:

1. Understanding of scope

Please describe how you interpret the objectives of this review and your approach to the review questions. Explain what you consider are the key challenges in mapping evidence on deaf children with additional needs.

2. Proposed methodology

Clearly outline and justify the approach you would use for this review (e.g. scoping review, systematic review, rapid review). Describe how you will define inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies. Specify which databases and sources you will search. Explain how you will ensure comprehensiveness. Indicate which framework or guidelines you will follow.

3. Expertise and experience

Describe your experience in conducting reviews in health or education research. Describe any previous work involving children or populations with additional needs. Provide examples of similar projects undertaken and academic articles or reports published. Identify who will be involved in the review and outline their roles and qualifications.

4. Timeline

Please outline the key stages of your project and the time required for each. We expect the project and final report to be completed within six months. We recognise that preparation of a peer-reviewed journal article may extend beyond this period; therefore, we expect the article to be at submission stage by the end of the project.

5. Deliverables and outputs

Describe how you will meet the deliverables and outputs described above.

6. Budget and value

This should set out an indicative cost of the work. We have budgeted up to £18,000 (including open access fee for an academic journal). We are looking for proposals that can show us that researchers have thought carefully about what would be needed to fulfil the required tasks and objectives and how good value for money can be achieved.

The final budget will be confirmed prior to any contract being signed.

This section should make clear if VAT would apply and if the price is inclusive of VAT or not.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The main contacts at the National Deaf Children's Society will be Sian Lickess, Research Lead and Tanyel Oktar, Research Analyst.

Once we have agreed a partner, a contract will be prepared, which will set out the expected management arrangements.

We would ask for regular monthly updates throughout the review process to keep us updated.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Tenders should be sent to Sian Lickess by email sian.lickess@ndcs.org.uk with the subject heading: 'Tender - Deaf children with additional needs'

All applications must be received on or before: **Friday 27th February 2026** (11:59 p.m.)

An internal panel at the National Deaf Children's Society will review the tenders.

It is intended that a decision will be made primarily on the quality of the tenders received. The highest-scoring applications will be asked to participate in a short interview and submit references.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information or for an informal discussion, please contact Sian Lickess by email at sian.lickess@ndcs.org.uk