



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

BATOD Position paper - The retention and recruitment of Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

The British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD) is the United Kingdom's (UK) only professional association dedicated to Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs). BATOD was formed in 1976 in the name British Association of Teachers of the Deaf, by the amalgamation of The National College of Teachers of the Deaf (NCTD) and the Society of Teachers of the Deaf (STD). In 2022 BATOD revised the name to British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People to remove 'the deaf'.

The Association advocates for the interests of QToDs and the deaf babies, children, and young people they support, engaging with governments and key agencies at national and regional levels. BATOD nationally, and each individual region, have regular conferences and workshops to develop the professional expertise of Association members by enhancing the continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities, as well as national and regional meetings. BATOD, often in partnership with allied organisations, creates specialist publications and resources. Courses and conferences are open to non-members. BATOD continues to provide members and as appropriate allied professional associations and organisations specialist advice and guidance regarding professional routes to train as QToD, deaf children and young people's (CYP) access to communication and language, technology, education, the world around them among many other related aspects. These initiatives ensure members and allied professionals have access to current information, resources, and best practice guidance.

This document is a revision of the Recruitment and Retention [document](#) that was first published in September 2009 on the BATOD website for BATOD members only to provide a source of information. It is still intended to be a useful document from which colleagues can take sections of text, to use as they need in the discussion of understanding of the role of QToDs in the development of services to deaf CYP and their families and in their professional role as 'agents of change'. Throughout this document, the term 'deaf' is used to denote all levels and types of deafness.

This document will be reviewed annually, but members with knowledge of more up-to-date information are requested to draw it to the attention of the BATOD National Executive Officer immediately via email exec@batod.org.uk.

Contents

Executive summary

1. Context and purpose

2. Background

National specific QtoD requirements

Profile of educational provision

3. Vision

4. The role of the QToD

Significant factors

Summary

5. Retention

Recommendations

5(a) Current findings

5(b) Progression

5(c) Peer-to-peer QToD support in small services

5(d) Pay scales

5(e) Teacher's pay and conditions and non-contracted working hours

5(f) Profile of deaf CYP

6. Recruitment

Recommendations

The QToD mandatory qualification (MQ)

Funding for the postgraduate education MQ

Representation within the profession

Additional training needs

Communication approaches – skillset meeting demand



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

7. Service delivery in support services for deaf CYP

Significant factors

8. Impact on educational outcomes for deaf children and young people

9. Understanding the related legislation and practice

England

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

Guidance documents/quality standards

10. Summary

Other related BATOD documentation

Executive summary

The recruitment and retention of Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) is critical for ensuring the educational success and well-being of deaf CYP across the UK. This document, a revision of BATOD's 2009 publication, explores the challenges, opportunities, and strategic recommendations for addressing these issues in the context of legislative, economic, and social shifts. Key points include:

1. Role and significance of QToDs:

- The intervention from QToDs positively affects the quality of education and support for deaf CYP. QToDs possess specialised skills in audiology, communication, and language development that are crucial for supporting deaf children from early intervention through higher education¹.
- They address the unique needs of deaf CYP, ensuring compliance with international rights-based frameworks, eg the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and localised legalisation like the Equality Act and Disability Discrimination Act.

2. Challenges in retention and recruitment:

- Persistent staffing shortages due to retirements, pay disparities, limited career progression opportunities, and regional variations in pay incentives.
- Recruitment challenges include limited funding for training, difficulties attracting qualified candidates, and high stress levels among existing QToDs due to workload pressures.

3. Legislative and policy frameworks:

- Variations across the UK in recognising and mandating QToD qualifications complicate efforts to standardise services and training.

¹ BATOD's Articulating the specialism 'The role of the QToD in early years, mainstream, further education, higher education, auditory implant centres' www.batod.org.uk/information/batod-publication-articulating-the-specialism-series/

4. Emerging trends:

- Increasing complexity in the profiles of deaf CYP, including additional needs, complex presenting profiles, and increased awareness of auditory processing disorder².
- Growing demand for bilingual communication skills, eg British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language³ (ISL) among QToDs.

5. Recommendations:

- Strengthen financial incentives for training and retaining QToDs, including funded bursary schemes and apprenticeship routes.
- Develop structured career progression pathways for QToDs to enhance professional retention and motivation.
- Enhance diversity in the profession: There is a need for greater representation of deaf, disabled, and ethnic minority individuals within the QToD workforce to better support deaf CYP and their families.
- Expand access to specialist training and continuing professional development (CPD), particularly for bilingual and multi-disciplinary approaches.
- Foster collaborative models of service delivery, integrating health, education, and social care professionals.

6. Future vision:

- BATOD emphasises the need for a robust QToD workforce to ensure deaf CYP achieve equitable social well-being and educational outcomes, and meaningful societal participation.

This comprehensive analysis highlights the critical importance of addressing systemic challenges to safeguard and enhance the educational provision for deaf CYP.

² MESHGuide 'Auditory Processing Disorder' (MESHGuide Deaf Education series), hosted and managed by BATOD – [Auditory Processing Disorder in Children](#)

³ Northern Ireland has two signed languages –BSL and ISL. Both BSL and ISL were embraced within the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and in March 2004 the Secretary of State announced the formal recognition of BSL and ISL as languages in their own right, following similar recognition of BSL in Great Britain.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

1. Context and purpose

BATOD represents QToDs across the UK. Constituent members include QToDs employed across all types of educational provision in England (Department for Education), Scotland (Scottish Government), Wales (Department for Education and Skills), and Northern Ireland (Department of Education).

As a not-for-profit organisation representing professionals, BATOD is not a typical campaigning organisation, but it plays an important part in safeguarding the rights of deaf CYP and their families and assuring their entitlement to high-quality educational opportunities. The complexity of representing specialist teachers in changing environments across legislation in four countries cannot be underestimated.

BATOD engages with a range of allied charities eg National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) and professional associations across the UK.

This paper is intended to be a useful document from which colleagues can take sections of text to use as they need in the discussion of understanding the role of QToDs in the development of services to deaf CYP and their families.

2. Background

The retention of QToDs is one of BATOD's constitution objectives "To maintain and improve the status of QToDs as specialists working with deaf pupils in all educational age phases, and also to maintain and improve the status of those Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People working in contexts other than schools". As, too, is the constitutional remit of BATOD "To encourage and assist in the training of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People including mandatory qualification training and post-qualification continuing professional development" and "To promote the education of all deaf babies, children, young persons and adults and to promote the interests and status of all Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People, and members of allied professions". With evidence of the impact of high-quality early intervention, statistics around mental health needs of deaf CYP, ongoing gaps in attainment across the stages, and challenges in employability opportunities, the role of the QToD remains vital.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

There are at least 1,263 full-time equivalent (fte) (England), 47.2 fte (NI), 173.17 fte (Scotland) 64.7 fte (Wales) 1,548 fte QToD posts in the UK (Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) 2025). QToDs are qualified teachers with the additional skills, knowledge, and expertise required to provide quality teaching to deaf CYP in mainstream settings and those in specialist provisions. They have trained to achieve an additional MQ for supporting deaf CYP from birth to adulthood. They are a workforce of dedicated professionals that play a key role in ensuring deaf CYP's rights; the UNCRC, in particular Article 23 (support for disabled children), Article 28 (right to education), Article 31 (right to play) and Article 30 (minority language rights, including BSL), and the UNCRPD. A QToD, or an appropriately supervised ToD in training, is considered an auxiliary aid in terms of the Equality Act (England, Wales, and Scotland).

QToDs have additional understanding 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.

National specific QToD requirements

There are 150 local authorities in England, 1 education authority in Northern Ireland, 32 local authorities in Scotland, and 22 local authorities in Wales. CRIDE 2025 indicates “there were 253 resource provisions reported by services across the UK”. There are 22 specialist deaf schools listed on the BATOD website (2025)⁴.

Across the four UK nations, QToDs may be employed by a local authority without having the appropriate additional qualifications so long as the education authority is satisfied that the teacher is already in the process of training and will obtain these qualifications within three to five⁵ years of teaching deaf CYP.

⁴ www.batod.org.uk/information/special-schools-deaf-children-uk-and-roi/

⁵ In England, it is stated in the Education Regulations 2003 that students undertaking the MQ must be supervised by a qualified and experienced QToD and must achieve the MQ within three years of starting to work with deaf children ([Education \(School Teachers' Qualifications\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)). Currently in Scotland, it is five years; however, following the 2025 consultation, this timeframe might be reduced.

England

Within England, the Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice 0 to 25 years (p 183) states “Those teaching classes of children with sensory impairment must hold an appropriate qualification approved by the Secretary of State”, ie these specialist teachers **must** hold the MQ for teaching children with hearing, vision, or multi-sensory impairment. Teachers working in an advisory role to support such pupils should also hold the appropriate qualification. For the access to early support in the earliest years, ie from birth to two, the SEND code p 82 states this support can take a number of forms, including specialist support from health visitors, educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, or specialist teachers, such as a QToD or qualified teacher of the visually impaired (QTVI). These specialists may visit families at home to provide practical support, answering questions and clarifying needs. Further relevant legislation includes Section 36 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Regulations 6, 7, and 8 of the SEND Regulations 2014, eg “If the child or young person is either vision or hearing impaired, or both, the educational advice and information must be given after consultation with a person who is qualified to teach pupils or students with these impairments”

The 18⁶ special schools with specialisms for a deaf population vary in profile across England. There are a reported 215 resource provisions across England (CRIDE 2025). The NDCS in 2024 reported “217 resource provisions (RPs) in England across both primary and secondary schools”. Their report, Table 3 in part 4, reflected the number of central and delegated RPs in regions in England.

(% represents % of resource provisions in region)

Region	Number of resource provisions				
	Central		Delegated		Total
East England	10	36%	18	64%	28
East Midlands	1	9%	10	91%	11
London	10	20%	40	80%	50
North East	6	67%	3	33%	9
North West	10	50%	10	50%	20
South East	8	17%	38	83%	46
South West	1	7%	14	93%	15
West Midlands	9	56%	7	44%	16
Yorkshire & Humber	20	91%	2	9%	22
England	75	35%	142	65%	217

⁶ [Seashell](#), formerly the Royal School Manchester Seashell Trust, identifies as a specialist deaf school on the BATOD website.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

Northern Ireland

There is no reference to ToDs in the existing SEN Code of Practice (1998) (Northern Ireland).

There is one specialist school that supports children who deaf and/or have vision impairment and two RPs for deaf learners (one primary and one secondary).

The qualification for ToDs is not mandatory in NI; however, the value of the profession is recognised by the government in its acknowledgement of the QToD professional in Department of Education (DE) Circular 2007/22: “The commitment that a teacher must complete the qualification within 3 years. ‘To be eligible to teach pupils with visual and hearing impairment, the teacher must have successfully completed one of the approved courses listed on Annex B to this Circular”.

“To be eligible to teach pupils with visual and hearing impairment, the teacher must have successfully completed one of the approved courses listed on Annex B to this Circular.” (DE Circular 2007/22)

Scotland

The [Requirements for Teachers Regulations](#) (Scotland) requires each authority to employ adequate numbers of teachers with appropriate professional skills and knowledge necessary to enable those teachers to undertake the teaching duties allocated to them. Teachers who teach wholly or mainly sensory impaired children are required to possess appropriate qualification to teach such pupils.

There are 3 deaf specialist schools and 17 RPs across Scotland (CRIDE Scotland 2025)

Wales

The Welsh Code of Practice (2021) references “Teachers of the Deaf” but the statutory obligation is not as rigorously emphasised as it is in the English Code of Practice.

In Wales, teachers who gained Qualified Teacher Statuses (QTS) on or after 1 April 2003 must also have completed an induction period. There is no national expectation for QToDs to have any teaching experience prior to obtaining a QToD role.

Some deaf CYP in Wales required support from QToDs fluent in Welsh and English. There is no data available about the number of dual language Welsh/English speaking QToDs. Due to their geographical location in North Wales, some deaf CYP are supported by English auditory



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

implants that are very unlikely to have QToDs, speech and language therapists (SaLTs), or rehabilitation team staff fluent in Welsh.

There are no specialist schools in Wales catering specifically for deaf children. There are 44 special schools in Wales which cater for CYP with more severe special educational needs. Most have CYP with multiple needs including CYP who are deaf.

Wherever possible, deaf CYP either attend mainstream schools with appropriate support or one of the 19 designated deaf resource bases, depending on the nature and severity of their needs.

Profile of educational provision

Over recent decades, the developments and progress in the education systems have continued to change the profile of educational provision across the UK. 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, special schools for CYP, further education provisions, and universities. They may also work with CYP who are electively home educated or in health settings. A QToD may be working directly with deaf CYP in any of these settings.

As recognised in the 2009 publication of this document, throughout that time, the greatest impact arose from the newborn hearing screening programme (NHSP) with intervention from the earliest stages, and from the policy of inclusion of CYP with additional needs in the mainstream classroom, and the reduction in the number of deaf CYP placed in specialist provision. Since 2009 the emphasis of the role of QToD remains unchanged. QToDs need to work together, as a key multi-disciplinary partner, across all agencies for the benefit of deaf CYP, in a wide range of settings and in their communities, including the access to effective interventions in the earliest years.

During this time of educational shift there have been significant changes in the training of teachers. The requirement for a mandatory qualification (MQ) for QToDs, as well as QTVIs and teachers of multi-sensory impairment (QTMSIs) has been retained, with the need for trainee ToDs to have QTS*, but with a flexibility on the prior classroom experience and/or experience of deaf experience before undertaking training. These pressures continue to have different impacts in the four countries.

3. Vision

Since the introduction of the NHSP early in the 21st century, the aim for children born deaf is to establish their situation as early as possible so that the family can then make decisions and be offered early support from a QToD or other professionals/third-sector groups. They and their families need to receive early support from high-quality, efficient, and integrated services across agencies, which respond well to their changing needs. The ultimate goal is for young deaf people to have successful educational outcomes and to be enabled to take a full and meaningful part in the community.

Services will be delivered by a wide range of professionals working collaboratively in a multi-disciplinary team and in a network arrangement at different stages. This will involve several different providers from health, education, social care, and voluntary (third-sector) agencies, supporting parents and young people through providing unbiased information and peer support. The QtoD role traditionally, and actually, plays a key role in the process at all times, starting for many deaf CYP from the first few weeks of life. Across the UK, a small number of referrals to specialist support services are for children identified as deaf through the NHSP: 13% in England, 25% in Northern Ireland, 16% in Scotland, and 8% in Wales (CRIDE UK 2025).

QToDs work collaboratively with

- stakeholders to identify learning needs and advise on and provide appropriate support
- 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, 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 practice 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 evidenced-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 their preparation with Disability Students' Allowance (DSA) funding.

QToDs work on

- 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 well-being 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
 - to 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, teaches delivery, and guides decision making, while drawing on the specialist assessment of others, such as audiologists and SaLTs to inform their own assessments and advice
- policy and practice
 - embedding national and local legislation, guidance, initiatives, and research in their own teaching and other work with deaf CYP, parents, and settings.

4. The role of the QToD

- QToDs with the MQ are recognised in all four countries of the UK as having expert knowledge and training in audiology, communication, and language development. This will include expertise in the latest specialist assistive listening devices, equipment, and hearing aids, as well as the understanding of early spoken English and BSL (BSL/ISL in Northern Ireland) acquisition processes.
- They support CYP and their families from identification to further and higher education and employment and so have an understanding of the impact of deafness on language acquisition, development, and communication (both in relation to both spoken and signed languages) and all aspects of educational attainment and social inclusion.
- The NHSP ensures all parents/carers, since 2005 are offered hearing screening for their new child within the first few weeks of life. It is a core service within the health services of the UK, and QToDs usually provide that early support and contact with the family, with 1 to 2 babies in every 1,000 born with permanent deafness in one or both ears ([National Health Service \(NHS\) England, 2021](#)), and between 1 and 3 per 1,000 live births (approximately 15 children per week) being identified with bilateral severe or profound levels of deafness. The welcome involvement in such early diagnosis has implications for services needing to be available to respond to diagnosis at any time, including over the summer holidays. It has led to ~25% of a peripatetic (peri) QToD's working practice occurring in the family home with the 0–5 age range, ie outside the classroom.
- The principles of an early support and key working approach are embraced across the UK with the role of the QToD as an agent of change working in partnership with a team of professionals, coordinated by a lead professional or keyworker, who provides a valuable service to families with children under five years. QToDs often use 'Success from the start', an NDCS publication, a revision of DFES 2025 Early Support Monitoring Protocol (ESMP) as a monitoring tool.
- The majority of deaf school-aged CYP are taught in mainstream classes, some in resource provisions, and a minority in special schools of all types (see Table 1).
- CRIDE 2025 reports suggest that there were 54,321 deaf children reported by services across the UK (45,902 England, 1,527 NI 3,649 Scotland, and 2,147 Wales).

Table 1: Data summary from the CRIDE England 2025, CRIDE Northern Ireland 2025, CRIDE Scotland 2025, and CRIDE Wales 2025 reports

	Mainstream schools	Special schools not specifically for deaf children	Resourced provisions in mainstream schools	Special schools for deaf children	Home educated
England	78%	13%	6%	2%	1%
NI	66%	18%	1%	4%	–
Scotland	82%	8%	9%	1%	–
Wales	un	7%	5%	N/A	1%

- The QToD will support, as a member of a team in all these settings, recognising local policy may restrict the profile of deaf CYP receiving direct QToD support. The QToD may work with a class of children or individual deaf CYP, collaborating with mainstream class teachers and support staff, teaching assistants (TAs), and communication support workers (CSWs) or interpreters. Since the Warnock Report (1978), there has been a recognition of a lack of teacher training around meeting the needs of learners with SEND. In whichever provision, the QToD contributes to the aims of the setting and the educational outcomes of the CYP.
- They will work within a wide range of settings. QToDs will be employed directly by local authorities children's services (as specialist teachers in support services); a small number work in teams that service a number of local authority areas in a region, schools (or within England in academies too), primary care trusts, and voluntary bodies. They may work as members of a team of professionals across all of these settings.
- Some QToDs specialise in working with deaf children from identification and during the early years, some in further and higher education, some work as educational audiologist, which in some areas can involve joint working with clinical audiologists from an NHS audiology environment. Unlike educational audiologists in America, whose role is as clinic audiologists who then specialise to work with deaf CYP, educational audiologists in the UK are QToDs with an additional level 7 postgraduate qualification in educational audiology.

Significant factors

Over the last two decades, the number of QToDs continues to decrease as the current workforce reaches retirement age (see Table 2 below). This CRIDE data suggests that there is some movement towards a lower average QToD age profile, particularly in Northern Ireland. However, the data also reflects a loss in the cohort of experienced QToDs as 48% of them were aged 50 and over and due to retire in the next 10 to 15 years. In 2021 this stood at 50%.

Table 2 CRIDE 2023 age profile data

	England	Northern Ireland	Scotland	Wales	Total
Aged 49 or under	334.27 (49%)	19.6 (77%)	91.24 (60%)	23.6 (64%)	468.71 (52%)
Aged between 50–59	291.4 (43%)	5.8 (23%)	50.7 (33%)	11.1 (31.1%)	359.1 (40%)
Aged between 60 and 64	51.6 (8%)	0 (0%)	8 (5%)	1.8 (5%)	61.4 (7%)
Aged 65 or over	7.2 (1%)	0 (0%)	2.6 (2%)	0	9.8 (1%)
Total	684.47	25.4	152.54	36.6	899.01

In response to queries about younger teachers entering the profession, BATOD has started to collect data. The membership data, Table 3, provides an indication of numbers of ToDs/QToDs in the younger age groups entering the profession.

Table 3 BATOD membership – QToD members (including those on MQ degree) only

Age range	No. of QToDs* 2025	Percentage	No. of QToDs* 2024	Percentage
20 – 29	16	1.4	12	1.2
30 – 39	163	14	184	16.4
40 – 49	366	31.3	329	29.5
50 – 59	354	30.2	356	31.9
60+	172	14.7	121	10.8
Not declared	100		114	10.2
	1171	100%	1116	100%
Deaf	143/1172	12.2	131 (1116)	11.7%

From information provided by CRIDE, it is clear that there remains a demand for additional teachers with the MQ to fill unmet needs in the majority of local authorities, including the specialist RPs settings for deaf CYP that may not be directly managed by local authorities.

Table 4 (CRIDE 2025) Filled and vacant ToD posts

	2023 fte ToDs in employment	2024 fte ToDs in employment	2025 fte ToDs in employment	2023 fte vacant posts	2024 fte vacant posts	2025 fte vacant posts	2023 Total ToD posts fte	2024 Total ToD posts fte	2025 Total ToD posts fte
England	1222.15	1220.75	1222	45	37.52	41	1267.15	1258.27	1263
NI	44	46.8	47.2	1.4	0	0	45.4	46.8	47.2
Scotland	167.24	168.34	165.57	4.6	7.8	6.9	171.84	176.14	173.17
Wales	64.3	62.8	62.1	1.6	2	2.6	65.9	64.8	64.7
UK	1497.69	1498.69	–	52.6	47.32	–	1550.29	1546.01	–

Table 5 Percentage change in number of ToDs CRIDE 2025)

	England	NI	Scotland	Wales
ToDs with MQ in employment	–24%	–26%	–41%	–16%
ToDs with MQ in employment or in training	–21%		–33%	–16%
Teachers working as ToDs in employment	–20%	–23%	–	–18%
Vacant posts	21%		–	0
No. ToD posts including vacancies	–19%	–25%	–	–

**It is a note of interest that in Wales in 2009 there were 119 QToDs in Wales registered ([Senedd Cymru members discussion](#)).*

The CRIDE report UK 2025 indicated that there was a mixed picture in relation to the number of teachers employed as QToDs with the MQ, those in training, and those without the MQ.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

If the general teaching population also continues to fail to secure sustainable recruitment levels, there will be an additional factor impact on future QToD numbers. There may be a period approaching when it is likely that more QToDs will leave the profession or retire than the numbers available to join our workforce.

The QToD workforce is not just employed in education. A specialist area of employment for some [QToDs is in the NHS](#), in rehabilitationist roles in auditory/cochlear implant services. For a number of years, some centres have not recruited QToDs to the role, some report no challenges with recruitment and retention, while others have experienced challenges with recruitment in recent years. Some members report the role has been not attractive due to the difference between the NHS and teachers' pay contracts. However, in relation to questions about work–life balance in the 2025 BATOD membership survey, some respondents reported “a positive work–life balance”, more so in relation to moving to NHS employment and satisfaction with the pay level.

Summary

Within each country, the service delivery model across many local authorities and special schools varies. While the structure in some areas may have resulted from historical decisions, it may support flexibility in provision for some areas. Nevertheless, the decline in QToDs in employment over the years will impact the ability of the services/settings to deliver the provision in their model and allow for the flexibility required to meet changes needed in the low incidence population. The changes reported in recent years include a significant increase in CYP with complex needs profiles, CYP who are deafblind, CYP/families selecting bilingual communication, children aided for glue ear due to waiting lists for grommet operations, connectivity between assistive listening and other assistive technology, supporting the assistive listening technology needs for CYP with auditory processing disorder, the amount and type of mentoring and training of new ToD staff with limited prior experience in education, and the internal cover of caseload for staff who require one day per week study leave to successfully undertake the MQ (see BATOD guidance for employers on study leave).

5. Retention

The 2025 BATOD membership survey asked members to share the reasons that influenced any changes in employment roles. Responses reflected a passion and commitment to the work with deaf CYP and their families.

“The job is great. It offers a better work–life balance than being a mainstream class teacher and is much more satisfying.”

A common reported job role change was from RPs to peri QToD employment, with some examples of moves from specialist deaf schools to peri QToDs too. One QToD noted the need to apply for the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) role in order to secure a resourced provision role.

An analysis of the submissions identified a number of trends with workload and well-being being the main drivers.

“There is a lot of duplication of admin and planning unnecessarily and little to no thought given to our personal lives”

Challenges for recruiting QToD roles in RPs, deaf specialist schools, local authorities with negative inspection/area review history, perceived unattractive location due to social economic status, and policy of the setting, eg academic regarding QTS status of the teaching population.

“The increase in workload, ever-increasing percentage of contact time and not protected PPA [planning, preparation, and assessment] time alongside the increased needs of the children we are now supporting has led to a picture of over-stressed team members who simply don’t have enough time in the week to meet the needs of the pupils fully.”

Some QToDs in RPs raised concerns about inappropriate line management/provision management, eg QToD line-managed by a support staff member, or provision managed strategically by a SENCo with support staff member leading on the operational provision management.

The increased workload and unrealistic expectations were cited most among the responses, with particular reference to challenges in resource provision and related mainstream integration often linked to academies.

“School has transferred to an academy that doesn’t understand SEND including Deafness and is increasingly not meeting the needs of Deaf children or children with SEND.”

“Previously when working in a resource provision I felt that mainstream staff didn’t treat me as a professional in my field and there was consistent blocking of support.”

- Pay issues for QToDs and support staff (aspiring QToDs) across the UK. Many QToDs are centrally employed.
 - In England, the local services are not in the same position as schools regarding access for the agreed 2025 pay rise which will put unnecessary demand on pressurised budgets.
 - In Scotland, there is no pay difference between non-specialist teachers and the specialist teachers who have successfully completed the postgraduate MQ specialism in deaf education.
 - In Northern Ireland, three years prior mainstream teaching experience is a requirement, there is variation in other parts of the UK. Some MQ course providers will allow a teacher to move directly from achieving QTS onto the MQ, subject to the individual’s background experience.

Some respondents reported finding the role rewarding, with the challenge as “exciting” or “manageable” perhaps due to their current setting and/or prior experience. (BATOD survey 2025)

Some QToD members reported in the BATOD survey 2025 valuing the experience their prior teaching brought to the engagement with teachers. Lack of experience prior to MQ training which impacted on the quality of recruits in RPs, deaf specialist schools for the deaf, and local authorities led to inappropriate appointment of staff/higher exit from the professional during/post-MQ, when the recruitee felt the profession was no longer the right fit and which had subsequent financial and reputational implications when re-advertising the role(s).

- Progression opportunities within deaf education are limited. Headteacher and head of service roles can often be fulfilled by non-specialist teachers. Senior manager roles and/or roles with additional responsibilities within services eg lead QToD, educational audiologist are limited.

“Some QToDs shared opportunities that enabled promotion into lead QToD/service manager roles and roles specific to early years. However, many respondents indicated financial constraints and budget cuts led to redundancy and service delivery change to a peri-only provision. In addition, the financial cutbacks impact the availability of specialist equipment and resources affects the quality of intervention that QToDs can deliver.” (BATOD survey 2025)

- Progression opportunities within deaf education for deaf professionals outside of deaf specialist schools are reported to be limited
 - Limited access to specialist continued professional development for upskilling BSL levels, Auditory Verbal approaches, assistive and assistive listening technology training, meeting the needs of CYP with deaf plus additional needs profiles, supporting the needs of deaf CYP in special school settings, and guidance for statutory assessment and examination access.
 - “The need for tailored, individualised approaches is emphasised with many highlighting the need to have access to regular, targeted professional development on APD [auditory processing disorder], trauma-informed practice, the use of assistive technology and co-occurring conditions particularly linked sensory processing.”

“Most of the resources that I use have been gathered from my previous experiences in SEND. However, as with most children with SEND, resources often have to be modified or bespoke.”

“We are trying to develop resources with sign photo and the word for children new to the country and assessment tools for this situation.”

Some respondents indicated the financial constraints within their service limits access to any training, unless they self-fund. (BATOD member survey 2025)

Recommendations

- In England, the independent School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB) recommended a pay award of 4% to uplift the pay and allowances for teachers from 1 September 2025. The pay award was 5.5% in 2024. BATOD feels these were essential first steps in the



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

reversal of the real terms pay cuts inflicted upon teachers and school leaders. Continued efforts required to restore the 14% that teachers and school leaders have lost since 2010.

- In Scotland the support, training and additional pay and reward for QToDs is weaker than the package provided in the other nations of the UK, although overall teachers' pay is higher in Scotland as result of years of negotiations between the Scottish Government, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the unions. Therefore, the allowance approach applied in the rest of the UK is not likely to be a viable option for addressing concerns about QToD pay. BATOD, Scottish Sensory Centre and Heads of Deaf education services should continue to work together to identify viable pay reward options for QToDs/ToDs.
- In Northern Ireland in 2024, a rise in the starting salary for teachers in to £30,000 was agreed. Continued efforts are required to maintain rates that are comparable to other UK nations.
- The second point should also be mandatory for those ToDs who hold the relevant MQ (see BATOD Allowances for QToD policy).
- QToDs should have regular access to specialist training, deaf education-specific conferences that offer peer reviewed evidence-based research and practice, plus a specific network of professional peers, and opportunities to take part in action research to effectively meet the needs of the cohorts they support.
- CRIDE should collect and report on positions held by deaf QToDs.
- BATOD members should contribute to a review on the experiences of deaf professionals in the workplace.

There is difficulty with recruitment and retention in all four UK countries with an observable increase in the number of job listings post-pandemic. In 2019 the NDCS, who has been campaigning against cuts to QToD since 2011, reported “we know there has been a 17% drop in the number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf across the UK. We also know that over half of Teachers of the Deaf are due to retire in the next ten to fifteen years”. The joint NDCS/BATOD survey in 2019 of 625 QToDs from across the UK asked questions about their jobs and about specialist support for deaf children.

The findings included:

- the majority (58%) reporting “there is less support available for deaf children” in comparison to in 2014
- almost half of ToDs believing that deaf children are less likely to make good educational progress now than in 2014 when the government in England made big reforms to the education system for children with special needs
- the majority (85%) expressing their workload had increased since 2014, with 87% working additional hours to keep up with their workload and 96% saying they felt stressed in their job role. More than 60% of ToDs are working the equivalent of a whole extra day per week, unpaid, just to catch up
- 17% indicating they were considering leaving the profession as a result of pressures of the job, too.

The responses in the 2025 BATOD membership survey echoed some of these findings.

“Workload and well-being being the main drivers” for QToDs leaving the profession or changing the type of QToD role.

Increased workload and unrealistic expectations were cited most among the responses, with particular reference to challenges in RPs and related mainstream integration often linked to academies. The issue is not only with RPs but all provision models.

Some respondents mentioned being asked to “do more for less” and facing “unrealistic expectations” from parents, schools, and management.

5(a) Current findings

The BATOD 2025 membership survey responses reflect there is difficulty in recruiting and retaining QToDs and a sustainable workforce.

“Recruitment can be challenging – capacity of existing staff to coach and mentor newly qualified ToD is an issue when in challenging circumstances.”

“We will find it difficult to replace our QToD when she retires next year.”



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

“There are further implications for succession planning and workforce development. With fewer QToDs in post, there are limited opportunities to mentor and support new entrants to the profession.”

“Gaining funding for additional staff once ToDs retire can be challenging.”

BATOD carried out a survey in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 of deaf education professional posts advertised on the BATOD website in the respective academic years. In 2023/2024, a majority of the 82-job listing were roles in England; although Scottish settings typically advertise on the Scottish job platforms, there has been an increase of listings from Scotland and Wales.

Of approximately 82 jobs listed between August 2023 and July 2024 from 58 settings, of which 41 settings listed single job submissions and 17 settings who submitted multiple jobs:

- There were approximately 11 adverts relisted for the same job role following unsuccessful recruitment
- There had been an increase in the number of settings experiencing challenges accessing an advertising budget to support recruitment. Again, this year, there was feedback noting the difficulty in attracting teachers who are already qualified to the QToD role
- Approximately 85 adverts were listed between August 2024 and July 2025 from 47 settings
- The number of relisted adverts for the same job role following unsuccessful recruitment remained at approximately 11 adverts
- Some settings experienced challenges accessing an advertising budget to support recruitment. The difficulty in attracting teachers who are already qualified to the QToD role remains a common theme for some employers
- Informal membership feedback suggests retention in deaf specialist schools seems to be higher as the postholders tend to stay in the role until they retire, although feedback via the 2025 membership survey indicates that some members left the specialist setting for a better work balance in a peripatetic role.

In 2023, National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) surveyed heads of specialist education services and provision for learners with sensory impairment on recruitment of qualified teachers of sensory impairment (QTSIs). This received 44 responses from across the UK, the majority of which were from within England.

NatSIP survey key findings:

- Over 4 in 5 heads had tried to recruit in the last three years
- 30% had to go through two or three rounds of recruitment before they could appoint anyone
- 41% said there was a significant delay of more than a term before they could recruit someone
- Only 19% were able to recruit a QTSI with the MQ – most are recruiting a teacher and then funding their training for the MQ
- When asked about the impact of any delays or not being able to recruit a QTSI, heads referred to increased workload/stress for existing staff and reduced support for children with SI
- The main direct costs associated around not being able to recruit a QTSI related to supply cover
- On average, respondents reported 0.5 unfilled QTSI posts in their service/school.

The 2025 BATOD membership survey responses indicated a small number of services and settings experience no impact or even positive staffing situations:

“We haven’t had a decline in [our LA]. We employ 17 QToDs (some are part time). All are qualified. I know this is unusual. We are in a fortunate position now.”

“It doesn’t; we are very lucky to have a full complement of ToDs. SEND in our county really value our role.”

“Not at all – we always have a large number of applicants for posts.”

However, the majority of respondents highlighted challenges:

“There are further implications for succession planning and workforce development. With fewer QToDs in post, there are limited opportunities to mentor and support new entrants to the profession.”

“Gaining funding for additional staff once ToDs retire can be challenging.”

In some areas it is reported services are adapting by training mainstream staff and shifting QToDs to advisory roles which is both a necessity and a risk, as it can dilute specialist expertise and reduce the depth of support:



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

“We have had to look at ways of training our own mainstream staff to provide support for deaf pupils.”

“Services are increasingly structured around consultation and advisory models rather than intensive one-to-one teaching.”

5(b) Progression

There is not an obvious career structure for QToDs working outside specialist schools for the deaf, particularly evident with feedback from Scottish members over the last few decades. Across England, Wales, and Scotland an increasing number of head of support service positions are held by non-QToD/QTVI/QTMSI specialists.

Some deaf QToDs feel the lack of representation of deaf professionals in senior local authority roles reflects a glass ceiling in career progression for deaf QToDs.

5(c) Peer-to-peer QToD support

In small services

QToDs in small services may find that they are the only employed QToD or part of very small team. Creative management by heads of services has often seen the establishment of close relationships with a nearby authority where there may be a larger ToD team and/or statistically similar local authorities.

In larger services

QToDs in the peripatetic role, more so those new to appointment post-pandemic, have a sense of disconnect with the QToD team due to not having a base, with fewer opportunities to learn from the more experienced QToD roles, build team relationships, and feel supported from the transition from the smaller school community to the larger local authority structure. In addition, some members feel that with the pressure to manage larger caseloads, the job is becoming less teaching based to more of an advisory one.

5(d) Pay scales

Across the UK, a majority of QToDs are employed on teachers' pay and conditions. The *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) published in 2023 the main teacher pay scale in three UK

nations (Image 1); Image 2 indicates the pay scales for England in 2025.

Teacher pay, England (excluding London)				Teacher pay in different UK nations			
	2024-25	2025-26	Increase	England	Wales	Scotland	
M1	£31,650	£32,916	4.0%	outside of London from Sept 2023 with DfE pay offer	from September 2023	from January 2024	
M2	£33,483	£34,822	4.0%				
M3	£35,674	£37,101	4.0%				
M4	£38,034	£39,555	4.0%				
M5	£40,438	£42,056	4.0%				
M6	£43,606	£45,350	4.0%				
U1	£45,646	£47,472	4.0%				
U2	£47,338	£49,232	4.0%				
U3	£49,084	£51,047	4.0%				
M0*	N/A	N/A		£30,000	N/A	£32,217	
M1				£31,680	£30,742	£38,655	
M2				£33,455	£33,210	£40,848	
M3				£35,328	£35,769	£43,218	
M4				£37,538	£38,586	£45,960	
M5				£40,479	£42,464	£48,516	
M6						N/A	

Some English local authorities may contract their staff as advisory QToDs and subsequently contract them on Soulbury or have local arrangements. QToDs employed by the NHS are employed under NHS pay and conditions.

In London, it is vital to offer more to retain skilled staff, eg Teaching and Learning Responsibilities (TLRs) and the leadership scale.

Outside of Scotland, many QToDs often receive an additional payment for their specialist MQ, eg £2,384 uplift for QToDs in training and a maximum £4,703 uplift for those qualified (although levels of pay may vary from employer to employer). Teachers' pay and progression in Scotland is a complex area. Although teacher pay scales are higher in Scotland, there is no additional remuneration in recognition of specialist level 7 postgraduate qualification as a QToD.

In addition to better pay condition for QToDs, members also indicated that petrol/car expenses need to be reviewed to help with the increased living cost.

5(e) Teachers' pay and conditions and non-contracted working hours

While there are quality standards requirements (NDCS 'Early years support for children with a hearing loss, aged 0 to 5 (England)' and Scottish Sensory Centre (2011) 'Scottish Standards for deaf children (0–3): Families and professionals working together to improve services') for QToDs to establish contact with parents within two working days if the baby has been identified as deaf through the NHSP, as yet there is no consistency across all UK services on the approaches to 52-week cover. In some areas this may be in relation to the application of teachers' pay and conditions and non-contracted working hours.

In Scotland, despite the specialism of the QToD to support early intervention, the 0–3 provision in some areas is led and delivered only by health via a SALT who may not hold any additional specialism in deafness. However, education authorities also have duties under the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 to provide appropriate support for children under the age of three who have support needs arising from their disability. If parity in access to specialist early intervention provision is embedded for deaf children and families across all areas, this will require considerations within QToD services for approaches to 52-week cover and the application of teachers' pay and conditions and non-contracted working hours.

5(f) Profile of deaf CYP

An increasing number of deaf CYP are being diagnosed as deaf with additional needs, which has an influence on staff training and allocation of resources. In particular, the profile of many specialist schools for deaf CYP and RPs has widened from the traditional 'deaf' profile. In addition, due to a lack of specialist services for assessments, the additional needs of some deaf CYP may not be identified. Long waiting lists for Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (DCAMHS) in areas of England are impacting on meeting the mental health and well-being needs of some deaf CYP.

However, the upskilling of QToDs through ongoing CPD will support those deaf CYP in having their needs profile recognised and understood by a suitably qualified professional.

Within England, the NHS healthy hearing scheme programme in residential special schools may lead to an increase in the number of identified deaf CYP with additional needs to deafness.

Further recent developments that expand the profile for CYP requiring specialist input include the World Health Organization (WHO) recognition of "auditory processing disorder (APD) – a generic term for hearing disorders that result from the poor processing of auditory information in the brain" (WHO, 2021) and the 2023 NICE guidance 'Otitis media with effusion in under 12s' intertwined with growing ear, nose, and throat (ENT) waiting lists.

A high number of deaf CYP, with their families, continue to relocate to the UK from a range of countries and for a variety of reasons. Some deaf CYP have mis-identified disability profiles, significant language deprivation causing very delayed language and communication skills, and need very high levels of intensive support from QToDs in the mainstream environment where they are often placed, sometimes inappropriately.

6. Recruitment

Recognition:

- of the increasing complex profile of deaf students in RPs
 - “Without robust assessment there is a risk of inappropriate placement, where the child’s needs are not best met and where specialist provision is being used in a way that does not reflect its intended purpose.”
 - “Most of the children who now attend the base in which I work, have additional needs.”
 - Settings with RPs, particularly in areas where there is no deaf specialist school option and/or local authorities support, are under-pressure to reduce out-of-city/county placements and have experienced a change in student profile.
 - Members are reporting understaffing in settings with RPs, eg one fte QToD for 15+ deaf pupils in a provision. BATOD has recommended an one-to-six ratio in schools with RPs.
- of services and settings who have been
 - progressive in their service model delivery and sustainability planning through diverse professional staffing model designs and/or regional partnership arrangements to meet the need of the complex deaf cohort profile
 - achieving and retaining healthy QToD position numbers
 - recruiting deaf QToDs to the mainstream per role and challenging the misconception that deaf QToD who prefer to use sign language can’t support the 89% of deaf children in settings that are reported as using only spoken English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic
- that staff employed in a QToD role must hold the MQ
 - a QToD position can be filled by a qualified teacher, ie with QTS, willing to undertake the MQ and complete it within the set timeframe (three years in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland; five years in Scotland.)

- local authority peri teams recruiting Early Careers Teachers (ECT) (England) face challenges undertaking the MQ as ECT induction can only be completed in an organisation that has a headteacher or principal, and a governing body to sign off the induction programme.

Respondents in the BATOD 2025 membership survey reported:

- “ECT status has positively influenced recruitment and early retention of newly qualified ToDs by providing structured induction, mentoring, and professional development.”
- “ECT status has positively influenced recruitment and early retention.... However, challenges such as high caseloads, specialist workload, and limited training capacity mean that additional strategies are needed to sustain recruitment and long-term retention.”

Several responses highlighted barriers created by ECT requirements:

- “The insistence on 2 years in a classroom and not in a base (or peri service) has meant we've lost 2 great teachers who wanted to join us as ToDs and do their ECT with us and then their ToD training.”
- “Yes. 2 years is too long and can put off career change teachers from spending over 5 years retraining. Doing both simultaneously is even harder and may break new teachers.”
- “There is far more on schools now; process takes much longer and requires more staff time. The amount of non-contact time means ECT struggles when they get to the usual 10% PPA.”
- “The ECT framework is designed for mainstream classroom teachers and does not fully account for the highly specialised nature of the ToD role.”
- “Because of the need to complete QTS first and then the MQ for ToDs, there is a delay in getting fully qualified ToDs into the workforce.”

BATOD is mindful of the need to increase the number of teachers entering the workforce, the sustainability needs of the course providers, the potential wealth of knowledge of some individuals with prior CSW experience, and current experience a parent may have that supports a fast-track route into the profession, but it also recognises the confidence to work with the deaf

and additional needs expressed by members who have secured mainstream teaching experience.

“Respondents reported finding the role rewarding, with the challenge as ‘exciting’ or ‘manageable’, often because they work in specialist settings or have extensive prior experience and qualifications from a background in the wider SEND sector.” (BATOD 2025 membership survey)

- Within England, it is the responsibility of the Department of Education to monitor, although it is not clear how rigidity this is monitored. To date there is no similar arrangement in Scotland. The CRIDE Scottish data 2025 indicated that 5% of teachers are unqualified individuals working in the capacity as a QToD, without any mandatory training pathway.
- QToD roles in some settings with RPs are being replaced by higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs), support staff, ALNcos /SENcos/additional support needs (ASN) co-ordinator. It is suggested that this might be more common in academies. Academies have more flexibility around QTS, ie it is only mandatory that SENcos and designated leads for looked-after children have to hold QTS. Nevertheless, if unqualified staff are presenting in meetings as the QToD, this is a breach of the code of practice. However, there is no clear pathway for reporting breaches and no process to prevent intentional or unintentional gatekeeping of the right to access a QToD.
- Within higher education, the role of the QToD is classed as a sensory support professional (SSP), which is a role other professional such as CSWs can fill. Anecdotal evidence suggested that some CSWs are employed as SSPs. Young adults, familiar with QToD input in their younger years, are not informed of the absence of the QToD specialism and have to request a QToD after a period of insufficient support from the SSP.
- Deaf specialist schools and schools with RPs are increasingly experiencing financial pressure when budgeting for their new unqualified ToD staff to complete the two-year part-time MQ course due to MQ costs, study days, release for shadowing colleagues in other services, related training, teaching placements, and supply cover for the school class groups.

- It is an objective of BATOD “To encourage the development of the role of Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Communication Support Workers (CSWs) in supporting the work of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People.” In England, the qualified teacher covers tutors with Qualified Teacher Learning Skills (QTLS) too. Some local authorities/settings have been able to identify and support progression routes for support staff/CSWs wishing to embark on the route at the level 7 requirements for the MQ course to qualify as a QToD.

Recommendations

- Local authorities recruiting ECTs should develop links with suitable schools to provide a fair induction experience.
- Clear pathways for reporting breaches of the code of practice should be implemented.
- Statutory documents should be monitored to ensure the intervention of a QToD has been provided as an option.
- Charity-based bursary options, although current options are not UK-wide, should still be given as they provide a route for teachers not in employment to undertake the MQ.
- BATOD should work with relevant bodies to establish guidance in routes to training for QTS/QTLS and then the QToD MQ.
- Each of the four governments should fund a central bursary scheme to cover the training costs of QToDs for one year to provide a ‘stopgap’ solution to the decline in QToDs.
- Support should be given to universities such as the University of Edinburgh which aims to deliver an undergraduate degree in primary education with BSL. The new course will allow individuals fluent in BSL to become qualified primary school teachers with QTS status; teachers are then eligible to enrol on the MQ ToD level 7 postgraduate degree.

The QToD mandatory qualification (MQ)

The QToD MQ is a master’s level course and is worth 120 credits, ie two-thirds of a master’s level. The part-time (two years or two-and-a-half years) courses are offered for teachers with QTS/QTLS. In England, QTLS is recognised as equivalent to QTS. The MQ is recognised in all four UK countries and internationally, eg in New Zealand and Australia.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

Part-time courses are available at the Universities of Birmingham, Edinburgh, Mary Hare School, Leeds, and Manchester.

- [University of Birmingham](#)
- [University of Edinburgh](#)
- [Mary Hare courses in partnership with Liverpool John Moore University](#)
- [University of Leeds](#)
- [University of Manchester](#)

BATOD considers that the minimum standards and range of competences for training ToDs in their respective UK nations for the mandatory qualification are encapsulated in the specifications published by the governments linked to the course providers ([Department for Education \(2023\)](#)/[Scottish Government \(2007\)](#)) (revised publication pending in 2026).

Funding for the postgraduate education MQ

ToDs in training will usually be funded by their employing local authorities, school, or academy and may compete for funding against teachers seeking other qualifications and courses; a number (less than 10%) fund themselves or successfully secure a funding grant from charity bodies such as Ovingdean Hall Foundation, Birkdale, Lawrence Werth or Jennifer Gough.

Ovingdean Hall Foundation is restricted to only the four English course providers. Birkdale, Lawrence Werth, and Jennifer Gough are restricted to applications only for the University of Manchester course. The University of Leeds is the only university to offer a deaf education study bursary (one award).

- Trainee ToDs from independent or non-maintained special schools are usually funded on the MQ courses by their schools.,
- Apprenticeship route (England only) – with the change in government, it was confirmed in 2025 that the apprenticeship route would no longer be a long-term option for the level 7 MQ.

In meetings with all UK governments, BATOD has highlighted the need for a bursary option. The original version of this paper recorded that in 2009, the Training and Development Agency (TDA) for schools in England introduced funding to 95% of local authorities, for 40 additional



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

teachers to train for an MQ in teaching deaf children with sensory impairment during 2009, and 22 in 2010 (two cohorts of students). The reasons for the additional places were to build capacity, to meet new demands from increasing number of children with complex needs, and to improve the quality of provision.

In the same time period, a similar initiative in Wales (funded by Senedd Cymru) proved a short-term success as an increased number of teachers undertook training, but this was insufficient to match the number of teachers who retired, and there is again a shortage of qualified specialist teachers.

In Scotland to date, no similar initiatives have been introduced.

In Northern Ireland there is limited access to budgets to fund training and peer-to-peer opportunities.

An apprenticeship route was explored in England; however, following a change in government, the option was not possible. Even if any similar route were achieved, the need for bursaries would remain as apprenticeship-type routes would only support those employed by a local authority and would not support the number of QToDs available to be employed by colleges, schools, the NHS, etc.

The very small pool of qualified staff across the country, whenever services are trying to recruit, was also identified in the 2016 Scottish specialist teacher survey by Ravenscroft and Wazny.

The reasons for the additional places include

- to build capacity
- to meet the need for an increasing focus on the early years and the need for parents to receive well-informed and unbiased information
- to support new demands from increasing numbers of children with complex needs
- to improve the quality of provision.

New challenge

In England, the introduction of the ECT, replacing newly qualified teacher (NQT) status, applies to QTS teachers for the first two years in teaching. Some newly qualified teachers may aim to



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

enter the QToD profession directly after completing their teaching training course. However, the ECT framework is designed for mainstream classroom teachers not the specialised ToD role.

If a teacher is appointed to a QToD role, the specialist MQ must be completed within three years of starting in the role. The ECT has complications for local authorities employing newly qualified teachers due to the timetable remit in meeting the requirements for the ECT induction period – section 2.17 of the ‘Induction for Early Career Teachers’ ‘A suitable post for induction’ which states that it must “involve similar planning, teaching and assessment processes to those in which other teachers working in similar substantive posts in the institution are engaged in”. Also “The professional judgement of headteachers and appraisers is therefore central to appraisal against these standards.” (p 6). Therefore, the ECT cannot solely teach SEN classes; there needs to be mainstream experience of effectiveness against the standards for teachers www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards

In a 2025 BATOD membership survey, respondents highlighted that the ECT “offers a clear framework and expectations, which can reduce the anxiety often associated with starting a teaching career” and that the “ECT status has positively influenced recruitment and early retention of newly qualified ToDs by providing structured induction, mentoring, and professional development. However, challenges such as high caseloads, specialist workload, and limited training capacity mean that additional strategies are needed to sustain recruitment and long-term retention”. In addition, “services may struggle to provide mentors who are both trained ECT mentors and experienced QToDs, which is essential for relevant professional development” which may “deter services from recruiting NQTs into QToD roles due to concerns over support quality”.

“Schools receive funding for reduced timetables and mentoring, which may help resource the additional support needed for a new ToD to succeed in a complex role”, and employers and employees may benefit as “the ECT framework helps integrate ToDs into wider educational communities, promoting cross-disciplinary collaboration and professional learning.” However, for some services there “may be hesitant to take on ECTs due to the longer lead-in time and additional training costs.”

While some employees appreciate bringing prior teaching experience to the role to support relating to the class teacher and wider school staff, and some employers may favour prior classroom teaching experience, others may accept teachers without prior teaching experience

due to other experiences and skills, or if the setting/area has low numbers of QToDs and experienced teachers applying for roles. However, concerns have been raised by members that “if the support during the ECT phase is not appropriately adapted to the deaf education context, ECTs may feel isolated or underprepared, increasing the risk of early career attrition”.

It might be viewed that “it would be difficult for an ECT to acquire enough evidence for the ECT year as a peri or unit ToD”; thus, the ECT requirements may be more achievable for specialist deaf schools and some school-based resource provisions”. Also, “Those QToD roles are limited in comparison to LA [local authority] peri QToDs roles. In addition, those settings can feel vulnerable to being used as a pathway to secure the MQ, for some ECT, and intense teaching experience with deaf CYP before leaving, once qualified, for a peripatetic role. Members indicate that specialist schools and large RPs can sometimes struggle to finance the MQ training for staff, the related supply costs for the study leave and teaching placement leave and subsequently may have to operate a rota if they have a high number of unqualified ToDs. This may be further impacted by the ECT process which “takes much longer and requires more staff time.”

The number of specialist provisions and related QToDs are small in comparison to the number of local authorities and peri roles. CRIDE 2025 UK data indicates that 4% of deaf CYP were educated in RPs in mainstream schools and 2% in deaf specialist schools. Fifty-two percent of QToDs worked mainly as a peri QToD, with an additional 1% working flexibly as a peri ToD in a resource provision and/or in a special school or college not specifically for deaf CYP, supporting the 78% of school-aged children who were in mainstream schools.

As well as deaf specialist schools, a small number of other specialist schools may fund staff to train as QToDs/QTMSIs/QTIVs. England and Wales report that there are less than 1% of QToDs working mainly in a special school or college not specifically for deaf CYP. Across the UK, 13% of deaf CYP are in specialist schools not specifically for deaf CYP. These settings are also vulnerable to losing their QToDs to other roles. There is also variations in the UK in localised policies regarding the level and type of QToD input from peri services into specialist schools not specifically for deaf CYP.

Representation within the profession

BATOD membership (November 2025) indicates ~12.2% of the BATOD QToD members identify as deaf. However, diversity in the profession across the UK is poor.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

Improvement opportunities and experiences for deaf students at college, university, etc may influence more deaf individuals to pursue a career as a QToD. In addition, the routes to the QToD qualification have progressed over the years.

In England, individuals can enter the QToD MQ course with QTLS. The QTS is a level 6, and individuals can teach in primary or secondary schools depending on which course they do; the QTLS is a level 5, and individuals can only teach in post-16 education. Some deaf QToDs have worked in schools full time and did a Teaching and Learning foundation degree at the same time to acquire QTS, working four days a week and attending university one day a week. For these individuals, it took four years to complete their training, but it meant they could get the experience they needed, work and earn, and do their degree and teaching degree all at the same time. There is no data collection, yet, regarding how many deaf MQ students have started and how many have graduated from the MQ course.

Additional training needs

While many of the universities offering the MQ can offer further master's studies opportunities for specialist deaf-related studies, there is no standard or accredited route for CPD for QToDs within their career development. There are advantages for ToDs engaging in generic professional development opportunities; there would be further advantages within a career structure for the profession (outside the special school experience) if qualifications associated with a clear career path were available.

The pandemic assisted with access to training that can be delivered via online platforms. BATOD, like many providers, including the Scottish Government-funded Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC), has engaged the online learning platform opportunity and developed online language modification training modules that can be accessed in addition to the frequently offered CPD events, in person and virtually across the four UK nations. However, the CPD and specialist training opportunities delivered face to face still mean that for geographically remote areas, significant post-pandemic hiked-up travel and accommodation expenses are incurred. There are also time issues for QToDs across the UK with having to travel to take part in those training opportunities for courses, as well as accredited opportunities such as advancing up the BSL levels scales beyond the Level 1 BSL minimum associated with MQs across the course providers, and Auditory Verbal training.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

There are also implications about the limited opportunities to visit a range of settings to observe a variety of approaches during their post graduate QToD course. This is also applicable to QToDs undertaking the additional specialist educational audiology postgraduate qualification.

Communication approaches – skillset meeting demand

Skills and experience across the range of auditory/oral approaches, BSL, Sign Supporting English (SSE), Signed English (SE), Cued Speech are required by QToDs. There is a need for continued and sustained effort for QToDs to gain the required level of communication skills, which for methods such as SSE are typically only available through in-house provision due to the lack of formal qualifications, accreditation, and standardisation for them.

Some services continue to experience significant challenges in accessing local higher level BSL classes to develop staff skills beyond the basic levels 1 and 2 qualifications. This need for the supply to meet demand is of particular importance now that BSL is legally recognised in Scotland (2015), in the UK (2022), and in the new curriculum in Wales (2022). In addition, services want to move away from the view that the offer for families is an oral or sign option and embed a bilingual/multi-lingual offer for families from the earliest stages. This model means a shift to language skills needs for all ToDs because of the numbers working in resource provisions, deaf specialist schools, or working flexibly between peri, and these congregated settings. In addition, QToDs working in early years contexts will often need to teach BSL or at least facilitate this, which implies Level 4 in BSL (SCDF 7) or above.

7. Service delivery in support services for deaf CYP

An increasing variety of models for delivery and funding of support services exists across the UK. In England, these reflect the developments of delegated funding in local authority children's services. In some authorities, the services for deaf CYP are centrally funded (often within sensory impaired services), and in others, they are part of generic SEN or ASL teaching teams, managed in areas or clusters. These arrangements reflect the increase in local responsibility for services, but a logistical difficulty can arise when budgeting for a specialist teacher (with an MQ) against the unpredictable numbers of deaf CYP. While deafness is low incidence, the input is often high need.

Across the UK, and more so with commissioned and traded service models in England, which are expected to demonstrate value for money through part- or full-cost recovery, services have reported being only able to react to demand. Therefore, QToDs who support deaf CYP in mainstream schools as a member of a team around a deaf child, promoting good practice and proactively contributing to the aims of the setting and the educational outcomes for the CYP, in practice often end up only reacting to requests for intervention when the level of need is extreme.

Significant factors

- Services to schools, colleges, and early years may be compromised if there are insufficient QToDs to deliver a proactive service, with an effect on the quality of learning for all pupils.
- The scarcity of QToDs may impact upon service structure and specialist delivery and ultimately, on the outcomes for deaf CYP (NDCS data).
- Within some English services that operate a traded service model, there may be issues about the quality of delivery in services.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

8. Impact on educational outcomes for deaf children and young people

There is little robust data available in the UK about the recent progress and educational achievements for deaf young people in the UK. Previous widely cited and respected UK studies that have been valuable sources of data include Harris et al (2017), Kyle et al (2017), Hendar et al (2016).

Recent US research is presenting a mixed picture, eg Antia et al (2020) report significant underachievement, whereas Cawthon et al (2022) highlight that deaf/hard of hearing students, do not necessarily plateau in the elementary grades.

The variation in the profile of deaf CYP is vast. Therefore, there is still an ongoing need for improved data collection that recognises both attainment and achievements of individuals and cohorts of deaf CYP over time.

9. Understanding the related legislation and practice

Deaf CYP have a right to specialist input from a QToD. This may be identified as part of a statutory document. The various governments of the UK have long recognised the need for the mandatory training, and this dates back to the early 1900s.

The role of the QToDs as a workforce of dedicated professionals in ensuring deaf CYP's rights is recognised in various legislation, eg Article 23 (support for disabled children), Article 28 (right to education) and Article 30 (minority language rights, including BSL) of the UNCRC. A QToD, or an appropriately supervised ToD in training, is considered an **auxiliary aid** in terms of the Equality Act (2010; England, Scotland, and Wales).

England

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice

Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, Section 32 Children and Families Act 2014, BSL Act 2022

Northern Ireland

BSL Bill

Department for Education – Code of Practice

Scotland

Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 amended 2009

BSL Act (Scotland) 2015

Parental Engagement Act 2006, Education Act 2014 and 2016

Scottish Government – Additional Support for Learning Act Code of Practice.

Standards in Scotland Schools Act 2002

Wales

Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice for Wales

BSL Act

Guidance documents/quality standards

There are several documents with a focus on Quality Standards which are relevant to QToDs

- [Quality Standards for Paediatric Audiology Services \(NHS Scotland, 2009\)](#)
- [Scottish standards for children \(0-3\) \(SSC, 2011\)](#)
- [Quality Standards in Early Years Services for Deaf Children \(NDCS, 2012\)](#)
- [Quality Standards for Children's' Hearing Services \(NHS Wales, 2016\)](#)
- [Quality Standards for the Use of Personal Radio Aids: Promoting easier listening for deaf children \(2017\)](#)
- [How good is our sensory service? \(SSC, 2019\)](#)
- [Quality Standards: Resource Provisions for Deaf Children and Young People in Mainstream Schools \(2020\) Revised publication pending in mid 2026](#)
- [Quality Standards in Paediatric Audiology \(BAA, 2022\)](#)
- [BCIG Quality Standard 2023 – Cochlear implant services for children, young people and adults](#)
- [Quality Standards in the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme \(updated 2025\)](#)

In the absence of national registers of deaf children for the UK, the estimates of the number of deaf CYP tend to be based on assumptions about prevalent rates of deafness and application of these rates to estimates of the total number of children.

Nevertheless, data across the UK needs to be received with a warning and the small numbers of deaf CYP involved in much of the research makes it even more difficult to accurately report and infer conclusions.

10. Summary

This revised paper is intended to be a useful document from which colleagues can take sections of text, to use as they need in the discussion of understanding the role of QToDs in the development of services to deaf CYP and their families. The picture in the four countries of the UK continues to be very different and reflects national legislation and policy.

1. The ultimate goal is for deaf CYP to have successful educational and well-being outcomes and to be enabled to take on a wide range of roles in different communities. Services will be delivered by a wide range of professionals working collaboratively in a multi-disciplinary team and in a network arrangement at different stages.

Addressing recruitment and retention challenges requires structured mentoring, manageable caseloads, targeted CPD, incentives, service planning, and well-being support. These changes would allow QToDs to develop confidence, thrive professionally, and remain in post long-term, ultimately improving outcomes for CYP.

2. There is still difficulty with recruitment and retention in all four UK countries. Over the last two years, the responses to the survey of jobs listed on the BATOD website indicate employers in some areas are struggling to appoint QToDs to the role. Member feedback suggests some employers need to establish better support for new teachers undertaking the MQ to support and encourage them to succeed with the balance of the job role commitments and demands of the master's level MQ studies.

3. Early years has been an important growth area over the past decade, and alongside the number of children being identified as deaf with additional difficulties, there is an influence on staff training and the allocation of resources.

4. BATOD considers that the minimum standards for teaching QToDs for the MQ in the UK nations with the MQ course providers are encapsulated in their respective specifications. This includes the range of competences, and the periods of university-assessed teaching practice.

5. While there are advantages for QToDs engaging in generic professional development opportunities, there would be further advantages within a career structure for the profession (outside the special school experience) if qualifications associated with a clear career path can be assembled into a portfolio which employers will recognise.



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

6. Since the first publication of this document in 2009, the scarcity of specialist QToDs does appear to impact upon service structure and specialist interventions, and ultimately, the outcomes for deaf CYP. BATOD members highlight a shift from direct curriculum support for deaf CYP to an advisory approach.

7. In the absence of national registers of deaf CYP for the UK, the estimates of the number of deaf CYP tend to be based on assumptions about prevalence rates of deafness, and application of these rates to estimates of the total number of CYP. Data therefore needs to be received with a warning, and the small numbers of deaf CYP involved in much of the research makes it even more difficult to accurately report and infer conclusions.

8. Government data on deaf CYP's attainment suggest that they are still underachieving, which supports the drive for more accurate and comprehensive data collection.

9. The 2009 publication identified longer-term issues that resonate with current discussions, particularly in Scotland. Ongoing longer-term issues for the profession and funding bodies are:

- Variations in the data sources regarding the number of deaf children
- Numbers of suitable teachers to fill vacancies
- Incentives for teachers to take the MQ (including pay)
- Routes for career progression
- Recruitment and deployment arrangements
- Recognition of the importance of specialist teachers, including deaf professionals
- With BSL recognition, having more undergraduate degrees that build BSL fluency or in-depth knowledge of language acquisition, which would be a good foundation for people who later become teachers and then QToDs
- Ongoing specialist CPD training.

Published March 2026. To be reviewed March 2027

BATOD *National Executive Council* welcomes feedback on this publication, which will be updated annually. Contact lead author Teresa Quail, National Executive Officer, via exec@batod.org.uk



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

Other BATOD documentation

Documents are available on the [BATOD website - Deaf Education, BATOD Policies/Statements](#)

BATOD [Articulating the specialism 'The role of the QToD'](#) series

BATOD 2025 Membership survey report

BATOD 52-week cover guidance for Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

BATOD 'Features of Effective Services' – for Heads of Sensory Support Services

BATOD Guidance for employers/employees understanding the deaf education MQ

BATOD Guidance on paid allowances for QToDs

BATOD Paper If not statutory – then essential; maintaining services in challenging times
(revision pending)

BATOD Policy note – QToD staffing ratio in deaf resource provisions

BATOD Position paper - The retention and recruitment of QToDs

BATOD Position statement on QToDs and levels of British Sign Language

BATOD Position statement on study leave for employees completing the mandatory qualification to become a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People

BATOD Statement - Communication approaches, modes and methods currently in use in the education of deaf CYP in the UK

BATOD [Statement on Inclusion](#)

BATOD and British Association of Educational Audiologists [Joint policy statement on taking earmould impressions](#)

BATOD and Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) – Best practice guidance 'Collaborative Working between Qualified Teachers of the Deaf and Speech and Language Therapists'

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), BATOD and NatSIP [Briefing on the specialist needs of deaf children and the role of Teachers of the Deaf](#)



British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

References

Antia, S. D., Lederberg, A. R., Easterbrooks, S., Schick, B., Branum-Martin, L., Connor, C. M., & Webb, M. Y. (2020). Language and Reading Progress of Young Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children. *Journal of deaf studies and deaf education*, 25(3), 334–350.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/enz050>

Fordyce, M., Riddell, S., O'Neill, R. and Weedon, E. (2014) Educational outcomes of young people in Scotland who are deaf or hard of hearing: Intersections of deafness and social class. *International Journal of Inclusive*, 19 (3), 285-302

Cawthon, S. W., Barker, E., Daniel, J., Cooc, N., and Vielma, A. G. (2022) Longitudinal Models of Reading and Mathematics Achievement in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students. *Journal of deaf studies and deaf education*, 28(1), 115–123. <https://doi.org/10.1093/deafed/enac033>

Harris, M., Terlektsi, E. and Kyle, F, E. (2017) Literacy outcomes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing primary school children: A cohort comparison study. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 60(3), pp. 701-711. doi: [10.1044/2016_jslhr-h-15-0403](https://doi.org/10.1044/2016_jslhr-h-15-0403)

Hendar, O & O'Neill, R. (2016) 'Monitoring the achievement of deaf pupils in Sweden and Scotland: Approaches and outcomes', *Deafness and Education International*, vol. 18, no. 1, YDEI1142045, pp. 47-56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14643154.2016.1142045>

Kyle, F., E, and Harris, M. (2006) Concurrent Correlates and Predictors of Reading and Spelling Achievement in Deaf and Hearing School Children, *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Volume 11, Issue 3, 273–288

Ravenscroft, J., & Wazny, K. (2016). *The Qualification of Teachers of Pupils with Visual Impairment, or Pupils with Hearing Impairment or Pupils with Multi-Sensory Impairment (Vision and Hearing Impairment)*. Scottish Government.