BATOD
British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

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Resourced provisions

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Teaching Shakespeare to Deaf learners

Nova's Big Read project

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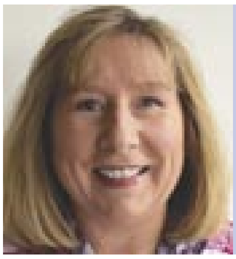

Welcome to the March Edition

BATOD President, Claire Jacks, reflects on specialist resource provisions and associated BATOD projects.

March! It only seems like yesterday that I was struggling to remember to write 2026! As the Articulating the Specialism series has clearly shown, being a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) covers a great many roles. In this edition, we are giving our fabulous, resourced provisions (RPs) the spotlight. The decisions we make today about RPs will define many of the educational opportunities available for deaf children and young people (CYP) accessing these settings in the future. BATOD is aware that there are 215 RPs in England, 2 in Northern Ireland, 17 in Scotland, and 19 in Wales specifically catering for deaf CYP. These figures do not include specialist schools for deaf children or special schools which cater for CYP with other needs, including CYP who are deaf.

In September 2025, the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) published their findings from surveys completed in 2024. Whilst it focuses on the English context, it is an interesting read. For example, the report states that 65% of RPs are delegated, meaning responsibility for managing them has been delegated to the host school. And 25% of all RPs in England are not led by a QToD, with delegated RPs being less likely to be led by a QToD. Also, 13% of RPs in England do not have a QToD at all.

One of the graphs in the NDCS survey shows the ratio of deaf children to each QToD in RPs by region. BATOD promotes a needs-led, rather than numbers-led, approach and within this approach has maintained a recommendation of QToD: pupil ratio of 1:6 in a recently published paper, subject to the staffing model and profile of learner. All the RPs in the NDCS survey were above this recommendation. If you are a QToD and are concerned about your QToD staffing allocation, you may find the revised BATOD paper useful in discussions with your line managers.

In summary, the NDCS survey highlights the need for more equitable distribution of RPs across regions in England and increased recruitment and training of QToDs so that RPs can deliver the excellence we all strive to provide for our deaf CYP.

The BATOD Retention and Recruitment paper, recently published, is informed directly by the experiences and contributions of our members. It highlights many valuable insights from colleagues working in RPs. For example, some RPs are providing inappropriate line management/provision management, eg a QToD is line-managed by a support staff member, or provision-managed strategically by a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) with a support staff member leading on the operational provision management. One member stated, "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."

Another area of challenge revealed by the BATOD Retention and Recruitment paper is that the decline in QToDs in employment over the years will impact on the ability of services/settings to deliver the provision in their model and allow for the flexibility required to meet changes in need in the low-incidence population. BATOD will use this data to support robust, evidence-based consultation responses to the education departments in the UK nations, and other official bodies, in order to champion the status and professional recognition of QToDs and to strengthen the educational outcomes and social inclusion of deaf CYP.

Looking to the future, BATOD is working on multiple projects which all intertwine. One being that BATOD members have been working extremely hard to support the revised publication of the past NDCS/NatSIP Quality Standards for RPs. The guidance has been informed by consultation responses and has been written by QToDs working in RPs, for QToDs working in RPs. This will be an enormously supportive document for all who work in RP settings and contains good practice advice for all QToDs.

Another BATOD initiative is the Statutory assessment and examination access arrangements working group, who have been working together to ensure that access arrangements are applicable to RPs. There is an article linked to this aspect of BATOD's work in this magazine.

A vital piece of work is the BATOD Membership Survey, a paper which is due to be published very soon. Your answers provide BATOD with the evidence of what work needs to be done on your behalf. If you have an interest in any area of deaf education or wish to submit nomination application to the next National Executive Council cycle, and/or a working group, please do get in touch. Your views, ideas, challenges, and solutions are literally why BATOD exists.

I also want to mention that the conference committee has developed an exciting and inspiring programme, showcasing the latest research, impactful case studies, and practical approaches to achieving positive outcomes for deaf CYP. The programme includes the invaluable work of the RPs. This 50th Anniversary Conference offers a unique opportunity to learn, share, and strengthen practice. See you there.

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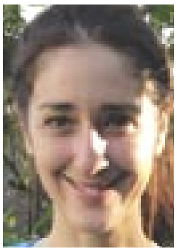

From your editor

This March edition of BATOD Magazine focuses on resourced provisions (RPs). Since the Warnock report, that was influential across the whole of the UK, and subsequent Education Acts from the 1980s, inclusion in mainstream education has been the mainstay for deaf children and young people (CYP), with RPs taking on the role of supporting them.

Articles in this issue spotlight the hard work that goes on in RPs – both in teaching and supporting deaf CYP – while showcasing innovative resources like the acoustic pod, smiLE Therapy, and Nova Big Read project, and research into the use of digital technology by deaf CYP. However, they also highlight the improvements that need to be made to ensure that deaf CYP reach their full potential. Mothers of deaf CYP advocate for more positive language around RPs, more deaf Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) and role models, and more high-quality, fluent sign language users among professionals.

This edition also highlights the work of the RP Special Interest Group, with the revised National Deaf Children's Society's Quality Standards for RPs and BATOD's 'exam access' group, as well as introducing new and/or revised BATOD publications and continuing professional development training, eg the pilot Deaf Studies modules, the BATOD Acoustics policy, and more.

In the 'General' section, the British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland reports on its 'Know Your Rights' workshops and the state of British Sign Language in Scotland, a decade since the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. With United in Sign as the theme for this year's sign language week (16th–22nd March), which is organised by the BDA, there are plenty of events happening to recognise BSL and celebrate Deaf culture, with this year's focus being "unity, pride, and collective action around sign languages" (see more at https://signlanguageweek.org.uk/). You can also read about the Norfolk Deaf Festival at the end of June, and we have our annual offerings from course providers in deaf education.

Please do send us any feedback about the magazine, along with all your suggestions or contributions for future issues (see themes below) to magazine@batod.org.uk

Meanwhile, I hope to see lots of you at BATOD's 50th Anniversary Conference at the end of April!

Future issues will focus on:

June 2026	50th Anniversary/ Conference
September 2026	Professionals' toolkit
December 2026	Curriculum
March 2027	Connectivity

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Reflecting on what makes a high-quality ARP for deaf learners

Leanne Chorekdjian-Jojaghaian is a dual QToD and SENCo and presents her call to action for retaining specialist resource provisions

Working within an additionally resourced provision (ARP) for deaf learners offers a unique vantage point: we stand at the meeting place between specialist deaf education and mainstream schooling. At Kingsbury Green Primary School, this intersection is where our pupils' identities are shaped, their access to communication is protected, and their academic and social development unfolds. As additionally resourced provisions face increasing pressure and scrutiny within the national special educational needs and disability (SEND) landscape, it feels important to reflect on what truly makes an ARP effective, why this model remains so valuable for deaf children and why we must continue to advocate for it to ensure longevity.

At Kingsbury Green School, our ARP for 30 deaf learners is referred to as the TCB (Total Communication Base). The school's values of 'Ambition, Character, and Empathy' are embodied in the provision offered to children who are deaf. Pupils are empowered to set ambitious goals, fostering a spirit of determination and confidence to reach their potential. Children are encouraged to become the best versions of themselves and to realise that their deafness is not a barrier.

What makes a high-quality ARP work?

A strong ARP begins with the ethos of the host school. Deaf learners thrive when the mainstream environment is aligned with the principles of accessibility and inclusion, rather than relying solely on specialist staff to 'bridge the gap'. At Kingsbury Green, we've found that senior leadership understanding the needs of deaf pupils is not a luxury; it is the foundation that enables meaningful change. When leaders prioritise acoustics, support whole-school training, and view deaf education as a shared responsibility, the provision becomes woven into the fabric of the school.

Equally central is the collaborative model between Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs), specialist teaching assistants (TAs), mainstream teachers, and pastoral teams. The ARP functions best when we are not an 'add-on service' but an embedded partner involved in co-planning reasonable adjustments, contributing to curriculum design, and ensuring that deaf awareness is consistently refreshed. This systemic approach prevents deaf pupils from becoming dependent on individual adults and instead builds a network of support that surrounds every classroom and every interaction. Deaf awareness assemblies are woven into the assembly calendar and delivered half-termly to both key stage 1 (KS1) and KS2 and are developed to go deeper than superficial deaf awareness strategies, to expose children to deaf role models, break down stereotypes, and build on children's knowledge of deafness.

Ensuring access to communication

Access to communication is one of the most visible daily challenges for deaf learners, yet when done well, it can become almost invisible; it is simply part of how the school operates. The combination of technology, environmental change, and teacher practice makes the difference.

Radio aids, soundfield systems, and deaf-aware teaching practices help create equitable listening environments, but only when both pupils and staff understand how and why to use them. Consistent routines around equipment checks and troubleshooting are essential. Likewise, teacher placement and deaf awareness strategies such as facing the speaker and teaching from a central space in the room are powerful contributors to listening ease.

Visual accessibility is equally important. At our ARP, we model strategies visually with images and concrete manipulatives, ensure all videos are enabled with captions, make use of structured seating plans, and ensure classroom language is precise and concise, which supports cognitive load and auditory processing. These adjustments enrich not only deaf pupils' learning but improve communication clarity for the whole class. Ultimately, we aim to create environments where deaf learners don't feel they are constantly negotiating for access because it's already there.

We also aid social communication by delivering weekly British Sign Language (BSL) classes to children in KS1. Teaching BSL to KS1 children at Kingsbury Green is vital in building strong social connections and laying the foundations for genuine friendships with deaf learners. When children learn BSL early, communication becomes natural rather than something that sets peers apart, helping deaf pupils feel included, understood, and valued from the very start of their school journey. Shared language fosters empathy, confidence, and mutual respect, allowing friendships to form organically in the playground and classroom. These early inclusive practices move with children as they progress through the school, creating a culture where communication, belonging, and positive relationships with deaf learners are sustained and strengthened over time.

Supporting language development through total communication

No two deaf learners have the same language profile, and an effective ARP reflects this reality through flexibility. We use a total communication approach, combining spoken language, BSL, Sign Supported English (SSE), visuals, gesture, and amplification - whatever enables the learner to access meaning most fully in that moment.

This approach extends beyond classroom support. Our small-group sessions in the ARP focus on vocabulary development, narrative skills, speech and auditory work, and targeted intervention where gaps have emerged. These sessions are not a substitute for mainstream learning; they are scaffolds that strengthen a pupil's linguistic confidence so they can engage more independently across the curriculum and are enabled to access mainstream learning simultaneously later that day or week. Deaf children move fluidly between their mainstream classroom and the ARP, initially spending more time in the ARP which reduces as their confidence and language skills build over time. The tailored support in the ARP allows them to work towards an 80% mainstream timetable when they progress up the school and move into upper KS2.

Promoting independence and advocacy

One of the most rewarding aspects of an ARP is watching pupils grow into advocates for their own needs. Independence is not simply about managing hearing technology, though teaching pupils how to care for, troubleshoot, and confidently use their equipment is certainly a key milestone. It is also about giving them the vocabulary, self-awareness, and confidence to say things such as, 'Please face me when you speak to me'; 'Please say that again'; 'I did not hear you'; or 'I am deaf so you need to speak slower'.

We build this through weekly deaf studies lessons where children learn to understand their hearing loss, learn about deaf history, deaf culture, and communication technology. They know when to request repetition, recognising listening fatigue in themselves, and reflecting on communication strategies that work for them. These skills matter not only for school but for future transitions into secondary, post-16 education, and adulthood. An empowered deaf learner recognises their rights and knows how to negotiate for access without feeling they are imposing.

Deaf studies and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education are essential for supporting the self-esteem, identity and mental health of deaf children because they provide space for children to understand themselves positively and feel proud of who they are. Learning about deaf role models, deaf history, and deaf culture helps children develop a strong sense of identity and belonging, reducing feelings of isolation. PSHE lessons tailored for deaf children support emotional literacy, self-advocacy and healthy relationships in ways that are accessible and meaningful, enabling them to express feelings, navigate challenges, and build resilience. Together, these subjects empower deaf children to be independent, and to see their deafness as a strength, promoting confidence, wellbeing, and positive mental health as they grow.

Social and emotional wellbeing and deaf identity

Academic progress matters, but so does belonging. Many deaf pupils experience isolation in mainstream settings, even within supportive schools. One of the greatest gifts an ARP can offer is a peer group: a space where deaf children see themselves reflected and feel understood without explanation. Our ARP is lucky enough to have a large peer group (30) for children aged 4–11. We are also lucky to have a range of deaf adults working with us who support children with empathy, understanding, and mutual respect; not only for deaf children but mainstream children. Our most recent Ofsted (2024) commented that "Life at the school is enriched by the presence of deaf pupils and staff".

Time spent in the ARP focusing on deaf studies or BSL lessons to mainstream KS1 pupils provides opportunities to explore deaf identity, build friendships, and share experiences. These spaces can be transformative. They promote self-esteem, reduce social barriers, and allow pupils to process the emotional load that comes with navigating mainstream environments.

We also embed wellbeing within the whole school. Staff awareness, pastoral collaboration, and consistent emotional support are essential so deaf pupils are not left to manage anxieties or confusion alone. A strong ARP recognises that wellbeing is deeply intertwined with communication access and identity development. We regularly attend deaf-only sporting events and cultural workshops led by deaf adults in museums and art galleries which is hugely important for deaf children's confidence, identity, and aspirations. These experiences give children the opportunity to communicate freely, feel a sense of belonging and see deafness reflected positively in social, creative, and public spaces. Meeting deaf adults in a wide range of roles helps children understand that deaf people are fully integrated into all areas of society, breaking down limiting stereotypes and raising expectations for their own futures. Seeing deaf role models thriving in sport, culture, and professional settings reinforces pride, motivation, and the belief that they too can participate, succeed, and lead in any environment. We also regularly invite deaf adults into school to deliver workshops or assemblies to mainstream children. Inviting deaf role models into school to speak with mainstream hearing children is a powerful way to build understanding, respect and inclusion. Hearing pupils gain first-hand insight into deaf people's lives and achievements, helping to challenge misconceptions and reduce stigma from an early age. Meeting deaf adults who are confident, successful, and active in society encourages curiosity, empathy, and positive attitudes. These experiences support a more inclusive school culture, where deaf peers are seen as equals, friendships are strengthened, and all children learn the value of diversity, accessibility, and mutual respect.

Challenges and a call to action

Despite the strengths of ARPs nationally, we are not immune to the pressures facing deaf education.

Recruitment of specialist staff (QToDs, specialist TAs, and BSL-proficient communication support workers) remains a national challenge. Funding constraints can limit access to technology, acoustic upgrades, or reduced teaching loads for QToDs. In some mainstream settings, there is still a misconception that inclusion means 'treating everyone the same', rather than creating equitable access which is arguably much harder to achieve.

There is also a broader systemic risk: as SEND provision becomes stretched, ARPs may be asked to meet increasingly complex needs without proportional increases in staffing or resources. We must continue to advocate for the value of specialist deaf education, not as a luxury, but as a necessity.

My call to action is simple:
We must ensure that ARPs remain protected, adequately funded, and recognised as centres of excellence within mainstream schools.

They provide the linguistic, social, and emotional support that enables deaf learners to participate fully and confidently in their education. Deaf learners deserve environments where communication is accessible, identity is celebrated, and independence is nurtured. ARPs are uniquely positioned to provide this but only if we safeguard the expertise, staffing, and collaborative structures that allow them to thrive. Protecting the integrity of ARPs is not an optional investment; it is a commitment to equity, representation, and the futures of deaf young people.

Leanne Chorekdjian-Jojaghaian is a dual QToD and SENco. She leads an ARP for deaf children and young people located within a mainstream school in London. As part of her wider role within the school, she leads on sustainable development and climate action.

BATOD Consultant team

BATOD has a long standing history of supporting members with queries. In 2024 the BATOD Consultant role has been replaced by a BATOD Consultant Coordinator (Sibel Djemal) and Consultant team, with UK-wide representation. If you would like to join the team, or if you would like support as a member contact consultant@batod.org.uk

The team

1 Support BATOD with their responses to government bodies and employers concerning pay and conditions with due regard to their professional roles and responsibilities.

2 Input into the Annual submission to the English School Teachers Pay and Review Body (STRB) for the NEO's response.

3 Offer a specialist perspective to members about policy and practice relating to performance management and terms and conditions of employment. This does not include offering specific advice which should be properly obtained from the teaching unions and associations.

Musings from an RP QToD

Marie Pearson, a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) based in a deaf resource provision in a primary school, reflects on her journey to date

I'm sure many of us look back on our early days as Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (ToDs) and realise just what a ride the journey has been – and how little we truly knew back then. I began in a primary resource provision after five years in mainstream teaching. Great, I thought. I knew the English National Curriculum, I had British Sign Language (BSL) Level 2 … just combine the two and it'll be fine. How wrong I was in my youthful confidence!

Even three years later, after qualifying as a QToD, I was still uncertain about how best to teach profoundly deaf BSL users to read, how to teach subjects such as science and maths through the medium of BSL, and how to navigate the many nuances of deaf education. To be honest, I'm not sure I'm much clearer nearly 20 years into the journey.

What has changed, though, is my toolkit. It has expanded over time, and I no longer feel the need to use it in a rigid or prescriptive way. Instead, I dip in and out of resources as needed, adapting them to suit the pupils in front of me.

Recently, during a BATOD Special Interest Group (SIG) working group meeting, I was asked whether I had experience of a particular resource that a local speech and language therapy team were planning to use extensively. This prompted a mini sermon from me about how resources should never be a one-size-fits-all, but tools to be adapted and used flexibly. (Note to self: never give mini sermons on a call with Teresa! This article grew out of that discussion.)

For example, I might use Colourful Semantics with a withdrawal group in the resource base to help construct sentences for a folk tale but then turn to the tense markings of Shape Coding when editing work with a Year 6 pupil accessing mainstream English. The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) 'Secrets of words', although an older resource, has provided a foundation for work on areas such as noun-verb agreement. I used to use 'Secrets of words' very religiously and quite prescriptively; now, it's the ideas and approaches behind it that form a cornerstone from which I can develop more tailored resources for my pupils.

Over the years, I've also added Six Bricks to my toolkit (see Teresa Warren's article in the December 2025 *BATOD Magazine* edition for more information). Many elements of my toolkit address similar areas – reading skills, English grammar, vocabulary development – but they offer a breadth of ideas and approaches, allowing me to keep things fresh for different pupils. In a resource base, some pupils may work with me for up to nine years, so variety really matters.

I suppose the point of this article is that whether you're just starting out, newly qualified, or at the stage where sitting on tiny school chairs (or getting up from them) feels like a workout, the toolkit you develop is yours. Feel free to experiment, to adapt, to 'magpie' ideas from others, and don't feel you have to stick to it rigidly. Life in deaf education is always on the move – I often feel like our resource provision has a revolving door – but the children will take you on countless adventures, as long as you bring along an active, flexible, and useful toolkit.

Marie Pearson is a QToD at Leeds City Council.

Retiring?

As another school year draws to an end, you may be thinking of changing your membership arrangements.

If you are retiring, did you know there is a reduced offer for retired members, for example?

If you are thinking of changing your membership status in any way, please let us know of the proposed changes at least a month before your next renewal date by contacting: treasurer@batod.org.uk.

If we are alerted early, we can take the necessary steps to ensure that payments are amended as required.

Our terms and conditions state that once a payment period has commenced, no refunds can be allocated for payments made.

Please let us know:

- what changes you wish to make
- the date you wish to implement those changes

Please also contact your bank to ensure that direct debits are cancelled and ensure that recurring card payments are stopped if you are cancelling membership.

If you have any queries re your membership options, further information is available here www.batod.org.uk/memberships and please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Quality Standards for Resourced Provisions 2026: Process, Purpose and Practice

David Canning, BATOD Project coordinator, and members of the BATOD Special Interest Group for Resource provisions share an overview of the revised standards

Thanks are extended to the Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) in resource provisions across the United Kingdom (UK), National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), NATSIP, Sign Bilingual Consortium, and Scottish Sensory Centre for the comments and support in shaping the publication.

What does high-quality specialist provision for deaf children and young people (CYP) look like in practice – and how do we demonstrate it with clarity and confidence?

In many resourced provisions, leaders are asked to evidence impact: to senior leadership teams, linked governors, local authorities, or inspectors. Without a shared framework, those conversations can become reactive, inconsistent or overly dependent on individual interpretation. The revised Quality Standards for Resourced Provisions (QS-RP) have been developed to provide a clear, professionally owned structure for defining, evaluating, and strengthening quality in specialist resourced provision.

The QS-RP represents a collaborative and professionally grounded framework, reviewed and refined through the work of the BATOD Special Interest Group (SIG). The revision process included UK-wide consultation, generating approximately 800 comments from both individual practitioners and team responses. These contributions were carefully considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the published version. Drawing on this breadth of professional insight, the revised standards are more succinct and user-friendly while retaining a strong focus on the core strategic elements that underpin effective provision.

The aim is not to introduce an additional burden. Rather, the framework is designed to support reflective, evidence informed self-evaluation and to provide a shared language for professional dialogue.

A living document with a clear version of record

The QS-RP is designed as a living document. This means it is responsive to professional experience and evolving practice. At the same time, it is governed carefully: only formally published and dated versions constitute the agreed 'version of record'. The current published version is v1.0.2 (7th February 2026).

Feedback from practitioners is welcomed via survey@batod.org.uk and is reviewed through the SIG governance process. This ensures that the framework remains stable for users while continuing to benefit from sector insight.

From framework to practice: paper and webapp working together

The QS-RP is available in two aligned formats: the published framework will be on the BATOD website with access to a downloadable PDF format, and the QS-RP Report Card web application, hosted on the Here2learn website due to platform design. Each serves a distinct but complementary purpose.

The published framework remains the authoritative version of record. It defines the standards in full, sets out the rationale behind each domain and provides a stable reference point for professional dialogue.

The web application brings the framework into day-to-day practice. It mirrors the domains, expectations and grading descriptors of the published version, while providing a structured space to record evidence, apply professional judgement and identify next steps. In short, the document defines the standards; the webapp helps put them into action.

The digital tool has been designed to be flexible and proportionate. Provisions can complete a full annual review or focus on a single domain as part of a termly improvement cycle. Evidence can be added and updated over time, reducing duplication and avoiding the need to recreate documentation for each review.

Importantly, the Report Card is designed to reduce administrative workload rather than increase it. By consolidating evidence, reflection and action planning in one place, it supports clarity and consistency. The summary view enables structured discussions with senior leaders and governors without requiring additional report-writing.

The webapp has also been designed with data safety in mind. It does not require the upload of sensitive pupil data and is intended to support professional reflection rather than collect personal information. This ensures that services can use the tool confidently within their existing data protection frameworks.

Full instructions are available within the webapp.

Both formats are aligned to the same version of record, ensuring that professional guidance and practical application remain fully consistent.

What the QS-RP does

Establishes a common professional language

The framework provides clarity in areas where expectations can otherwise feel assumed and unspoken. It sets out eight domains that reflect the breadth of specialist resourced provisions, each with:

- a clear rationale
- baseline expectations (what provisions should demonstrate)
- stronger practice descriptors (what provisions could ideally demonstrate)
- and a five-point grading scale to support structured self-evaluation.

This enables leaders and QToDs to articulate strengths and development priorities with precision.

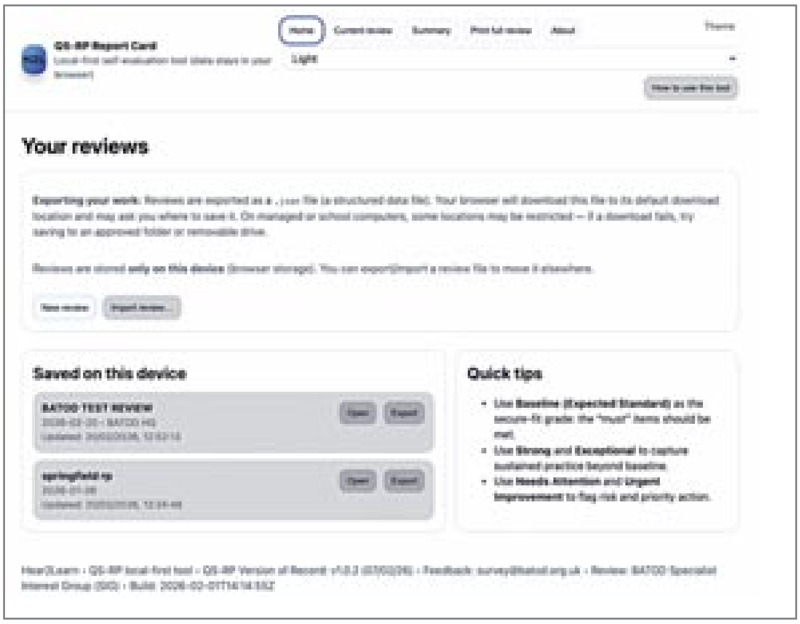
Supports confident professional conversations

The QS-RP helps make explicit what quality provision looks like. This can support discussions with senior leaders, governors, local authorities, and inspectors. By grounding evaluation in a shared framework, it reduces ambiguity and supports professional confidence.

Links evaluation to improvement

The QS-RP is developmental. Identifying an area as 'Needs Attention' is not a failure but a starting point for improvement. The framework encourages structured reflection and practical next steps, linking evaluation directly to improvement planning.

The accompanying QS-RP Report Card web application operationalises this process, enabling evidence capture, grading and action planning in a structured and accessible way.



Quality Standards Report Card WebApp

How to use the QS-RP Report Card

The QS-RP is most effective when used as part of a planned review cycle rather than as a one-off exercise. QToDs and service managers have found the webapp a quick and convenient way of creating a written report for multiple purposes; for example, it will create summary reports as well as detailed reports at the touch of a button.

Step 1: Select a domain

Begin by selecting one of the eight domains. Read the rationale, baseline expectations and stronger practice statements carefully before making any evaluative judgements.

Step 2: Gather and record evidence

Use the evidence section to record relevant documentation and reflections. Evidence may include policy documents, case studies, pupil voice, parental feedback, curriculum planning, technology audits and workforce development records.

Step 3: Apply a professional judgement

Using the five-point scale, apply a judgement based on the descriptor that most closely reflects current practice. Honest self-evaluation is critical. The aim is clarity and improvement, not perfection.

Step 4: Identify next steps

Following each judgement, identify specific, actionable next steps. Assign responsibility and timescales where appropriate to ensure evaluation leads directly to development.

Step 5: Review and share

The summary view provides a clear overview of strengths and areas for development and can support discussion with senior leadership teams, governors and local authority colleagues. A detailed printout of the entire QS-report card is also possible. The report can be shared and the webapp allows others to add to the work if set up appropriately.

Practitioner reflection

The following reflection from members of the BATOD SIG is included below.

BATOD Resource Provision SIG members – Katherine Hamilton & Julie Markowycz – Joint Teachers in Charge, Primary HI ARP, Kirklees

"It has been a positive and engaging experience being part of the BATOD Special Interest Group reviewing the quality standards for resourced provisions for deaf children and young people. These standards provide a robust framework for evaluating effectiveness across eight key domains and have been designed to be more user friendly and succinct whilst retaining the focus on core strategic areas.

"Working together as part of the SIG group has allowed for a collaborative approach across local authorities, sharing of good practice and a focus on being reflective practitioners and lead QToDs. As a result of detailed and constructive discussion and working through the process of completing the document, we were able to develop specific and actionable next steps as part of our improvement plan.

"The revised framework will enable a range of stakeholders including parents and carers, senior leaders, governors, professional organisations and more to access the strengths and areas for development of our specialist resourced provisions and supports robust action planning with appropriate accountability in place.

"Specialist support continues to be an integral and high impact part of mainstream education, and the standards provide a critical framework to consider how well the provision narrows the attainment gap while fostering social inclusion and emotional well-being. By regularly assessing these standards through this self-evaluation tool, schools can identify emerging gaps in provision, such as the need for updated assistive technology or further staff training and thereby ensure that every deaf child has the specialist intervention required to thrive alongside their hearing peers."

David Canning is a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People. He is the project lead for the revision of the Deaf Resource Provision Quality Standards.

Nova's Big Read Project: Developing a culture of reading in a deaf resource base

Cat Worrall, a second-year trainee Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (ToD) at Birmingham University, shares how her specialist deaf resource base in a mainstream primary school (Nova Primary Academy's Deaf Hub, Peterborough) encourages its pupils to develop a love of stories and reading

Laying the foundations: why reading matters

The benefits of reading are nothing us Teachers of Deaf Children (ToDs) don't already know. We are all very aware that reading is associated with improved life outcomes, reduced social isolation, and that it sustains cultural and intellectual curiosity. It expands our horizons, makes us more empathetic, and sparks our imaginations. As ToDs, all of these outcomes are ones which we no doubt encourage in the young people we work with.

With only one in three children and young people ages 8–18 reporting that they enjoy reading in their free time (according to the National Literacy Trust's Annual Reading Survey) and no large-scale national evidence on how this affects deaf children, I began speaking to the children at our resource base to explore how they felt about reading. Our students too reflected the shared challenge across settings, reporting low levels of reading enjoyment. If we see reading as a tool to unlock all of the amazing potential in our children's lives, then we felt at Nova that we needed to set about finding a way to overcome the children's perceptions of reading and spark a love for stories!

We approached this work in stages, knowing that a love of reading rarely appears fully formed. Instead, it grows through access, representation, inspiration, and shared experience, where each step builds on the last. As a way to equip children with reading skills to thrive in school and beyond, we also wanted to empower them with the chance to discover new things, both about the world varound them and explore their sense of self.

Opening the door

The first step on that journey was ensuring that children could access stories easily and confidently, both in school and at home. The children in my resource base have a variety of family home lives; some have Deaf parents and grandparents and are surrounded by British Sign Language (BSL). Others have hearing families who haven't experienced deafness before and would admit that signing a book with their child would feel intimidating. We needed to remove some of these barriers so that reading felt like an open door rather than a closed one for some of our families.

The first stage of kindling a love to read was therefore creating access to stories in the homes as well as at school,and ideally lots of them. Inspired by a talk from Dr Sarah Moseley about her book 'Teaching reading to all learners including those with complex needs', we began making our own versions of the reading bookmarks that she promoted. Our bookmarks included a QR code which

families could scan, taking them to a signed video of the story. The QR-linked bookmarks acted as simple signposts, guiding families towards shared stories in ways that felt accessible and manageable. What surprised me most about this step, was how quickly the children and their families engaged with these bookmarks; It was our first success and they came back to school ready to pick their next story. These were such an easy resource to keep in rotation and we ended up labelling them in book stages to use year-on-year, thinking about the different reading stages of our children and which bookmarks would be most appropriate for them. Our goal is to have a whole library of QR bookmarks eventually.

Who children meet in stories

Once children were stepping into stories more regularly, it became important to consider what and who they were encountering along the way. Once access to stories was in place, both at school and at home, the next question became whose stories our children were seeing, and whether they could recognise themselves within them. In other words, we felt that now we had the children engaged in stories and able to access the texts at home, we needed to use the books to help create a sense of identity.

Half of all children in the United Kingdom (UK) aged 8–11 report that they find it difficult to find books with characters who are 'like them'. When any child sees themselves reflected back in the stories they read, it not only boosts their connection to reading, but it also fuels their connections to their wider world. At Nova, we've always had a huge selection of books with Deaf characters proudly up on the shelves in our resource base; '*El Deafo*', '*Can bears ski?*', '*Hello Universe*', and '*You*', are some of the examples. Simply moving books like this onto shelves that face the books outwards, displaying the covers prominently, and putting them all around the mainstream school felt more obviously inclusive. We began to see all the children in school (deaf and hearing) reaching for this representation time and time again. With deaf characters and culture in these books or illustrations depicting technology used by some of our deaf students, we found our deaf children resonated with the story and felt 'seen' by their hearing peers around school. Books that act as mirrors and windows helped our students to recognise themselves in stories, while also offering the hearing children glimpses into experiences beyond their own.

Expanding the horizons

As reading became a more familiar feeling, new routes began to open, allowing children to imagine where stories might take them, and where they might take stories themselves. As our Nova children began to see deaf characters and experiences reflected in the books they were reading, we noticed a shift; reading was no longer just about recognition, but about possibility. With the children now fully engaged and developing a genuine enthusiasm for reading, we were able to build on that momentum through a series of inspiring events. We hosted our first BookTrust Represents virtual session

in the resource base for our key stage 2 (KS2) pupils, welcoming Deaf author and activist Natalie Denny, writer of 'Keisha Jones takes on the world'. Interacting directly with a Deaf author brought stories to life in a powerful new way, helping pupils to see reading not only as something to enjoy, but as something they could one day create themselves.

Alongside this, we ran a mini book-club discussion of Rose Ayling-Ellis' *Marvellous Messages*, encouraging pupils to share their thoughts, questions, and personal connections to the text. These sessions opened up rich discussion about Deaf role models in the media and sparked exciting conversations around future creative pathways, including illustration, drama, and dance. Together, these experiences reinforced the message that books are not just about reading words on a page; they are about representation, possibility, and imagining new futures. There is no doubt that books are giving our young Deaf people aspirations beyond literacy, in their identity, confidence, and agency.

Reading beyond the page

To keep that journey engaging, we decided that reading also needed to be something shared; something that children could explore together, enjoying the process rather than focusing solely on the destination. With their curiosity and confidence growing, we wanted to ensure that reading remained rooted in joy, rather than something that felt instructional or outcome-driven. Our aim wasn't just to improve literacy outcomes for the children academically, but to nurture a genuine love of stories. We felt that could only happen when reading was experienced as something exciting, creative, and fun.

To bring that vision to life, we partnered with the city's secondary school deaf resource base (Saint John Fisher) and reached out to d-live! (a UK-based, deaf-led professional digital theatre company, who celebrate Deaf culture, BSL, and English) and they generously spent an inspiring day with our students, delivering an interactive theatre and art workshop in BSL. What followed was a powerful example of what can happen when language, creativity, and accessibility come together.

Students from across the city worked collaboratively to imagine characters, develop a storyline, and bring their ideas to life through illustration and performance. The room buzzed with energy as stories were built visually, physically and expressively by placing Deaf culture, creativity, and communication at the heart of the experience. Centring the day around enjoyment and shared storytelling, the project reminded us that fostering a love of reading isn't about just picking up a book, It's about connection, confidence, and the freedom to explore stories in ways that truly resonate with our Deaf young people.

Developing reader identity

Along the journey, small milestones became important to us. As enjoyment in stories increased, we began to see a subtle but important shift in how children talked about themselves as readers. When we first started talking to the children about how they felt about reading it became clear that the children felt they weren't 'good' at reading; they didn't consider themselves to be 'readers'. To help create a sense of accomplishment and build their confidence in reading, we set about completing Blue Peter Badge applications with our KS2 children.

They shared stories during our peer time, discussed the ones they enjoyed, and told their friends why they liked them. We drew pictures and wrote down our ideas in our small group. Working together, we submitted their ideas to Blue Peter online and 12 weeks later the children received their Blue Peter Book badges. They now wear them regularly with pride and love telling others how they got them! The families loved this and the badge itself was a real prize for reading as it gave the children access to

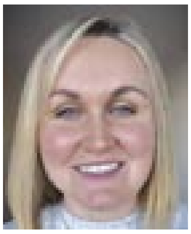
over 200 UK attractions free of charge; such an incredible way to really demonstrate the gains of reading in a tangible way for children in the form of a reward. Yet another surprise for me on this reading journey was seeing how many of the initiatives actually helped to develop the children's confidence and identity along the way.

What's still to come?

Having seen what can grow when reading is rooted in access, identity, and enjoyment, our next step at Nova is about creating something together and passing the flame of reading onto our resource base early years children. In the ideas stage at the moment, our hope is to create something together that can be shared with younger pupils and build bridges across our Deaf community in Peterborough. We aim to write our own collaborative story (teaming up again with the secondary school deaf resource base) about what deafness means to us and illustrate it. Hopefully making something of our own and sharing it with the younger children in KS1 will help cultivate the love of reading throughout our Key Stages.

Reflections on our journey

By thinking of reading as a journey rather than a single skill, we have been able to focus on access, identity, and enjoyment, trusting that over time confident and capable readers will follow. Through this project we have found there to be many additional benefits to sparking the love of reading in the children in our resource base. We've learnt that it's not only a way to equip children with the reading skills they need to thrive in school and beyond, but it also empowers them with the chance to discover new things about the world around them and explore their sense of self. This project reminded us that fostering a love of reading isn't about a single moment or method, but about creating the right conditions for something to grow and trusting that (given time and space) it will.



Cat Worrall is a second-year trainee ToD at Birmingham University managing the deaf resource base in a Nova Primary Academy's Deaf Hub, Peterborough.

Resources

Sarah Mosely: www.drsarahmoseley.com/

d-live!: www.d-live.org.uk/

The Blue Peter Book Badge: www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/findoutmore/blue-peter-apply-for-a-book-badge

Nova Primary School resource base: www.novaprimaryacademy.co.uk/page/?title=Primary+Deaf+Hub&pid=29

Peterborough County Council's Local Offer: www.peterborough.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-local-offer

National Literacy Trust: https://literacytrust.org.uk/

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Card payments	– £270 for a new advertisement and £171 for a re-advertisement

Resource provisions in England: what the data tells us

Ian Noon, Strategy Lead for the National Deaf Children's Society, summarises the results from a survey of local authorities in England in 2024

Our survey shows a picture of mixed practice across England in terms of numbers of resource provisions, staffing, and management arrangements.

How many resource provisions are they and where are they located?

At the time of the survey in 2024, there were 217 resource provisions in England across primary and secondary phases. Distribution varied by region: London (50) and the South East (46) together account for almost half of all resource provisions, with the remainder spread across East of England (28), Yorkshire & Humber (22), North West (20), West Midlands (16), South West (15), East Midlands (11), and North East (9).

Around two-thirds of local authorities (66%) in England have at least one resource provision, with notable regional differences – for example, 84% of local authorities in the South East reported at least one while in the North East only 40% do.

We know separately from the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE) surveys that there has been a long-term decline in the number of resource provisions, from 260 in 2016.

How resource provisions are managed

Nationally, 65% of resource provisions operate on a delegated model (where management responsibility sits with the host school), and 35% are centrally managed by the local authority.

Again, regional patterns differ markedly: Yorkshire & the Humber is predominantly central (91%), while the South West is predominantly delegated (93%).

Leadership by Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

Three in four resource provisions (75%) are led by a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD), but leadership arrangements vary by the type of provision. Delegated provisions are proportionally less likely to be led by a QToD than centrally managed ones (68% vs 88%).

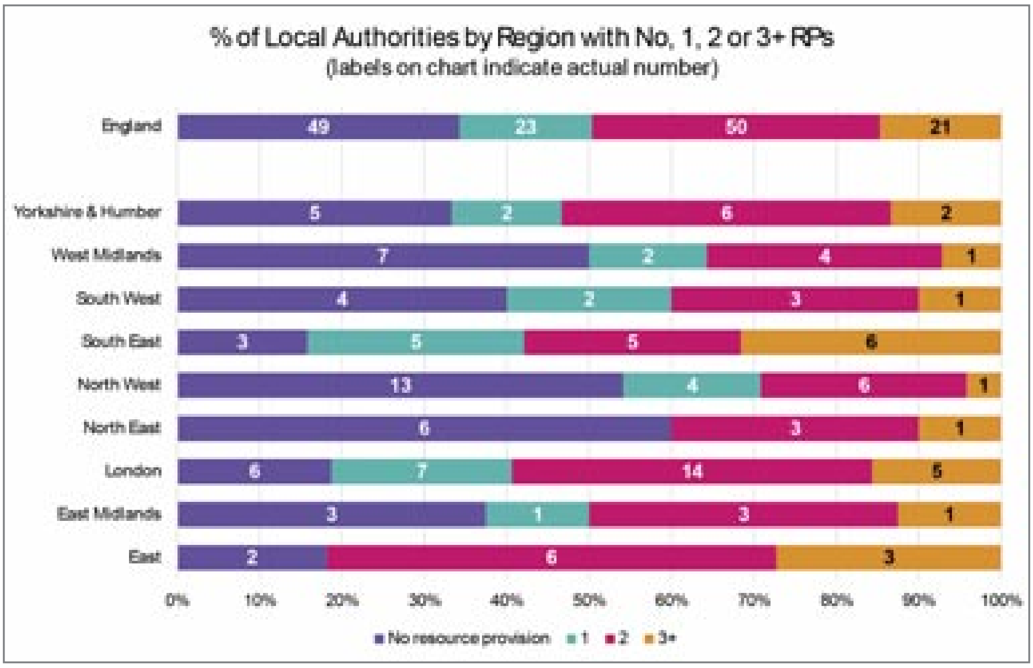
Capacity, occupancy, and share of the deaf pupil population

Collectively, resource provisions reported 2,602 places, of which 2,068 were occupied. A comparison with data from CRIDE indicates that 6% of school-aged deaf children are educated in resource provisions.

Caseloads: average pupils per QToD

Across England, each qualified QToD supports an average of 11.2 deaf children within resource provisions. Ratios differ regionally – London averages 14.2 pupils per QToD while Yorkshire & Humber averages 7.9.

Overall, 41% of resource provisions across England exceed a ratio of six deaf children per QToD, which is the best practice expectation across the sector.

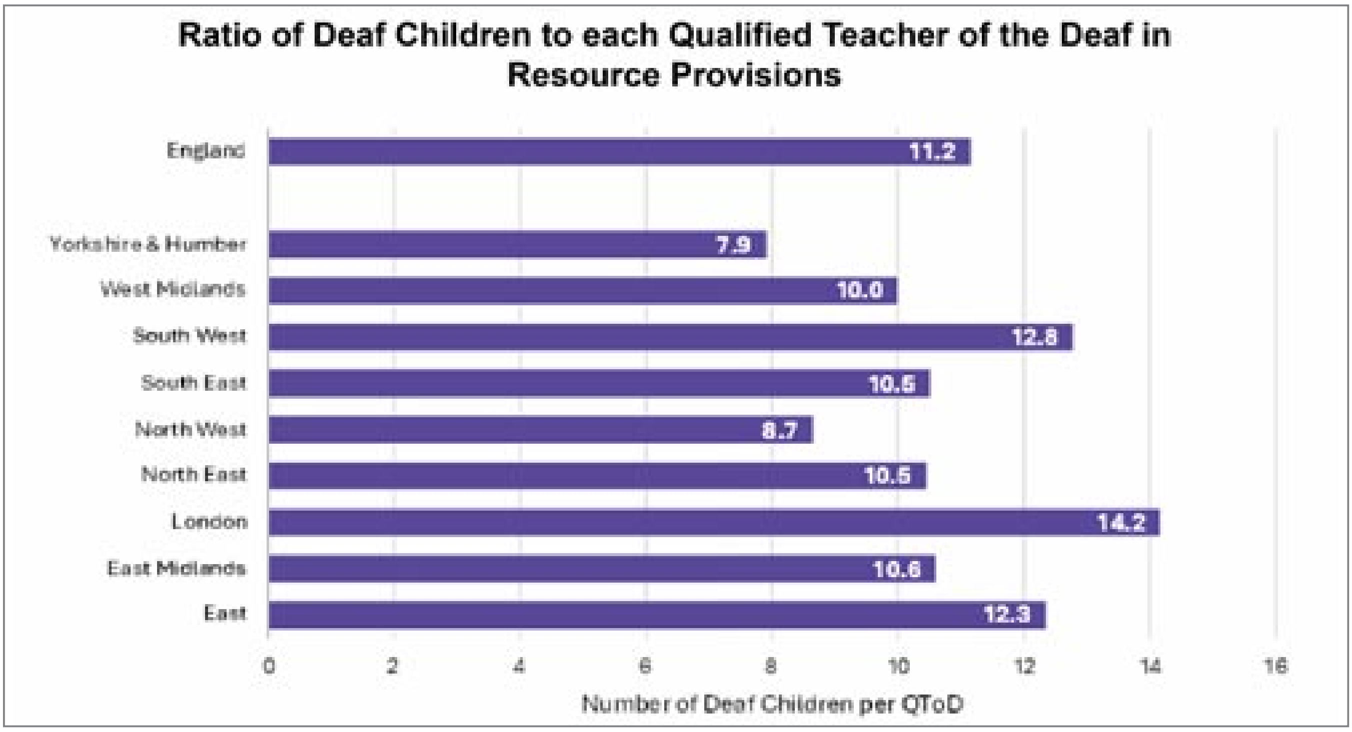


Workforce: leadership, teachers, and vacancies

Across England's resource provisions, the survey records 333.11 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in QToD posts, with 16.65 FTE vacancies.

This includes 78.4 resource provision leads, 170.21 QToDs holding the mandatory qualification, 55.4 teachers in training, and 29.1 working as QToDs but not in training.

Of particular concern, over one in ten resource provisions (13%) reported that they had no QToDs in place. Delegated resource provisions are more likely to not have a QToD in place than a



central resource provision (14% versus 11%).

The absence of a QToD raises concerns around whether deaf children are able to access the support that we would expect to see in a specialist provision. While some resource provisions are staffed by QToDs in training, this raises separate questions around those QToDs are mentored and supervised.

It is a statutory requirement for classes of deaf children to be taught by a QToD or someone in training to become one.

Support staff also form a substantial part of the resource provision workforce: 757.28 FTE are in post with 46.71 FTE vacancies reported nationally.

Service level agreements (SLAs)

Around 73% of resource provisions operate with an SLA in place, though this varies. For example, East of England (93%) and North East (89%) report higher use of SLAs, while East Midlands (36%) and North West (50%) report fewer.

In providing clarity of purpose, roles, and responsibilities, SLAs help ensure there is certainty between the local authority and school about expectations for deaf pupils placed in a resource provision.

Communication approaches and BSL skills

Resource provisions were invited to indicate the communication approaches they adopt (multiple responses allowed). Nationally, Total Communication was the most commonly cited approach (reported by 159 provisions), followed by Aural (57) and British Sign Language (BSL) (21).

In terms of staff skills, the survey indicates 27% of resource provision staff (measured as FTE) hold a BSL Level 3 qualification or above or are first-language users of BSL.

Conclusion

The 2024 survey results show a diverse and uneven landscape, which is likely to impact on the consistency of support that deaf children receive in some areas. The update by BATOD of quality standards for resource provisions provides an important opportunity to explore how any inconsistencies in support and commissioning that aren't in the best interests of deaf children can be addressed.

At the time of writing, the Department for Education in England is expected to publish a Schools White Paper in early 2026. The National Deaf Children's Society will be looking to the Department to set out clear expectations within this for how deaf children in resource provisions should be supported and to strengthen accountability and oversight over resource provisions.

More information

The survey results can be accessed in full, alongside other education research, from the National Deaf Children's Society website at: www.ndcs.org.uk/advice-and-support/all-advice-and-support-topics/research-and-data-childhood-deafness/education-support-research

Data from CRIDE can be accessed at www.ndcs.org.uk/CRIDE or www.batod.org.uk/information/cride-reports/

Ian Noon is the Strategy Lead of the Governance, Planning and Strategy Chapter at the National Deaf Children's Society

The power of a pod

Helen Roberts, headteacher and special educational needs coordinator (SENDCo), reports on the Simple Acoustic pod at Rampton Primary School

Although I regard myself as an enthusiastic and passionate individual, the ubiquitous pressures of leadership with the shackles of budgets, policies, and protocols, often do their best to prevent those truly wondrous moments I used to experience years ago. In those days, the magic of an inspirational split-second 'wowed' me as a classroom teacher. I could feel something amazing was happening. Thankfully, I am happy to report that those occasions can still occur. As a professional with nearly 30 years in education, including a decade as a SENDCo and almost seven years as a headteacher, I can genuinely declare that magic was in the air at Rampton Primary School this year. So much so, I feel compelled to share this recent experience with the world. Never would I have believed that this transformative event would occur during a significant building improvement project, taking place across the entire school site.

Classrooms are inherently vibrant and dynamic environments, resonating with the sounds of collaboration and engagement. However, during a major upgrade that started back in January this year, it quickly became evident that the increased noise levels caused by the various machines working throughout the site, exacerbated the constant school din and quickly overwhelmed both children and adults alike. It created an atmosphere that hindered rather than helped learning. This enormously impacted one pupil in particular: a Year 5 girl with severe, complex, and enduring special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) including moderate bilateral sensory-neural conductive hearing loss. Without hearing aids, this child cannot hear the spoken word.

As headteacher, it is not merely essential but my profound responsibility to cultivate inclusive practices, ensuring that every pupil receives the necessary support to flourish, both academically and socially. The immediate concerns we raised about the noise led to a conversation with my Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD), members of Arc Partnership, and Nottinghamshire County Council. We needed something that would support this pupil whilst her class was rehoused during the classroom refurbishment. These discussions led to the

involvement of Simple Acoustics Limited, and the conception of a portable fully-acoustic 'pod' was born!

The design of the pod was totally led by the student's needs, ensuring there was enough space for her wheelchair as well as her teaching assistant (TA) and equipment. The plan was to place it in the school hall with the class and then relocate it once the building work had concluded. The pod was delivered during the Easter break and was built within an hour. On our return, the pod immediately created optimal acoustic conditions for our most vulnerable child, providing a sanctuary from the new onslaught of background noise. My colleagues and I observed its impact firsthand, noting remarkable acoustic absorption that minimised disruptive reverberation. Its integration transformed this child's world overnight! Before the pod was constructed, she would regularly remove her hearing aids and lead her one-to-one to various places around the school where the noise level was tolerable. Following the installation of the pod, the child led her one-to-one to the pod! I was truly astonished when I regularly found her asleep – still wearing her hearing aids – or sharing a book under a blanket with a newfound ability to concentrate and engage, liberated from the anxiety of excessive noise levels.

It was truly wonderful to personally witness the acoustic pod enable a markedly positive learning experience, effectively mitigating noise-induced stressors that distracted her from her education. Staff members utilising the pod reported substantial improvements in the pupil's concentration levels, which directly correlated with levels of engagement and overall wellbeing. This thoughtfully designed space empowered my pupil to participate fully in lessons, engage meaningfully with their peers and embrace the joys of learning. From a time when the removal of her hearing aids communicated her unhappiness, she was seen once again smiling and dancing, as she did before the upgrade.

I am genuinely astounded by the profound impact the Simple Acoustic pod has had on our school community. It embodies our unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive educational environment, ensuring that every child has access to the highest quality of learning. The impact has been so profound that I have secured additional funding and will soon be installing my second pod which will be located in our new 'Wellness Room'. The unbelievably sad fact is that I did not consider the effect that environmental acoustics was having on this pupil until the background noise increased. Despite being in education for nearly 30 years with a plethora of roles and responsibilities ranging from being an early years foundation stage (EYFS) and key stage 1 (KS1) lead, to wellbeing lead, SENDCo, and headteacher, I never engaged in this discussion. No one ever mentioned the acoustics of my classrooms or school. I knew pupils' voices had an impact on concentration, but that was where the conversation stopped. If I kept the children fairly quiet whilst working, I was doing my job. No one talked to me about soft furnishings, carpets, or having tennis balls on the legs of my chairs. I simply wasn't aware that acoustic reviews, treatments, or solutions were available. And now I know, I simply can't stop talking about it. I sincerely hope that the new Office for Standards in Education, Children's

Services and Skills (Ofsted) Inspection Framework, with its standalone strand that focuses on inclusion, will also have other headteachers talking about it. Looking toward the future, I am deeply grateful for the resource and remain optimistic about its continued positive effects on learners facing various barriers, including those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), sensory needs, and, of course, hearing loss. Their resourcefulness and adaptability are yet to be fully explored, but I believe their potential is boundless.

I recently had the pleasure and privilege of sharing my experience at the BATOD North Study Day in Huddersfield. I know I was preaching to the converted when speaking to a room of incredible, like-minded professionals who spend their working lives breaking down barriers and enhancing the lives of the children and young people they support. It was an absolute delight to speak to so many passionate people and have the opportunity to ignite a collective spark of possibilities. In advocating for such vital resources, we pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all our students.

Helen Roberts has been the headteacher of Rampton Primary School since 2019, bringing nearly three decades of primary education experience to her role. She holds a Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Primary Education from Liverpool University and a master's in SENDCo from Nottingham Trent University. Helen also serves as SENDCo, designated safeguarding lead, and mental health first aider at the school. A passionate champion for children with SEND, Helen is dedicated to breaking down barriers to learning and ensuring every child can reach their full potential. Her expertise in inclusive practice, person-centred planning and removing barriers to learning, underpins her commitment to creating an educational environment where all children thrive. Under her leadership, Rampton Primary School achieved a 'Secure Good' Ofsted rating in 2022 and the EYFS provision was awarded Excellence Leadership and Outstanding Team by Nottinghamshire County Council. Helen has completed extensive professional development, including a National Professional Qualification (NPQ) in Behaviour and Culture, Certificate in Instructional Coaching, and comprehensive training in autism, dyslexia, Makaton, and supporting children's mental health and wellbeing. Beyond education, Helen is an accomplished children's author, having published six books between 2019 and 2025, demonstrating her commitment to literacy and inspiring young minds through both leadership and creative storytelling.

Exam group

The Statutory Assessment and Examination Access Arrangement Working Group (SA&EAAWG) plays a critical role in providing support and guidance, resources and shaping equitable assessment practices for deaf CYP from source with the awarding bodies to the practice in the exam room.

Its remit covers statutory assessments, national examinations, and the consistency of access arrangements across the United Kingdom (UK). If you would like to discuss any concerns about access arrangements in examinations, contact exec@batod.org.uk

Deaf, not 'hearing impaired': The power of words

Michelle Atkinson, a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) and a deaf mother of deaf children reminds us that language matters

Deaf, not broken

When I recently walked into a school and saw the name of the resource base, I paused. There it was in bold letters: Hearing Impaired Unit.

For a moment, I couldn't breathe. The words hit me like a punch; heavy, outdated, a reminder of the language that once shadowed my own childhood.

Words matter

Growing up, I spent my days in what was then called the 'hearing impaired unit'. That label followed me everywhere: across report cards, medical files, and rolled off the lips of QToDs so easily that they didn't realise what those words do to a child's sense of self.

'Hearing impaired'. Impersonal. Official. But when you sit with it, when you live under it, it carries one message: you are broken.

To be impaired is to be less than whole, something to be fixed. As a child, I absorbed that meaning without question. I apologised for my deafness as if it were an inconvenience to others. I felt small, fragile, like damaged goods wrapped carefully in pity.

It took years, and the strength of being born into a deaf family, to unlearn that. To understand that I was not broken. I was simply deaf.

Can't vs don't

Society measures deafness in the currency of hearing, as if it has less value or worth by comparison. But being deaf isn't about how much you can or can't hear, it's about how you experience the world.

From a hearing perspective, the term hearing impaired frames deafness as a lack, a 'can't' measured against a hearing standard. From a deaf perspective, it's much simpler: we don't hear. That's it. Just a difference, not a deficiency.

This shift in perspective might seem subtle, but it changes everything. When children first encounter their deafness through negative language and constant comparisons to hearing standards, they begin life carrying the weight of being 'less than' before they've even started. Before they've even discovered who they truly are.

Language that heals, not hurts

Across the United Kingdom (UK), attitudes are shifting. Deaf-led organisations, universities, and educators now use 'deaf' to describe the full spectrum of hearing levels. 'Hearing impaired' lingers in some schools and council services, but its days are numbered. Just as 'deaf and dumb', once a standard medical term, is now unthinkable, so, too, must outdated labels fade.

The Oxford Dictionary defines impairment as "a condition that means part of your body does not work correctly". Deafness is not a malfunction. It's not something that can be repaired. We wouldn't say someone who uses a wheelchair has a walking impairment, nor that a male is woman impaired. We recognise that our bodies simply move differently through the world. Deafness is a difference, not a defect.

So why do we still define deaf people through the lens of what's 'wrong'?

Discovering Deaf Gain

I love discovering Deaf Gain, a celebration of the advantages of being deaf. I smile reading examples: the ability to focus in noisy offices, a peaceful night's sleep during loud storms, communicating across distances and languages, and much more.

Deaf Gain flips the script: deafness is not a deficit; it's a different way of being with its own strengths. Maybe hearing people are the ones who are 'deaf impaired'. A play on words, yes, but powerful all the same. Every way of experiencing the world comes with its own kind of strengths.

A legacy I refuse to pass on

When I see the words 'hearing impaired' still used in schools, I think of my deaf children. I think of the deaf children I teach. I think of every deaf child in the world. I think of how easily words seep into the soul of a child. I don't want them carrying the same weight I did. I want them to be proud of who they are.

Deaf is not a dirty word. It's a culture, a community, a way of life. Something to celebrate.

Letting go of the old words

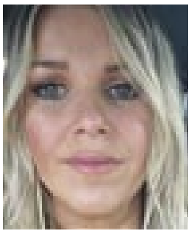
I try to understand that some hearing parents may find comfort in the phrase 'hearing impaired'. Perhaps it softens the reality of discovering their child is deaf. I empathise deeply with their journey of acceptance. But professionals have a responsibility to guide families towards language that empowers, not limits.

When we continue to use outdated terminology, we keep children tethered to old ideas about what deafness means. When we change our words, we begin to change the world around them.

Deaf is enough

If I've learned anything from this experience, it's that words carry power far beyond the page and beyond the classroom. They can build confidence or strip it away. They can heal or they can harm.

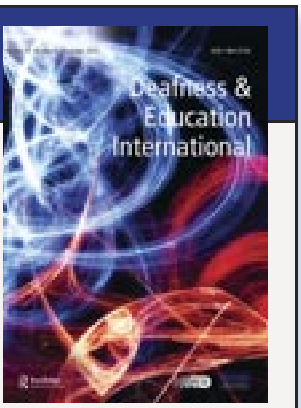
So, to every teacher, parent, and professional who works with or has deaf children: choose your words with care. Because when you call a child deaf, you're not simply labelling them, you're giving them permission to be whole.



Michelle Atkinson, a graduate of the University of Leeds with a Master of Arts in Deaf Education, is a QToD at the Royal School for the Deaf, Derby, with a deep-rooted commitment to enhancing outcomes for deaf children. She recently completed a dissertation exploring local offers for deaf children, adding to her growing body of work in the field. As a deaf parent of deaf children, Michelle brings invaluable personal insight and lived experience to her professional practice. She is passionate about creating environments where deaf individuals can truly thrive and remains dedicated to driving innovation in deaf education for future generations.

Deafness & Education International journal

– Submission guidelines for authors



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smiLE in action: Interaction that counts

Jenna Quirk and **Linda Montgomery**, Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs), and **Karin Schamroth**, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT), describe the journey to implementing smiLE Therapy into their school setting

Why smiLE Therapy?

We have always endeavoured to find ways to develop our pupils' independence and self-advocacy skills and become active participants in the school and wider community. The Specialist Deaf Curriculum framework (SDCF) by BATOD and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) provided a scaffold for us to develop our pupil's understanding of how to effectively communicate within the hearing world.

We also required a way to capture and measure their progress with this over time. We explored smiLE Therapy (strategies and measurable interaction in Live English) through the Scottish Sensory Centre and attended a free one-hour taster session online. smiLE Therapy seemed to encompass all we were looking for in developing pupils' understanding of their individual communication strengths and equipping them with the skills to communicate effectively within school and in the wider world. We were excited to see how we could put smiLE Therapy into action and measure progress.

We shared our enthusiasm with the headteacher. She could see that it fitted well with the school values of Acceptance, Respect, and Teamwork and gave us the go-ahead for training. smiLE Therapy is now embedded in our school improvement plan.

Over the course of 13 months, we have carried out smiLE Therapy successfully with a range of pupils and have established smiLE across the provision, including two-way inclusion groups with hearing peers. We will share with you the successes and challenges, including the impact it's had on our pupils, staff, catering staff, families, and ourselves.

What is smiLE Therapy?

smiLE Therapy teaches pragmatic skills – that is, how to use communication for effective social interaction. Karin Schamroth, a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT), created smiLE Therapy for deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students from ages 7 to 25, including DHH Plus students. It empowers students to be effective and confident for everyday interactions in the community with hearing people.

For many DHH students, pragmatics is a real challenge. Even those in mainstream schools who have age-appropriate language skills often struggle with pragmatics. Pragmatic skills include understanding expectations in social situations, repairing misunderstandings, negotiation, and problem solving. We know that language deprivation, delayed theory of mind, reduced opportunities for real interactions, and reduced incidental learning are some of the reasons why pragmatics development can be compromised in DHH students. The impact of poor pragmatic skills for DHH people, on a wide range of outcomes is well researched. It includes risk of poorer mental and physical health, poorer employment outcomes, and likely social isolation.

smiLE Therapy is evidence-based, pupil-centred, and flexible. It uses authentic real-life tasks with before- and after-therapy videos of real interaction and delivers clear, visual measurable outcomes. It includes training parents to actively work on generalisation and give their children real practice opportunities to manage interactions independently.

Pupil requesting in office

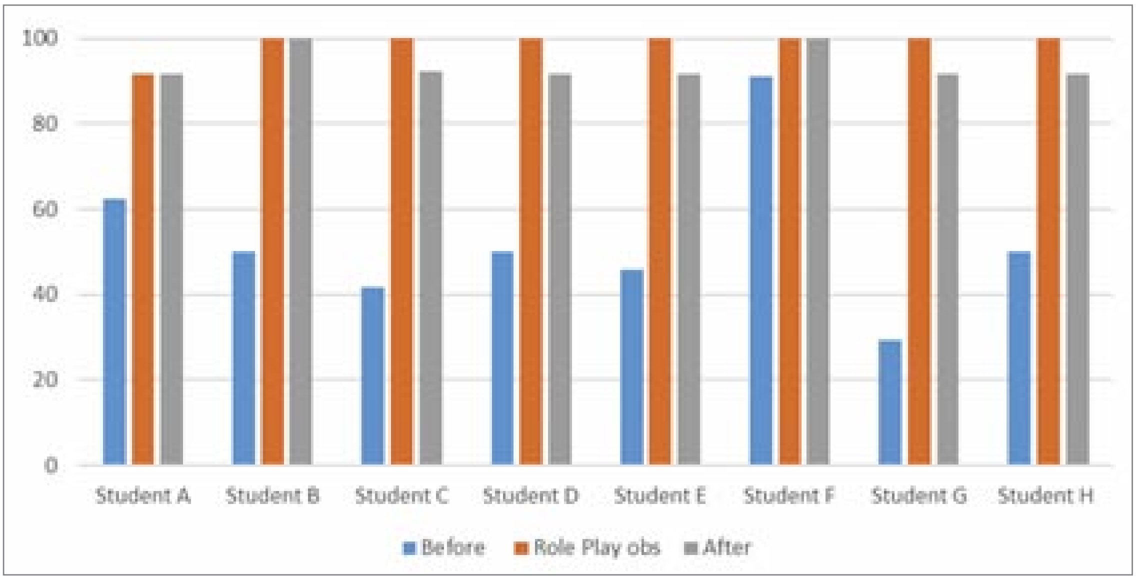


Chart 1: 'Requesting and refusing in an office'. Percentage scores of pupils carrying out the real interaction task. Scores from: the before-therapy video, the final role play observation in the group, and the after-therapy video.

How we got started…

We staggered training: Jenna first (October 2024), Linda next (March 2025), and a third teacher followed (November 2025). Working collaboratively has helped us learn faster, respond quicker to meeting the learning needs of our pupils, and see the potential of smiLE Therapy in our school.

We started with the smiLE Therapy module 'Requesting and refusing in an office'. Pupils learned how to enter a school office, to wait if someone was on the phone, to initiate the interaction, and make their request. If they were given the wrong item they learned to refuse it and leave with the item they needed. Finally, they learned how to end the interaction and leave.

Chart 1 shows the results from this module. The eight pupils were in three separate groups, depending on their rate of learning and processing.

Later we ran this module with our first mixed group of deaf and hearing pupils. There were two deaf pupils and a hearing pupil with a stammer. The results were very positive. We have subsequently included other hearing children in our modules.

We were delighted by the progress shown as we began role play sessions with the pupils. They looked forward to weekly sessions, and we could see the immediate

Parent workshop where the children lead their parents' learning impact. The pupils' mainstream teachers commented on increased confidence of our deaf learners in the mainstream classroom. Parents also noticed an increased confidence in communication.

We went on to run the smiLE Therapy 'Clarification skills' module, to help develop self-advocacy within the classroom. We ran a generalisation module six months later called 'Requesting and refusing in a kitchen'. We chose this setting to target independence skills in the everyday lunch environment. This was to see if skills learned in the office environment could be transferred to a different environment. Initially, the high noise level of the dining hall threw pupils, but after role play they quickly grew in confidence and achieved high after-therapy scores.

smiLE Therapy modules focus on strong collaboration between parents, educators, and support professionals to promote the development of functional communication and social skills for deaf students. The programme emphasises family engagement as a critical component of student success, ensuring that communication strategies are consistent across school, home, and community settings.

We invited parents to be actively involved through workshops to suit the needs of the families. Families scored a staged role play and discussed the communication skills checklist, with their child leading their parents' learning. These were well received. Each parent and child also met with the Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) to assess the child's before- and after-therapy videos. Communication targets were set, and parents agreed to support these outside school.

By fostering meaningful partnerships with families, smiLE supports pupils in developing confidence, independence, and positive relationships with peers and adults. The ultimate goal is to enhance students' ability to communicate effectively, navigate social situations successfully, and participate fully in academic and social environments.

The challenges…

Initially, establishing the groupings proved challenging. We needed to consider communication needs, language abilities, compatibility of children, and their learning pace. We have been able to be flexible with this approach, to best meet the pupils' learning needs.

Timetabling the sessions to avoid interruptions was a priority to ensure a safe learning environment for the pupils during role play.

The successes…

What we noticed about the impact on pupils

Pupils were delighted and proud on seeing their final after-therapy video showing their new skills. Data in Chart 1 demonstrates the individual skills progress.

Pupils now take more ownership of setting their own communication targets. Skills learned are transferable, for example, conversational repair. Pupils can now confidently inform you of their particular strategies such as "Can you sign please? Write it down. Repeat please?" Pupils are now aware of their expressive skills, how to slow the pace for clarity, and ensure they have been understood.

Confidence has grown, such as standing and presenting at a whole school assembly. Two pupils felt confident to go for house vice-captain of the school. One shared their feelings, "A wee bit nervous but I'm confident to do vice-captain speech in front of everybody. I used sign and speak so everyone could know because I'm deaf".

One deaf learner, aged 10, asked Linda when the dance after-school club started. Linda suggested she ask the teacher involved. The pupil was very nervous and asked to take her friend. On her return she explained that the teacher was busy, she didn't want to interrupt, and she was too nervous. Linda suggested stopping to think for a moment and exploring strategies used in smiLE. "I could see the penny drop as her face lit up and she said "Oh!" The pupil volunteered: "I could've knocked on the door, waited, and stood in a good place". It was a lightbulb moment. She still required scaffolding to support generalisation. Returning to the teacher, she succeeded in getting the information.

What we noticed about the impact on mainstream teachers

The staff around the school are reporting back that their pupils are speaking up in class using conversation repair strategies such as, "I can't hear you, what did you say again?" With the confidence the pupils have gained, the staff around the school are embracing opportunities for the pupils to lead and express their views.

What we noticed about the impact on parents

When the parents watched their child's videos, they were pleasantly surprised both by the skills their child already had in the before-therapy video and by their improvement after therapy.

Following the parent workshop (all attended!), we received positive feedback:

"Great session, really informative, the format of children and parents together worked well."

"We will encourage our child to do this at the shops."

"Face to face and lip-reading is very important."

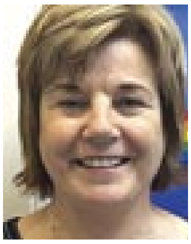
"My take away from this session will be to communicate more with him at home using BSL [British Sign Language]. Things such as knocking on the door, waiting for people before talking, and so on."

What we noticed about the impact on us

Using smiLE therapy has taught us to encourage more independence in our pupils' learning. We have started to look for opportunities to transfer and generalise their new skills. One example is the dining hall. Previously there was no expectation to communicate here. Now pupils are able to queue, give their name, and order their lunch independently. This also helped build understanding and relationships with catering staff. For example, our learners who chose by pointing are now readily offered a visual choice. We were pleased to see pupils advocate for themselves about the noise level in the dining hall. They chose to sit in a quieter place, but this meant they were isolated from their hearing peers. We highlighted the issue with the headteacher and now the whole class sits in the quieter area.

We encourage our staff team to find opportunities for pupils to be independent and ask for things themselves directly rather than through a supporting adult. This has been a big learning curve for all staff: to step back and give the pupils thinking time and to facilitate the pupil's independent communication.

We are excited to see where our smiLE journey takes us next!



Jenna Quirk is a QToD with over 14 years of experience working across primary, secondary, and peripatetic visiting services supporting deaf learners in a range of settings. Jenna is deeply committed to empowering deaf children to reach their full potential, supporting them to achieve their goals through strong self-advocacy and independence skills. She believes that every deaf child deserves the tools and confidence to succeed. Outside of her professional life, Jenna is a busy mum of two, balancing family life with her dedication to deaf education.

Linda Montgomery is a QToD with 24 years of experience in deaf education. Passionate about breaking down communication barriers, developing language acquisition, and championing inclusion, she has worked across a wide range of roles supporting deaf children and young people. Her unwavering commitment led her to study alongside full-time work, achieving both QToD status and BSl Level 6. Linda's work is driven by the belief that every deaf child deserves access, understanding, and the opportunity to thrive. Outside of her professional life, she enjoys walking, bagging Munros, and spending time with her family.

Karin Schamroth is a Specialist SaLT DHH. She worked in the NHS for 30 years with DHH babies, children, and young people across many settings including specialist DHH units and schools, and mainstream schools. Karin created smiLE Therapy to develop pragmatic skills in DHH students, that is, to use language for effective social interaction. smiLE builds communicative and social skills resilience for everyday interactions in the community. Karin and her team continue to develop smiLE Therapy and train SaLTs and teachers in the UK and internationally.

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Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE)

CRIDE is a consortium that brings together a range of organisations and individuals with a common interest in using research to improve the educational outcomes achieved by deaf children.

Since the formation of CRIDE, the data from the reports, a successor to the previous BATOD survey on deaf education, have influenced and supported the work of deaf education services in developing and/or sustaining the local authority provision, local and central government policy makers, academics at all levels including those on the mandatory qualification training to be a QToD, and other individuals and groups with an interest in deaf education.

The survey alternates from year to year between a standard survey and a survey with a mix of core and thematic questions. CRIDE has also refined the survey over time, with questions removed and added.

We would like to hear from you about how you use CRIDE. Contact us via exec@batod.org.uk

How do you connect? Exploring the digital lives of deaf children

Jaime Cohen, retired Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD), **Ulrike Thomas**, Research Associate, School of Education, Newcastle University, and **Ellie James**, undergraduate student, Newcastle University, discuss their pilot study about deaf children's use of digital technology to connect with others, and consider the potential it offers for inclusion

The school community is an important environment where friendships develop and healthy relationships have been shown to positively impact wellbeing, self-esteem, and academic achievement. Creating opportunities for social connection was one of the early drivers for integrating children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) into mainstream settings; yet, research from the 1980s onwards has consistently evidenced that deaf children may face challenges when socially engaging with hearing peers (Schwab et al, 2019, Da Silva et al, 2022).

Today, the use of digital technology plays a crucial role in developing and maintaining social connections for children and young people (CYP). However, there is little research that has explored how deaf CYP use technology to connect with others; the potential role it could play in the development of relationships; or the extent to which teachers could use it to foster inclusion.

This pilot project was designed to investigate such gaps in the research. Funded by the Catherine Cookson Foundation, it drew on Professor Susan Nichols' (University of South Australia) successful methodology used in her 'How do you connect' project (Nichols et al, 2022). Nichols designed a successful interactive network mapping activity to facilitate interviews in which children are invited to create diagrams using cards depicting people, apps, and emojis. It is an approach intended to shed light on the many ways in which children use digital tools to connect with others over time and space.

The project in action

The pilot project took place in two additionally resourced provisions in Newcastle upon Tyne. It involved nine key stage 2 (KS2) profoundly or severely deaf children; three were from families who use British Sign Language (BSL) and two had English as an additional language.

Before interactive interviews took place, a workshop was undertaken in each school to introduce the key concepts and terminology needed to complete a network map. The children were also encouraged to think about how and with whom they communicate in their daily lives.

During video-recorded interviews with each child, they were invited to choose avatars to represent themself and other significant people. As they reflected on their communication, they added images of apps and pictures to represent speaking and signing. Some of the students created a simple network map, focusing on family living together, while others produced a relatively complex map to include family living in different houses, as well as school staff and friends.

The children from the units regularly meet for 'Deaf friends days' where they have time to socialise with deaf peers, and complete activities to build cultural capital. So, the project finished with a day at Newcastle University where they worked on their data, had a campus tour, made a poster, and met an undergraduate student, Ellie who is deaf. Positive feedback about the project highlighted this day and is best summarised by Ellie:

> This summer, I had the joy of welcoming students and staff from both Benton Park and Broadwood Primary School to Newcastle University, where I studied! Together, we all worked as a part of the 'How do you connect' research project. We spent the day exploring the different ways that we all connect with one another, including ways which are more accessible and equally

> enjoyable for d/Deaf individuals!
>
> Like many of the children, I am profoundly d/Deaf and use cochlear implants. I also spent my childhood years in the same position as them, attending a mainstream school as a part of a Hearing Resource Base.
>
> Taking part in this research project almost felt like using a time machine and seeing little eight-year-old Ellie again! It was truly so heartwarming seeing fellow d/Deaf students in the position I once was, knowing that they too can achieve anything they dream of – and they certainly have incredible support from the staff to do so!
>
> Thank you ... for allowing me to be a part of this project. It is truly one that meant a lot to me, and fills me with pride for both myself and the children.

How did they connect?

The videos of the children making their network map were transcribed and thematically analysed, showing how digital technology facilitated inclusion. Despite their differences, all of the children used the mapping activity to tell us about ways in which they connected with others. For example, one child whose grandma lives abroad told us that, "She sends messages". Another explained how, "Like if I'm stuck somewhere, I might call them. If I miss the bus. Actually, I call my brother and say, 'Can you pick me up?'". Others elaborated on how they use specific apps to interact, for instance:

> **Researcher:** So, you use FaceTime and TikTok at the same time – two apps?
>
> **Child:** So normally FaceTime and then we [deaf school friends] normally like screen share, then we normally watch TikTok.

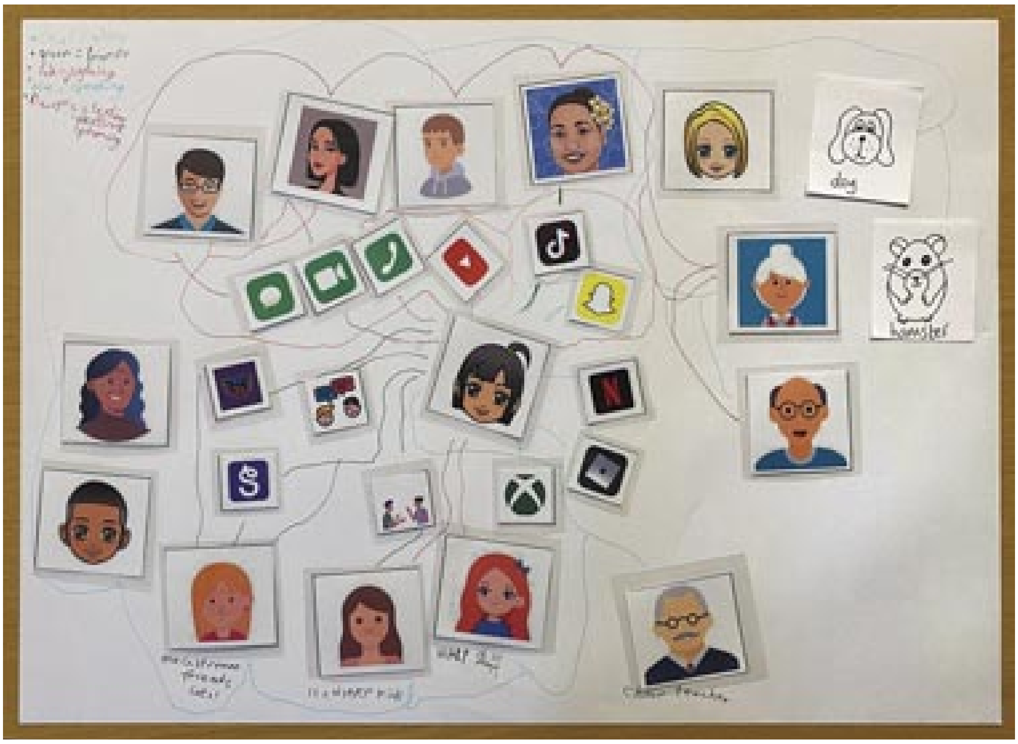
Another child outlined how they had used technology to connect with both deaf and hearing peers after school:

> **Researcher:** With your friends, do you message on your phone that you want to play Fortnite or Roblox? Is that how you know you're all free?
>
> **Child:** Yes, and they ask if we want to chat, then we all go on a group chat and then we upload Fortnite. It's just the three of us, unless we want to add one of our friends.
>
> **Researcher:** Who do you play Roblox with?
>
> **Child:** D, R, and A
>
> **Researcher:** A – that's a new person – how did you get to be friends with A [new hearing boy in school] on Roblox?
>
> **Child:** So, R added a call for me with him, and I asked does he have Roblox, he said 'yeah', then I asked what his name on Roblox is.
>
> **Researcher:** That easy! Had you already talked to him in school or is it just through Roblox that you got to talk to him?
>
> **Child:** I'd already talked to him in school.
>
> **Researcher:** If A is there and R and D and you're playing Roblox with them at home, when you get back to school do you talk about what you've been playing or is it something you just talk about when you're playing it?
>
> **Child:** Sometimes we talk about what just happened, like updates and that stuff.

This indicates how the children's digital lives can lead to inclusion, not just through activities undertaken with the technology itself, but also through conversation about these shared activities.

Many of the children talked about how they used technology to watch content with family and friends:

> **Researcher:** Do you ever watch funny videos?
>
> **Child:** Only on TikTok. If my cousin's over at my house, we put on TikTok and try not laugh and then if we laugh, we have to spit the water out.
>
> **Researcher:** Do you ever watch films?
>
> **Child:** Yes, on Netflix.
>
> **Researcher:** Is that something you do by yourself or with other people?
>
> **Child:** I sometimes watch it with people...with my family.
>
> **Researcher:** You said you watched YouTube Kids and YouTube...
>
> **Child:** Well, I watch adult YouTube with my [older] brother and YouTube Kids by myself. And sometimes with my mum. And my dad. No, it's just my mum.



One of the most popular activities was watching other families vlogging about their life and/or giving tutorials on online games. For example:

> **Researcher:** What do like watching on YouTube?
>
> **Child:** I watch that Anzala family, Royalty family, and Jancy family.
>
> **Researcher:** Can I ask about LaurenZside – what does she do on YouTube?
>
> **Child:** Sometimes she does like kind of spooky games and sometimes she watches funny games and some scary stuff I find a bit boring and she does play Roblox.

Learning about how other people live in a way that was not available to deaf children in the past is perhaps another way in which digital technology facilitates societal inclusion.

In addition to discussing their viewing content, a few of the children explained how they create and share content, including videos to teach sign language and TikTok dances:

> **Researcher:** So, you make your own little TikTok videos. Can you tell us about them?
>
> **Child:** We normally film what we're doing and take videos of us doing TikToks, dancing, and everything. We normally show our handshakes and everything. We both go on the video, but at the end if I need some space to do my leg kicks, she squashes out of the way because she doesn't want to do it.

Keeping safe online

Some of the apps in this study, such as TikTok, state in their terms and conditions that they are for young people aged 13 or above, and many of the KS2 children were aware of this. As with Professor Nichols' research, they explained that they used them on a trusted adult's account or device, with their permission and/or in their presence. For example:

> **Child:** I don't have Instagram; I've only seen the app on her [Mum's] phone.
>
> **Researcher:** Have you ever seen what she's looking at or does she not share it with you?
>
> **Child:** I think she just sent me some videos...like some videos, like funny cat videos and art stuff.
>
> **Researcher:** Have you seen Facebook?
>
> **Child:** Yes, on Dad's phone

The vulnerability of deaf children online and how to actively support their ability to stay safe is a vitally important topic (for example, see the *BATOD Magazine* December 2025 article by Laura Wood, Keeping deaf children safe online: What every QToD needs to know). It was therefore reassuring that during both the workshop and mapping activity many of the children showed their awareness of it. For example:

> **Child:** But like my TikTok account is private – I only share with my friends who I know.
>
> **Child:** I do signing videos to teach, but my account is private, only my friends who I know.
>
> **Researcher:** Who do you share your videos with online?
>
> **Child:** My TikTok's private. I do not want the full world to see. If you don't want to post your TikToks there's a drafts bit where you can post it as a draft so no one can see them.
>
> **Researcher:** Are you in the same room or a different room when you use grandma's phone?
>
> **Child:** The same, but sometimes, my grandma goes in a different room to make me dinner, and she checks if I'm

alright. My grandad stays with me.

Researcher: So, when you made friends with him on Roblox...

Child: I'm only friends with people I know, not strangers.

Supporting deafness

Most of the children discussed viewing videos of hearing people, but some of them also watched content made and presented by deaf people. For instance, one child said, "On YouTube, I watch about this other family with a tiny boy who's deaf and he has a cochlear implant" while another volunteered, "I found two deaf people on YouTube". Well-known role models were also mentioned, eg:

Researcher: Do you ever watch Danny Murphy?

Child: Yeah!

Researcher: Does he talk about his baby?

Child: No, he just talks about random things, funny videos, vlogs, I'm still waiting for his new one.

Researcher:I've never seen Gladiators – it looks quite exciting!

Child: Fury's deaf, got a cochlear implant

Researcher: Oh, you've got a deaf person on it!

Child: The first Gladiator!

The chance to see other deaf people represented in the media is another powerful way in which digital technology can facilitate a sense of inclusion. Furthermore, the project highlighted how technology enabled more equal access to communication and online content. For example, most of the participants were very keen on the use of subtitles:

Researcher: And if you haven't got subtitles, what's that like for you?

Child: It's quite hard with cartoons because you can't read their lips...and you know when actors turn around in the back, you can't read them.

Researcher: When you're reading the subtitles, how easy is it for you to follow and understand what they're saying?

Child: Very easy!

They also explained how they used gadgets and video calls to make face-to-face communication easier, again supporting inclusion, as seen in the following:

Child: When I'm playing Fortnite and Roblox, I have like a sticky thing on the back of my screen so I can stick it to the wall so they can see my screens.

Child: Sometimes my family phones me in the house. I'm normally upstairs in my bedroom, so if they start shouting and I don't hear them, my mam and dad start ringing me to say teatime.

Child: On the phone it's a little bit hard but if they're [people talking] through my Bluetooth it gets a bit better.

Researcher: And when you're on a group call with friends, how do you communicate?

Child: Sometimes talking, sometimes signing, but we mostly use sign.

Conclusion

Analysis of the data revealed that the majority of themes were the same as those identified in Professor Nichols' earlier studies, revealing the commonality of experience across all children. However, there were also examples of how digital technology enabled this small group of deaf children to engage with others in ways not possible just a generation ago. The project provided a fascinating glimpse into the richness of their digital lives, provided some insight into how they connect with others, and raised further questions such as:

- What factors influence deaf children's use of digital technology?
- How do we continue to ensure online safety for deaf children?
- Could the power of digital technology to promote connections with others be harnessed to further facilitate inclusion for deaf children?

With many thanks to all the children involved in this study, their parents/caregivers who supported it and to Newcastle Sensory Support team leaders and school staff who so warmly welcomed us.

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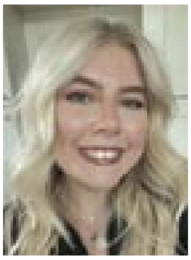


Jaime is a retired QToD who now spends her working life teaching yoga, proofreading, and as an external supervisor for the University of Manchester, supporting trainee QToDs.

Ulrike Thomas was a primary school teacher for 7 years before working as a Research Associate for 18 years in the School of Education, Newcastle University. She worked with Prof. Susan Nichols on the 'How Do You Connect project' that took place in the North East of England.

Ellie is a profoundly deaf English Literature and History graduate from Newcastle University who loves to travel and hopes to work with d/Deaf children in the future.

Our experiences and what we shared about deaf awareness for our son

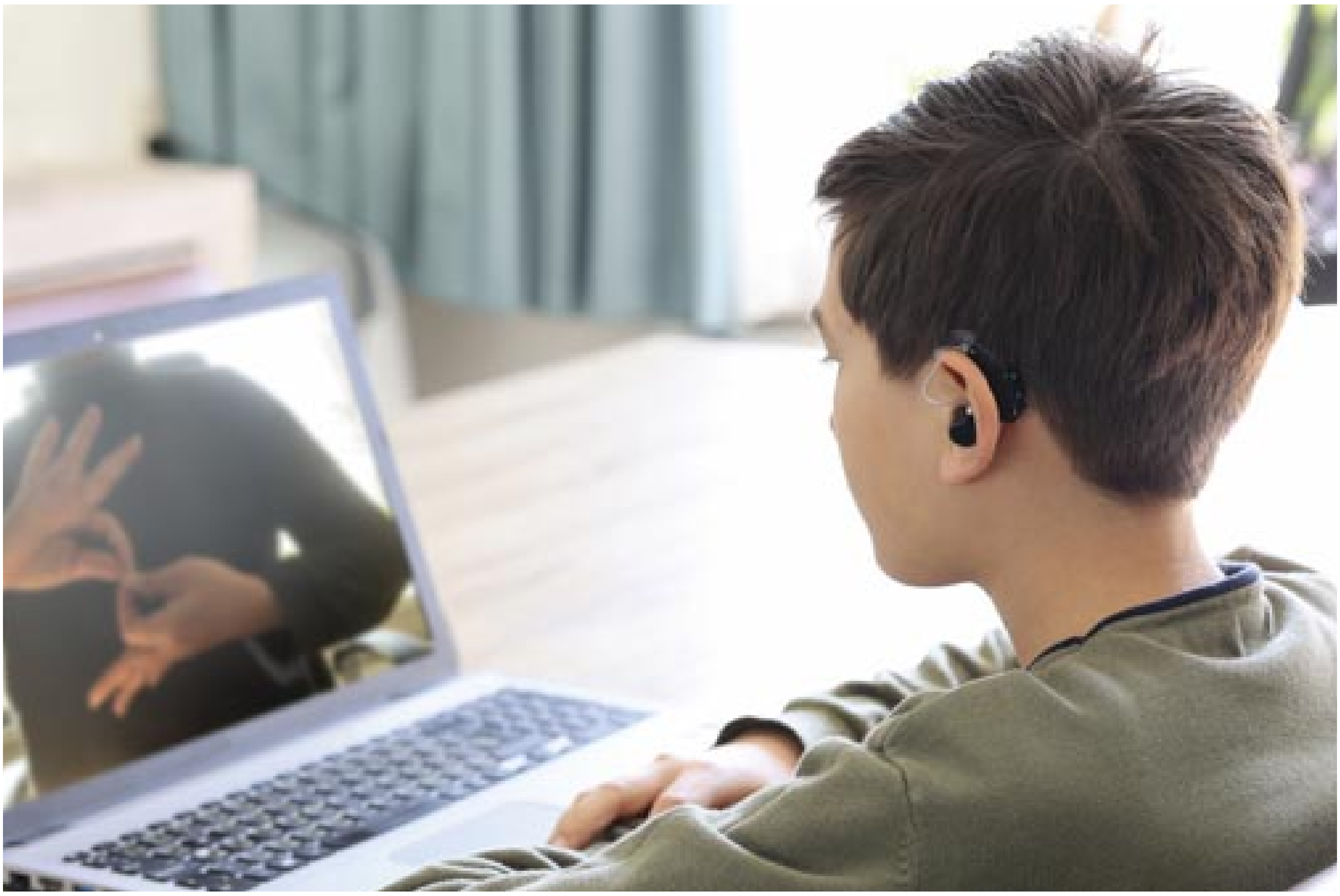
A mother of a deaf child shares her perspectives

I write as a mother of four boys, one being our 15-year-old profoundly deaf son. I worked as a homoeopath for ten years running two children's clinics alongside a general practice. I have worked as a childminder for fifteen years caring for children with a variety of additional needs and enjoying facilitating education through play.

Our son's deafness was discovered when he was five weeks old and he grew up using hearing aids and British Sign Language (BSL). He now uses bilateral cochlear implants and continues to use BSL. It has always been our aim to immerse him in as much of his language of BSL within school as possible. His father and I were still learning BSL. We also wanted him to meet other deaf children. Throughout his primary and secondary education, he has attended the resource base for hearing impairment and also mainstream with one-to-one signing support.

We have constant regret about knowing he is not receiving equal opportunities in education. Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) are often not fluent signers, and we, his parents, are hearing. We have always wanted him and other deaf children to be able to have access to education through fluent language role models and are constantly puzzled with the apparent difficulties that schools have in employing fluent signing deaf teachers. I have witnessed a deaf postgraduate student failing to gain a place on a teacher training course and resorting to becoming a teacher’s assistant first. There still seem to be barriers for deaf people aspiring to be school teachers. From my experience, there seem to be very few deaf teachers, and yet, I can't see a more perfect solution for deaf children than being taught by someone who truly understands, who could adapt their teaching styles appropriately to how deaf children learn most easily, and who could provide a more sophisticated language role model.

My interest in education for deaf children comes from these issues. I am interested in the educational trends that we see through history. From our history of housing deaf children in boarding schools away from their families, to a modern trend of bringing deaf children into mainstream schools away from deaf peers and any understanding of deaf culture. This may be the case in certain parts of Britain more than others, depending on the facilities, but it seems to me to come with limitations and its own package of possible emotional damage. The trend that seems to remain constant is that every decision made is through the



voice of the hearing world. I wonder how a child immersed in mainstream can have a future voice for a culture they've maybe never experienced. The modern risk is to BSL itself. The deaf world's language is being taught and passed down to our future generation by non-fluent signers.

I find language fascinating. Having a deaf child with a different language to my own has opened my eyes to the amazing subtleties and depth of language. I have experienced that QToDs may focus on helping a deaf child learn individual vocabulary more than helping them understand the context of a whole sentence. I've brought

A bit of deaf awareness from a mother to her son's mainstream teachers

- It is hard for Sam to memorise lots of new information. It is easier if tests/exams are spread out.
- All teachers that work with Sam in mainstream and later in college need to know that much of the content and vocabulary is not even slightly familiar because his deafness has not given him the incidental learning that hearing students have had.
- Sam's learning is often completely new. It therefore takes longer for learning to be processed and understood by him, longer to be remembered and then retrieved. It's very hard for Sam to re-word this learning into written English. English is his second language. Tests that require English answers are challenging.
- It's harder for Sam to understand the written questions about newly learned content. Test papers often use everyday scenarios for a student to draw on their knowledge and translate their knowledge in connection to the scenario. It's difficult for Sam to draw from all the various concepts he's learned, and know when and where to apply this to different written questions. He has abstract thinking, but this can be confused in the translation to and from written language.
- I have seen Sam give more in-depth answers if he speaks them to me. A speech-to-text device may not understand his speech, but a communication support worker could write his answers. I previously asked if he would be given a writer in exams. I was also previously reassured that tests would be signed to him. I am now seeing that rules and regulations don't quite allow for this.
- Sam can read a test question, think he's understood, doesn't ask for help or clarification, but he's misunderstood. Being given extra time in an exam makes no difference to this.
- It's harder for Sam to learn all the new spelling from memory. He needs to learn the spellings from memory rather than sound them out phonetically and with no, or little, familiarisation of the word or its sound.
- We, as hearing people, may take it for granted that Sam has understood a concept – when actually he might not have. Incidental learning doesn't happen easily. We might assume he knows something but it's never been explained. My example of this is when I took him to a college open evening and he realised for the first time that college is for learning one subject and not many like school. He was visiting an engineering course but asked where he'd learn physical education (PE).
- Sam naturally jumps to conclusions and misunderstands. He can fill the missing gaps with misunderstood concepts. He might nod when he hasn't understood.
- Using processors/lip reading all day is exhausting. All of the new learning is exhausting.
- Sam will hear from his processors if it's one-to-one and even then can misunderstand, especially in a busy room, and especially with poor acoustics.
- Sam is unlikely to hear a tutor who speaks to the whole class, and definitely won't if the tutor faces another student or the board. This is only the hearing – not to mention the true understanding and absorption of the content.
- Sam inevitably misses learning content. He'll also misunderstand the content.
- Sam can't easily use peer support for chatting, sharing of knowledge, or sharing of support.
- Education is set by hearing people for hearing people, taught by hearing people, written and explained in styles suited to hearing people (subtitled videos, often shown at speed, are usually in English, which is now always a deaf person's first language). Answers to tests are expected in English. Assessments of learning are set by and for hearing people.
- There is no adaptation to the thinking mind of a deaf person within our present-day education system. There is little research into the psychological differences of a deaf person's learning. From what research has been done – there have been no adaptations to the style of teaching in mainstream, and no adaptations to how a deaf person's learning is assessed within mainstream. Any deaf student who wishes to gain a recognised qualification such as a GCSE has to access the learning and assessment systems in place in mainstream. The deaf person is making all the adaptations within a hearing education system. There is little wonder that we see what the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) describe as the 'gap' in learning outcomes between deaf and hearing students of equal intelligence.
- The use of CSW and BSL signers is essential but is only a very small part in bringing a student anywhere close to accessing their right to learn. Their learning is still far from being fully accessible or equal. We can't individually change the education system but we can support Sam through our understanding.

examples to Independent Development Plan (IDP) meetings of how our son can know every word in a sentence, put those words together, and yet, the context is very different. I have sometimes been mistaken by teachers thinking I mean idioms when I am only speaking about normal sentences, of which there are hundreds to be confused by, in every subject, every day. One recent example from a maths test paper:

“If the longer side of a rectangle is *doubled* and the shorter side is *halved*, then the perimeter of the rectangle will stay the same. Is Owen correct?” (We are meant to picture two rectangles and know to compare them.)

From how our son had answered the question, I could tell that he had read:

“If the longer side of a rectangle is *double* and the shorter side is *half*, then the perimeter of the rectangle will stay the same. Is Owen correct?” (Our son read the question in this way and pictured only one rectangle.)

It is the suffix of 'ed' *doubled* and *halved* that allows us to picture this as two rectangles being compared. Language is amazingly subtle in how a slight change to a word changes the whole meaning of a sentence. Being fluent in English, we are so used to this that we hardly notice it.

Deaf children using signers in exams are apparently not allowed to have the question signed unless they specifically ask for it to be signed. They may often read a question and believe they've understood it.

A mainstream teacher does not have enough time to take all this on board. They do not have enough time to help a deaf child fully access education. Our personal experience is that our son has always enjoyed learning, is very interested in every subject, and applies what he's learned even though his QToDs, though very good at signing, have not been fluent signers. So, this is thanks to being in a resource base with his QToDs. In secondary school, he's been fortunate to have a Level 6 BSL communication support worker (CSW) and has continued to enjoy learning.

To access tests and exams means entering the mainstream education system. In mainstream, our son is not really learning from his teachers, he is learning from his CSW. Mainstream teachers don't attend IDP meetings. Parents receive a five-minute slot with each teacher at online parent evenings. Once the five minutes are up, we are cut off and the next teacher comes online. QToDs will understand that mainstream teachers are not going to be deaf aware after a deaf awareness class; it takes a lot more than this, and that's if it’s provided for a mainstream teacher at all. With such little time for a mainstream teacher to understand and get to know a pupil and the pupil’s needs, my experience is that our son is learning from his CSW and not from his fully qualified teachers.

Our experience of education is that QToDs are essential; they work hard within the education setting of the base, but they also work hard going over work from mainstream. This involves skill and a great deal of time and paperwork. I believe that is why our son learns well and enjoys learning. I also believe that there is a missing link between a resource base and mainstream that needs further bridging. So much communication and explanation of insight is needed between teachers. It is similar to the difficulty in bridging the deaf world and hearing world. Needing to access mainstream for exams and needing to be assessed by mainstream methods is letting our son down.

Our son has experienced no access to exams other than through the written language. Even if there were access to exams through BSL, the majority of our mainstream deaf children, most of whom will have hearing parents, have not been brought up with fluent signing teachers, and the pupils are therefore not fluent enough in BSL themselves. I believe the above issues are where the gap lies in learning outcomes that is spoken about by the NDCS. I believe that the issues are with the assessment of learning and not the learning itself. No matter how amazing and essential QToDs are, I believe that the present educational system is failing a good proportion of our deaf children. It is a systemic issue and not a teaching issue. I believe it requires more insight and research into how a deaf child learns, their educational psychology, and that this would need to be owned and voiced by deaf people. I believe it would then need a 3D shift into a creative style of teaching and a creative method of assessment, again, owned and voiced by the deaf community.

I was very interested in an article in *BATOD Magazine* December 2025 ‘Deaf epistemologies, identity, and education’ by Rich Evans, Lee Fullwood, and Martin Levinson. If I am allowed to quote, they write of deaf education being “arguably under threat from the way in which teaching is generally focused on student standardised testing”. As a mother without the company of peer teachers, I am not understood by those that aren’t living my experience, and I cannot converse with teachers who need to remain professional. Reading this article in *BATOD Magazine* was refreshing and reassuring. It seems there is not much I can do individually as a mother, but I have shared a bit of deaf awareness with our son's mainstream teachers. I share it with you hoping that it's useful for you to see the insights of a mother.

The author of this article lives in Wales and remains anonymous at the request of her son.

Adapting audiological assessment for learners with complex needs

Kate Ellor, Senior Audiologist, reports on a case study from Seashell Trust assessing the hearing of a young person with Down syndrome

Introduction

Assessing the hearing of children and young people with complex needs often requires flexibility, creativity, and close collaboration across multi-disciplinary teams. This case study illustrates how adapted approaches, combined with partnership working, enabled successful hearing assessment for a student with Down syndrome who was previously unable to access routine audiology services.

Seashell Trust in Cheadle, Stockport is a national specialist centre for children and young adults with complex needs. The on site Audiology suite allows for assessment in a familiar, low stimulus setting with opportunities for integrated working with education, therapy, and residential teams. This environment proved key for the student described below.

Background

The student, a young person with Down syndrome, had been unable to complete audiological assessment within his local National Health Service (NHS). Notes indicated the following barriers:

- high anxiety when attending hospital appointments
- difficulty waiting in busy or clinical environments
- minimal engagement during previous visual reinforcement audiometry (VRA) and play audiometry
- inconsistent participation, with periods of complete non co-operation and difficulties with attention

When this young adult started their Seashell placement, the audiology team aimed to establish his hearing levels by exploring alternative behavioural test methods appropriate for his developmental profile.

Initial assessment

The student was seen in the Audiology suite at Seashell. This suite design is based on a sensory room in order to offer a familiar and less clinical feel for students attending sessions. The student had met the Audiology team in their classroom before being invited to the Audiology suite. From classroom observations and discussions with his wider multidisciplinary team including teaching staff, learning support assistants, speech and language therapists we felt his developmental presentation suggested potential for play audiometry.

We began with standard behavioural performance testing, using men in the boat and a piggy bank toy, and began to try and condition the student to the test. The student engaged well and seemed to learn the association between the sound and the action when supported by staff. However, when asked to do the test without prompts and support, he became ‘stuck’ when he heard the sound. He appeared unsure how to respond, despite being able to complete the action when prompted verbally. During the sessions in audiology at Seashell, the student again presented with difficulties of freezing and needed verbal prompts and support from staff, which limited test reliability. Despite repeated conditioning, these difficulties continued to present and we began to question if the student did not understand the task or was struggling with cause and effect.

Multidisciplinary collaboration

Recognising the need to explore cognitive accessibility, we worked closely with the student’s speech and language therapist (SaLT), who attended the next session to support.

We changed to a familiar game ‘pop-up pirate’ that had been routinely used during his speech and language sessions. Although he understood the game well in its usual context, changing the rules so that the game was triggered by listening for a sound caused difficulty, and we saw the same challenges from the student once more becoming ‘stuck’. As with the initial task, he struggled to connect the listening cue with the motor action.

The SaLT was very surprised that he was struggling with the task, as she felt this was very much within his understanding. We wondered if repurposing a game he was already familiar with and introducing new rules (ie waiting for the sound before taking a turn) was too confusing.

These sessions highlighted that the core difficulty was not motor, sensory, or motivational; it was understanding the purpose of the task, and we therefore began to look at sounds that had meaning to the student.

Gathering functional hearing information

To better understand his listening behaviours in daily life, we contacted his education support team and asked them to observe and document:

- when he listened to sounds
- how he responded
- which sounds were meaningful or motivating to him

At college there is a pedestrian crossing, and here the education team highlighted a key observation. At pedestrian crossings, when the tactile/auditory alert sounded, the student would independently say ‘noise’ and prepare to cross.

This was a breakthrough for us. This highlighted the student’s understanding of cause and effect in meaningful functions.

Personalised testing adaptations

Using this functional behaviour, we recreated a mini pedestrian crossing inside the clinic. The elements included:

- men in the boat figures to represent crossing the road
- a hand held warbler to simulate the crossing alert
- a verbal reinforcement sequence: 'Noise → cross the road'.

We first modelled the sequence and conditioned the student. The hand-held warbler sound plays a noise similar to a crossing sound; we then verbally said 'noise – cross the road' and demonstrated crossing one of the figures across the crossing. The student quickly engaged with this. We then proceeded to remove the modelling and present the sound via soundfield speakers; the student responded by saying 'cross the road' and moving the figure.

This demonstrated clear understanding of the auditory cue and enabled reliable behavioural thresholds to be obtained.

Discussion

This case highlights several core principles for audiological assessment in complex needs settings:

1. Familiar context supports successful conditioning
Repurposing familiar tasks can be confusing, whereas using a situation already meaningful to the student can support understanding.

2. Multi-disciplinary insight enhances outcomes
Input from SaLT and education staff revealed valuable functional information not visible in clinic.

3. Flexibility is essential
Standard testing is not always accessible to those with complex needs. Creative adaptations allowed the student to participate in an assessment that was previously deemed inaccessible.

4. Anxiety and environment matter
Providing assessment in a calm, low pressure space enabled engagement with familiar staff and allowed the student to participate in a way that was not possible in a hospital setting.

Conclusion

This case demonstrates the value of a collaborative, personalised approach to audiological assessment for learners with complex needs. By combining specialist assessment skills with input from education staff, SaLTs, and the young person's daily experiences, we were able to adapt the testing method to suit his understanding, and obtain the reliable behavioural responses required for his ongoing hearing management.

It serves as a reminder that, for complex learners, it is not the child who must fit the test but it is the test that must adapt to the child.

Kate Ellor is a Senior Audiologist at the Seashell Trust, specialising in supporting children and young adults with complex needs. With a background in paediatric audiology and a decade of NHS experience, she provides tailored hearing assessments and device management. Currently completing a Master in Science in Educational Audiology, Kate is committed to improving hearing access and outcomes through integrated, person centred care.

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Norfolk Deaf Festival

Eleanor Craik, who is a producer of the Norfolk Deaf Festival, reports on this summer's festival in June

When I was born, I passed what used to be the hearing test: a bell that was rung behind my head to see if I would turn around. When I was three, my baby brother was born and he failed the test – when he went back to repeat it, my mum, realising that I was not always responding to things, quiet but content, asked them to test me again. I failed and my brother passed. These are terms that were used freely: fail, pass. Times have changed and improved immensely with newborn hearing screening and terms such as 'results not as expected' rather than 'fail' – I know this because my beautiful deaf daughter was born three years ago.

Growing up with a progressive hearing loss in Norfolk was very much normal – I did not know any different. I did not know that other children sometimes teased me because I did not hear it. I did not know that I was different because I did not see it. When I was 12, my Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) put me in touch with two other deaf girls of a similar age who lived a few villages away. This was my first true connection with my deaf identity.

When I was 26, I was working as a QToD and was implanted with a cochlear implant. This was a tricky time, learning to hear the world again with the listening fatigue as well as a determination to do the best I could in my new role. This got me thinking about how many other

Eleanor's daughter

people in rural Norfolk felt the same way: isolated, alone, and unaware of their deaf identity. The Norfolk Deaf Festival was born from a desire to bring deaf (and hearing) people together in an accessible way for everyone.

Our ethos is:

Educate: opportunities for professionals to upskill in order to best support deaf and hard-of-hearing people, and signpost them and their families to local and national provisions available.

Empower: empowerment through positive deaf role models and opportunities to take part through volunteering or learning a new skill.

Engage: with access to information, services, and the arts for all deaf people. To promote deaf awareness and ensure information given is accessible for all through the medium of British Sign Language (BSL) with sign language interpreters or technology for deaf people.

Connect: bring deaf and hard-of-hearing people, and their families and friends together, and help the hearing community to engage with and learn about deaf people. Support further events to be accessible in the region.

Whatever your hearing loss, you are not alone.

Since the last festival in 2023, the future of the Norfolk

Titch the guide dog with Indy the hearing dog

Deaf Festival has become more sustainable and also exciting, thanks to the support of The Forum Trust and recognising how important this festival is.

The Norfolk Deaf Festival will be back on Friday 26th and Saturday 27th June 2026 at The Forum in Norwich, with an additional day on Sunday 28th June, which will be focused on a Deaf Craft Fayre.

Friday 26th June will be open to all but with a focus on workshops for young people, schools, and colleges to attend. This will look like disk jockey (DJ) workshops, filming workshops, and games to play, as well as Toy Like Me Bear Ear Clinic for younger children to bring their teddies and get toy hearing aids for them. There will be an atrium full of information, organisations, and both local and national charities in attendance, with entertainment outside with captions and BSL interpreters for accessibility.

Saturday 27th June will be similar with more entertainment outside, workshops for all ages, and stalls brimming with information.

Sunday 28th June will be the Deaf Craft Fayre where deaf-led and deaf-related businesses will be selling their crafts as well as workshops to try creating something yourself, signed-song workshops, and signing choirs performing outside.

Feedback from previous years has always been so positive, but don’t just take my word for it, why not come and have a look? You can follow Norfolk Deaf Festival on Facebook for updates on who will be there and timings. Teachers are more than welcome to attend, this is a festival for all!

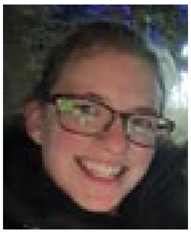
“Fantastic, it felt like I belonged to a community.”

“A great opportunity to spread deaf awareness and meet deaf people and performers.”

“Essential to deaf and hearing … my grandson has grown in confidence each year by year.”

“The event made me feel like my child is not alone. At school she is the only one.”

“Made me realise I can do the same as everyone else. It was fun and they were ordinary people like me.”



Eleanor Craik is a producer of the Norfolk Deaf Festival. She previously worked as a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People for over eight years. Eleanor is deaf with a cochlear implant, and she also has a deaf daughter and a hearing dog, Indy, who misses visiting schools.

British Sign Language Glossaries of Curriculum Terms

With the BSL Glossary project, the Scottish Sensory Centre aims to develop lists of subject-specific terms (called a glossary) in British Sign Language.

"*Teams of BSL linguists and subject specialists have created this resource by gathering any existing terms and creating new terms in BSL for those that do not. The glossary terms are supported by signed definitions, lab experiments and examples.*"

The glossary includes Mathematics curriculum terms as well as a range of other topics. Visit the website for further information www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/BSL/maths.html

Teaching Shakespeare to Deaf Learners: The Definitive Guide

Following the success of their first book about teaching English to Deaf learners, BATOD members **Rich Evans** and **Lee Fullwood** have published a second book that focuses on the teaching of Shakespeare

What about Shakespeare?

Of all the many, many emails we received about our first book, by far the most prevalent were those that related to the study of Shakespeare. In truth, we were bowled over by the response to our first book and were delighted that it has found so many dedicated readers across the English-speaking world. The community of Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) is both strong and supportive, and it is wonderful to contribute something that seems to have assisted with the practice of so many.

So, we listened and drew upon our experiences to produce a second offering, which focuses on the works of The Immortal Bard. While our first book was centred on functional English language, its sequel deals with the literary study of Shakespeare and considers how best to teach selected works to Deaf learners.

Challenges

When teaching Shakespeare to Deaf students, challenges are many and varied. However, one of the key tenets of our previous offering is the concept of intent over output.

Globe Theatre interior

Globe Theatre exterior

In other words, irrespective of the 'academic prowess' of their charges, QToDs should strive to be ambitious with content and not shy away from more challenging subject matter. When it comes to the study of Shakespeare, this ideology is particularly relevant; in order to increase enjoyment of literary works and to bolster cultural capital, it is incumbent upon educators to make the Shakespearean canon more accessible.

Though great strides have been made in recent years to improve accessibility to all would-be theatregoers, this has not always been the case. Lack of British Sign Language (BSL)-interpreted performances has often precluded Deaf learners from live Shakespeare, and sub-optimal acoustic conditions in venues have hindered enjoyment. Added to that, we are dealing here with wordplay, idioms, and archaic or Early Modern English. For many hearing people, this remains challenging; much of the vocabulary employed in the plays and sonnets is no longer in use. Plus, the iambic rhythms, symbolism, and rhyme of the works are unashamedly aimed at hearing audiences.

The challenge, therefore, was this: how can the study of Shakespeare be made more interesting; more relevant, and more accessible to a demographic of learners who might otherwise be deprived of the opportunity to enjoy what remain arguably the most important works in the English language?

Our approaches

1. Realism

Trying to make all the works of the Bard magically accessible to the students we teach would be foolhardy.

Jenny Sealey

For example, *Timon of Athens*, *Coriolanus*, and Cymbeline are rarely studied outside of universities. Our pedagogical suggestions therefore focus on five key plays which frequently find their way onto school curriculums: *Macbeth*; *Much Ado About Nothing*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Henry V*.

2. Universal ideas

Many of the suggestions and solutions we offered regarding functional English are relevant here. We chose not to regurgitate these but would remind practitioners that there is not a firm boundary between literature and language – nor is there a firm boundary between the study of English and that of other subjects. Since language is at the heart of education, strategies outlined in our work can be applied across the board.

3. Immersive teaching

This is probably the most important facet of this text. Traditional Shakespearean study is rooted in textual analysis and close consideration of word choices. While we have not abandoned this, we emphasise understanding of plot, characters, and themes above all else. We strongly advocate the use of BSL performance whereby learners recast scenes in their own way. There are myriad ways to perform and understand Shakespeare; the idea of enabling ownership helps to empower learners and make them more confident.

4. Topic-based learning

As mentioned, traditional approaches may well not work for Deaf learners. The topic-based teaching we outline is designed to provide increased knowledge of historical context. In some cases, where reduced access to sound results in diminished incidental learning, students may have gaps in their knowledge. Topic-based learning allows for a more holistic approach, where knowledge of contemporary life is embedded in parallel to study of the text.

5. Pre- and post-teaching

Point 2 discusses universal ideas. Since pre- and post-teaching are so vital in Deaf education, it is important to harness them regarding Shakespeare. Knowledge of themes, characters, and structure can all be improved through this approach.

6. Shakespearean teaching and deafness

We spend time discussing attitudes towards Deafness during the era Shakespeare was writing. Moreover, we highlight issues relating to theatre accessibility through the ages and offer several talking points with which to prompt broader discussion.

Relevance

While the study of Shakespearean plays at GCSE level is a prerequisite for students who are being educated in mainstream provisions, more than anything, we have striven to promote enjoyment. Just as the vast majority of hearing students who are made to study The Immortal Bard will rarely read his works in the future, so the same is true of Deaf learners. However, this does not mean that they should not study the plays.

Pragmatists will point to the fact that we are largely straitjacketed into measuring educational worth through the achievement of academic qualifications. Ultimately, however, the true value of education is found through intangible qualities: enjoyment; engagement; cultural awareness; the ability to make links between areas of learning; and an increased awareness of all the possibilities in the world.

Looking back, this was a mammoth undertaking. There were many times in the process when we actually wondered if we'd taken on too much. However – at the risk of sounding horrifically pretentious – on such occasions, we drew inspiration from the words of Lucio in *Measure for Measure*:
"Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt." (*Measure for Measure*, Act 1, Scene 5)

Given the difficulties and challenges of working in the field of Deaf education, I believe the above is an example of Shakespearean wisdom that we would all do well to draw on from time to time!

Jenny Sealey

We are truly honoured that Jenny Sealey both took the time to read our manuscript prior to publication and that she kindly wrote a foreword for the book. As director of The Graeae Theatre Company, Jenny is a luminary in the world of theatre, where she has worked tirelessly to champion inclusivity and increased access for Deaf dramatists.

Jenny is also an ambassador for The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and was Co-Artistic Director of The 2012 Summer Paralympics Opening Ceremony. That our ideas align with many of the approaches she uses is another reminder that it is possible for Shakespeare (and theatre in general) to be available to all.

Hopes

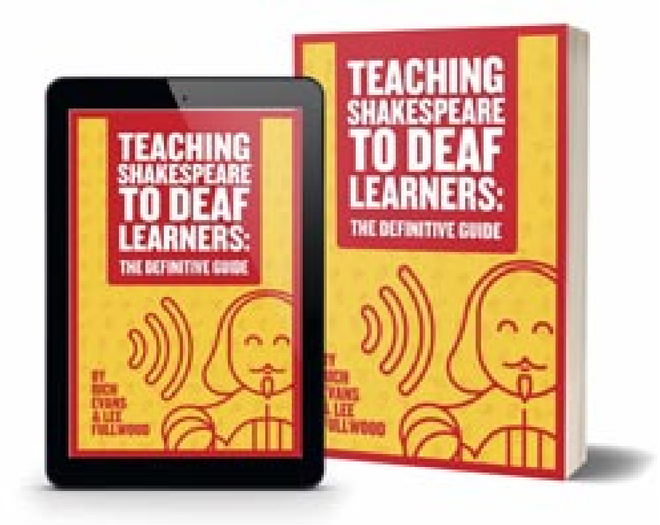
This is obviously a subject we are both very passionate about. While it is intended as a practical guide, we hope it will also be enjoyable and interesting to read. As with any guidebook, we have not assumed extensive knowledge on the part of our readers, but neither have we aimed to give exhaustive explanations (there are enough of those available already!).

In the spirit of it serving as a manual, we have instructed our publisher to keep costs as low as possible. The book is designed to be the type of text QToDs can dip in and out of – we sincerely hope that it will be of use to anyone teaching English literature to Deaf learners.

Rich Evans and Lee Fullwood

Teaching Shakespeare to Deaf Learners: The Definitive Guide is published by DEAFCON 1 EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING and is available globally in both ebook and paperback.

The Graeae Theatre Company's website can be found here: https://graeae.org



Rich Evans has over 20 years of teaching experience in a variety of settings and is a QToD. Along with Lee Fullwood, he is the co-writer of Teaching English to Deaf Learners: The Definitive Guide.

Lee Fullwood has over 30 years of experience as a QToD. He currently works at The Spires College, Torquay, a mainstream school, and is lead teacher in their enhanced provision for deaf students.

Have your say on the revision of the 2020 BATOD Audiology guidelines for the assessment of children with special needs

BATOD has partnered with the British Society of Audiology (BSA) and the British Association of Educational Audiology (BAEA) to update the 2020 publication for a current day, United Kingdom wide, context. A multidisciplinary working group, made up of a wide range of educational and clinical professionals, is currently revising the Audiology Assessment guidance document as a joint publication. Two questionnaires have been developed to gather feedback and ensure the revised document is clear, practical, and genuinely supports those who will access and use it in practice.

Professionals are invited to complete whichever questionnaire is most relevant to their role. Each questionnaire takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. Responses are welcome from individuals; teams may also wish to collate ideas or set aside time to discuss and complete the questionnaire together.

If you have a particular interest or experience in this area, your views would be extremely valuable in shaping the final document. This survey will close on 15th May 2026.

This questionnaire is for Clinical based colleagues:
Complex Children/Young Adults: Questionnaire for Clinical Colleagues (BSA, BATOD) – Fill in form

This questionnaire is for Education based colleagues:
Complex Children/Young People: Questionnaire for Education colleagues (BATOD, BAEA, BSA) – Fill in form

Click here for a supportive guidance document
For access to a supportive guidance document, contact Teresa or Verity.

Contact details:

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Teresa Quail: exec@batod.org.uk

Chair of the Paediatric Audiology Interest Group of the British Society of Audiology (BSA),
Verity Langlands: verity.langlands@manchester.ac.uk

BATOD
British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

BSL Inclusion Team at Twinkl

The new team introduce themselves

Georgina Durrant – National Inclusion Lead

I'm privileged to be the National Inclusion Lead at Twinkl, overseeing our inclusion – Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and English as an additional language (EAL) strategies. I'm a former teacher and SEND Co-ordinator (SENDCo), and author of published books about SEND including SEND Strategies for the Primary Years published by Bloomsbury. I see my role at Twinkl as ensuring that every child and young person who uses our resources feels represented, supported, and valued through the products we create.

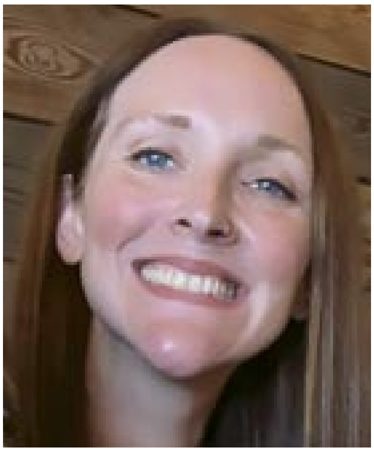
When I first began shaping our inclusion strategy, my vision was simple: I wanted every child and young person to thrive, to feel a true sense of belonging, and to be understood and supported. Inclusion should never be seen as a bolt-on, but a thread that's woven through everything. British Sign Language (BSL) and deaf education are such an important part of that vision. I knew that if we were serious about inclusion, we needed to expand our BSL resources and establish a dedicated BSL team, led by people with lived experience and expertise. Without that commitment, we wouldn't be where we are today. Seeing the team come together, passionate, skilled and determined to make resources that are authentic and representative of the Deaf community has been one of the most meaningful steps in our journey. And I'm so incredibly proud of our team.

Becki Igoe – BSL and Deaf Education Educational Content Lead

I joined Twinkl in September 2025, and I couldn't be more excited to have the opportunity to expand what Twinkl can offer for deaf education and BSL. I bring around 15 years of experience in working with deaf children, with the last ten years as a dedicated Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) with a Level 6 BSL qualification. I'm a passionate advocate for inclusion, and my goal is to ensure the Deaf community is seen and included in society. I am a big believer that they need to be a part of the conversation on how to best support their community and needs.

I'm excited that we have now established a highly skilled BSL content team, composed of highly qualified BSL users and a vital representative from the Deaf community. We don't want to just create content; it's about ensuring every resource we develop is accurate, authentic, and genuinely reflects the diverse experiences within the Deaf community.

Emma Dadswell – SEND and BSL Team Leader



I joined Twinkl in 2021, originally as a content writer and editor for secondary English. As a former teacher, I have over ten years of experience in teaching English, both across mainstream settings and within their departments to support learners with SEND. For the past nearly three years, I have been a team leader for Twinkl's Inclusion Team and most recently became the team leader for our BSL team as the product expands. After leaving the teaching profession in 2021, I remained strongly passionate about helping those with SEND to thrive and grow through their learning. I am truly excited about the opportunity to work alongside our team of highly experienced and passionate colleagues in the field of BSL and to support the team as we expand our offering within deaf education.

Claire Ahrens – BSL Content Writer/Editor

I am incredibly proud and excited to have joined Twinkl's new BSL team as a content writer and editor. With my experience as a specialist in deaf education support, and being qualified in Level 3 BSL, I bring practical insight to inclusive resource development in this inspiring role. The team has been incredibly kind and welcoming, helping me settle in with ease and feel truly valued. I am excited for everything we're building together and for the plans we have lined up in the future!

Jemma Symmonds – SEND Content Writer

I am a SEND Content Writer for the Inclusion Team and work remotely. I write content to support all those involved in teaching children with SEND including those using BSL. I have been teaching for 21 years in mainstream and SEN settings. I have taught from Nursery to key stage 4 (KS4) and worked for ten years as a local authority (LA) specialist SEN teacher, until I moved back to mainstream SEN where I am now a SENDCo, designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and designated teacher, alongside teaching Year 3 in a lovely, little local primary. I have a master's in SEN Teaching and Learning. I have two beautiful children who are both partially deaf – hence my passion for everything BSL, and I've been learning BSL over the past five years.

Richard Green – BSL Content Writer/Editor

My name is Richard Green and I'm Deaf. I have been working in education for over ten years within either colleges or mainstream schools throughout that time. I joined Twinkl in September 2025. So why did I join Twinkl? I joined because I wanted to get stuck in to help deaf and hard-of-hearing children, with a real focus on making sure all children have access to resources. Also, I want to break down barriers as I believe it is so important for children to learn information from a variety of topics.

Donna Wiscombe – Graphic Designer

I'm delighted to be part of Twinkl's BSL team as a graphic designer, bringing my experience in inclusive, user-centred design, and my passion for accessible learning. Visual communication plays a vital role for many deaf learners, and I see it as my role to create clear, engaging, and meaningful designs that truly support understanding. Having just begun a BSL course, I am eager to gain understanding of BSL to strengthen the resources I create to be accurate, empowering, and supportive. I'm looking forward to contributing to the continued growth of Twinkl's BSL offering.

Yuri Man – Illustrator

I have worked as an Illustrator at Twinkl for the past three years and have been heavily involved in the illustration of BSL throughout this time. I am delighted and feel incredibly fortunate to now be working more closely within the BSL team after its recent expansion. Collaborating with such highly experienced professionals is a constant source of inspiration for me and my work, and I am always learning new layers of communication and interpretation through every project that I work on. It is extremely meaningful to know that the illustrations I create are helping others in their BSL learning journey, and I am grateful to contribute to such a vital and inclusive area of education.

Phoebie Day – Illustrator

I've worked at Twinkl for four years, and over that time my role has gradually shifted towards sign language illustration and accessibility work. In the past year, I've helped develop Twinkl's Sign Language Illustration Brand Book, creating practical guidance that illustrators and content writers can actually use day to day. I also support other illustrators working on BSL content, often working with our BSL professionals to improve how sign language is shown visually. A big part of my role has been building illustration templates and resources that make sign language illustrations clearer and more consistent, especially for learners at different stages of their BSL journey.

I love the work I do with the BSL Team and hearing about how much our work has positively impacted so many learners – I'm very excited to see what else we can achieve in the years ahead!

We want to hear from you. If you have any ideas on how we can improve our resources, you can contact our Twinkl Cares team on twinklcares@twinkl.co.uk who will pass on your suggestions to us.

Raising awareness of glue ear

Ginny Parker and **Amy Cowan** share an overview of their awareness poster designed for staffrooms in Northumberland

Background

In 2019 reception hearing screening was discontinued in Northumberland. At that time, we provided schools with information to help special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinators (SENDCos),headteachers, and early years staff identify signs of mild hearing loss and glue ear, conditions that had often been detected previously through universal reception screening.

Emerging concerns

Last year, some local SENDCos expressed concerns that children with mild hearing loss, particularly those with persistent glue ear, might be getting missed. In response, we have done a number of things to address these concerns and strengthen awareness across schools and early years settings in Northumberland.

The wider context

Firstly, we consulted regional colleagues and found an almost equal split in practice regarding reception hearing screening. Current government guidance (2019) states that there is insufficient evidence to determine whether school-age screening should be discontinued or extended. The United Kingdom (UK) National Screening Committee therefore recommends continuing screening only where it is already in place, pending further research into its effectiveness. Based on this guidance, reception screening is unlikely to be reinstated in the foreseeable future in Northumberland.

Updating information and raising awareness

Recognising these concerns, we reviewed the information originally shared with schools in 2019 and identified the need for an update. During a team meeting, we explored strategies to ensure guidance reached the widest possible audience. With input from a parent, we developed a glue ear awareness poster designed for staffrooms, serving as a visual prompt for early years staff to consider persistent glue ear as a potential factor in hearing or communication difficulties. We have worked with colleagues in early years inclusion and portage as well as the whole of the Sensory Support Team to get the

Make notes about what you have noticed.
Talk to parents and carers. Maybe they've noticed things too.
Explain that talking to a GP is the first step in getting their child the help they need.

If you would like further advice or training regarding glue ear, posters out into as many schools and settings as possible. We have distributed posters and leaflets at the Northumberland SENDCo conference, and they have been shared electronically with all schools. This was some of the feedback we received from a manager of one of the local private nurseries in Northumberland: "The poster is very eye-catching and staff have been using it to feedback to parents if we are having any problems so parents can feed back to GPs [general practitioners] and health visitors regarding their children. Since putting it up we have already had one child go for a check with potential glue ear so I would say even for that one child, it has been a very useful tool to raise awareness" (Michelle Taylor, my Little Kingdom Nursery, Ashington).

Changes to NICE guidelines

At the same time, we were also aware how National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines had changed regarding the management of glue ear. Previously, guidance recommended a "watchful waiting" period following initial identification; it now emphasises "monitoring and support". Most children at the monitoring stage would not be referred to the Sensory Support Service, and we lack capacity to see all of these cases. However, we remain committed to supporting this stage by ensuring helpful resources are easily accessible to schools, settings, and families. To achieve this, we created a Padlet containing links to trusted sources, including the National Health Service (NHS) and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) glue ear information, the Glue Ear Together charity, and Ewing Foundation resources such as 'Listening to learn' and 'Hearing to succeed and achieve'. We also offer schools and settings 'Advice only' visits to support schools and settings with more tailored advice. Schools and settings can request a visit and subsequent written advice when a child has had long-term glue ear or hearing problems. These are children who would not fulfil the criteria to go on to a caseload, but schools or settings require something over and above ordinarily available provision. This has increased service workloads. However, as a service we recognise the need, and such visits have been very gratefully received by schools/settings and parents/carers.

Training and future plans

In Northumberland, we have a comprehensive training offer that includes 'Glue ear awareness' and 'An introduction to mild and moderate hearing loss'.

Our training is free and available to all schools and settings on request. However, to extend our reach across Northumberland's large rural area, we are also developing a short training video to complement our existing training offer. The video will provide childminders, nurseries, and schools with an understanding of glue ear, the signs to look for and what they can do if they suspect a child may have glue ear. The video will be freely available to all providers of early years education across the county, and they will be able to access it as and when they need to.

We have also started a special interest group with a few of the local SENDCos who have a particular interest in this area. It is a work in progress, but we are hoping to meet termly to collaborate, discuss concerns, approaches, and guidance as it evolves.

Ginny Parker is a QToD and Lead Practitioner at Northumberland Sensory Support, and Amy Cowan is a Trainee Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People at Manchester University and is also at Northumberland Sensory Support.

Further reading

Gov.uk child screening programme (hearing) Hearing (child) – UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) – GOV.UK

Ewing Foundation – 'Hearing to Succeed and Achieve'

Ewing Foundation – 'Listening to Learn'

NICE Guideline – 'Otitis media with effusion in under 12s - Recommendations'

MESHGuides, Deaf Education – Glue Ear (hosted on the BATOD website)

HearGlueEar

The Hear Glue Ear app is FREE for families to download and use through the Android or Apple App stores. Click here to download now

You can also register to the web app and select whether you are a clinician or a parent/carer. Click here to access webapp. You can download flyers and leaflets in the downloadable resources section of the website.

The website link https://www.hearglueear.co.uk/hear-glue-ear

Read the BATOD Magazine September 2021 edition to learn about how Hear Glue Ear was used in one local authority's glue ear plan.

For the updates:
"BATOD East of England members are invited to attend the 2026 online event.
Session title 'The Latest on cCMV and HearGlueEar with Dr Tamsin Brown'
Contact batodeast@batod.org.uk for the registration link and further information."

Groundbreaking training to deliver inclusive relationships and sex education

Dolly Padalia, CEO of School of Sexuality Education (SSE), describes their pilot training programme specifically for Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs)

This pilot programme was made possible thanks to generous funding from the Ovingdean Hall Foundation, with support from the Ewing Foundation.

As a specialist charity delivering inclusive, evidence-based relationships and sex education (RSE), we see first-hand just how life changing high-quality RSE can be for young people. Open, honest and inclusive RSE empowers young people to make informed decisions, promotes equity and consent, and supports critical thinking, both online and offline.

Yet, our own experience, alongside national data, shows that many young people with disabilities are still being left behind. Only 43% of disabled students aged 16–17 rate their RSE as good, and just 20% report learning about pornography in school. Even more concerning is the lack of robust research and data available about the specific experiences of d/Deaf young people accessing RSE in educational settings.

What we do know is d/Deaf young people often face additional barriers when accessing RSE, including limited access to British Sign Language (BSL) or sign-supported provision, and inconsistent confidence among professionals delivering complex or sensitive topics. Without inclusive, accessible education, young people are at greater risk of misinformation, exploitation, and harm.

This gap in provision is not due to a lack of commitment from professionals. Rather, it reflects a systemic lack of specialist training, time, and resources, resulting in safeguarding risks that are simply not acceptable. Inclusive RSE is not an optional extra. It is a core part of safeguarding, wellbeing, and preparing young people for adulthood.

Building specialist provision for d/Deaf learners

Over the past six years at School of Sexuality Education (SSE), we have been developing bespoke pilot programmes to support d/Deaf young people to access inclusive RSE. Working in close collaboration with d/Deaf consultants, BSL interpreters, doctors, teachers, and sexual violence prevention specialists, we have delivered RSE workshops, sign-supported English, and BSL in schools across the country.

Between 2020 and 2023, our pilot programme supported d/Deaf students to explore topics including bodily changes during puberty, self-care, healthy relationships, consent (online and offline), and coercive control. Sessions focused on practical strategies, supporting young people to understand consent as a positive framework for safe and enjoyable experiences, rather than simply a list of rules.

Focusing on training QToDs

In 2025, SSE built on this learning by developing a pilot training programme specifically for QToDs. QToDs play a crucial role in supporting d/Deaf young people's learning, wellbeing, and safeguarding; yet, many told us they had limited access to specialist RSE-focused continuing professional development (CPD). We developed the pilot programme to build on our previous work with d/Deaf students, support wider uptake by schools and local authorities, and underline the importance of ongoing, specialist CPD for effective RSE delivery.

Inside the QToD pilot training programme

Delivered in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council and Rochdale Borough Council, the programme began with focus groups made up of QToDs to better understand the barriers they face and how training could be designed to genuinely support their work. Through the focus groups, teachers highlighted limited time, training, and resources, alongside a need for greater awareness within schools and among caregivers about the importance of RSE for vulnerable young people. These insights directly shaped the training design and informed a series of workshops we developed.

The workshops covered a comprehensive range of topics. These included the core principles of high-quality RSE, such as statutory responsibilities and non-judgemental, trauma-informed approaches; inclusive RSE in practice, including relationships and identities, LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more) awareness and inclusivity, and faith and RSE using an anti-racist approach; consent, safety, and prevention, covering consent education, sexual violence prevention, and online sexual harassment, abuse and pornography; and bodies, health, and wellbeing, including puberty and female genital mutilation (FGM). Workshops also supported teachers to respond confidently to challenging questions and to help students understand how media shapes attitudes and behaviours.

Each workshop was supported by tailored resources for teachers and schools. Teachers then trialled these resources with d/Deaf students in Years 7–10 before feeding back through a two-stage evaluation process, immediately following the training, and again after classroom delivery. This meant we could adapt and strengthen the resources based on real classroom experience and ensure that teachers received continuous, practical support rather than one-off training.

What teachers told us

"The themes explored within the topics are key to keeping our young d/Deaf people safe and preparing them for adulthood. The training I have received from School of Sexuality Education has supported me to understand the topics in more detail and I feel lucky that I have had the opportunity to challenge my own viewpoints on these topics with other teachers of the d/Deaf." Edward Bradley, RANS – Teacher HI, Early Help and Schools.

"These workshops were excellent; they were extremely engaging thanks to the trainer, whose knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject areas shone through. Our thoughts and ideas were challenged in a safe and supportive environment. We feel better prepared to support schools to deliver RSE sessions and to discuss challenging questions and comments from students around sex education." Tiffany Moorcroft, Lead Specialist QToD and Educational Audiologist, at Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Feedback consistently highlighted increased confidence, deeper understanding, and a stronger sense of preparedness to deliver inclusive RSE.

Want to bring this training to your school or local authority?

QToDs have a vital role to play in empowering young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to navigate relationships, wellbeing and safety. Specialist, inclusive RSE training is a key part of that work.

We are keen to take the learnings from this pilot to more schools and to continue working collaboratively with teachers, schools, and local authorities. If you would like to find out more about the training or explore opportunities for delivery in your area, we would love to hear from you. Get in touch via info@schoolofsexed.org ■

School of
Sexuality
Education

Dolly Padalia is the CEO at School of Sexuality Education.

Note

Sex Education Forum, "Young people's RSE poll 2024," April 2024, www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/resources/evidence/young-peoples-rse-poll-2024

British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland – Know Your Rights Workshops

James Barnes-Miller shares an overview of the bespoke training sessions designed for Deaf young people to understand their entitlements throughout their educational journeys

Funded by the Scottish Government's Equality & Human Rights Fund, British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland is working with the Scottish Deaf community and listed authorities to secure effective access and promote public services in British Sign Language (BSL), in line with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

Our work includes supporting the delivery of the Scottish Government's **BSL National Plan 2023–2029** and the development of **BSL Local Plans**, which are built around ten priority areas and 45 actions.

For further information about BDA Scotland's BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 project, please visit: https://bslscotlandact2015.scot/

Empowering Deaf children and young people

A key part of our remit is to work directly with Deaf children and young people to support them to understand their rights as Deaf BSL users. This enables them to feel empowered and confident in expressing how their needs should be met within schools, further education settings, and local public services.

To support this, we have developed **bespoke 'Know Your Rights' workshops** for Deaf children and young people. These workshops help Deaf children and young people understand what they are entitled to throughout their educational journeys from primary school through to secondary school and beyond.

Access to Work

Know Your Rights workshops – An age-specific approach

Our workshop programme is tailored to different age groups:

Primary (P4–P7)

We provide an introductory 'taster' session to support primary pupils to learn what human rights are, using clear and visual examples. We encourage discussion about the rights they have within primary school and how these

School Group 1

Teachers' group

continue as they transition into secondary school.

Secondary (S1–S3)
At this stage, our workshops explore how human rights are relevant to pupils' development throughout their educational journeys. We discuss rights within the school environment and how these may apply as they grow older. Learning is linked to the 54 articles of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**.

The information shared with Deaf children and young people also includes the **World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) Declaration on the Rights of Deaf Children**. More information is available at https://wfdeaf.org/rights-of-deaf-children/

Secondary (S4–S6)
For senior pupils, workshops focus on their rights in relation to exam preparation and transition beyond school education. This includes information from the **Scottish Qualifications Authority, now known as Qualifications Scotland**, on access to BSL qualifications and the right to sit exams in their first language, BSL.

More information
BSL Qualifications:
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65528.html

Access to exams in BSL:
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/36298.html

Pupils also take part in practical activities to learn how to apply for funding for access support, both through the **Student Awards Agency Scotland** for further and higher education, and via **Access to Work** for employment.

Workshops also cover Deaf pupils' rights to access local public services in BSL, such as requesting BSL/English interpreters for appointments. This aims to build confidence and independence as young Deaf people prepare to leave home for the first time.

Supporting teachers and parents

We also work with teachers and parents, creating opportunities to share experiences of supporting Deaf children and young people throughout their educational journeys. Together, we identify gaps in BSL access and discuss how BSL can be embedded within youth frameworks such as Getting it right for every child and the UNCRC.

James Barnes-Miller, BDA Scotland Equality & Inclusion Officer, comments:
"The BDA's mission is to ensure a world in which the language, culture, community, diversity, and heritage of Deaf people in the UK are respected and fully protected, ensuring Deaf people can participate and contribute as equal and valued citizens in wider society.

BDA Scotland believes the impact of our work should empower Deaf children and young people to build confidence, understand their rights, and develop resilience. With our support, Deaf people are better prepared for the future and empowered to achieve their full potential in life."

For more information about the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 project, please email james.barnes-miller@bda.org.uk

James Barnes-Miller is Deaf and a British Sign Language user. He has worked with the BDA for 15 years and has spent the past six years working on the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 project. James works closely with schools across Scotland to empower Deaf children and young people, teaching them about the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and to understand their rights to access information and services in BSL.

A decade of progress Under the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015

British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland shares an update of its work during the decade since the BSL (Scotland) Act

Funded by the Scottish Government's Equality & Human Rights Fund, British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland works with the Scottish Deaf community and listed authorities to secure effective access to, and promotion of, public services in British Sign Language (BSL), in line with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

Our work includes supporting the delivery of the Scottish Government's **BSL National Plan 2023–2029** and the development of **BSL Local Plans,** which are built around ten priority areas and forty-five actions.

For further information about BDA Scotland's BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 project, please visit https://bslscotlandact2015.scot/

Celebrating ten years of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015

In September 2025, BDA Scotland organised a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the passing of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, bringing together the Scottish Parliament, Scottish Government, public services, and the Deaf community to mark this important milestone at the Scottish Parliament Building.

The journey towards the Act receiving Royal Assent on 22nd October 2015, by the late Queen Elizabeth II, was a long one. It began in February 2000, when a motion was first lodged in the Scottish Parliament, reflecting years of campaigning and advocacy by the Deaf community.

Development of the BSL National and Local plans

Following the passing of the Act, BDA Scotland supported the **National Advisory Group,** established in 2016, to develop Scotland's first **BSL National Plan 2017–2023**. This involved 46 face-to-face consultation events with the Deaf community, resulting in responses from 558 Deaf BSL users, including Deaf school pupils. The first National Plan was published by the Scottish Government in October 2017.

BDA Scotland then supported consultations for **BSL Local Plans**, with local authorities and the National Health Service (NHS) publishing their plans in October 2018.

Since then, BDA Scotland has continued to work closely with Deaf community and local authorities, particularly councils and NHS Boards, through engagement events to follow up on the actions within the BSL Local Plans. This has included organising BSL tours of public buildings and courts, where Deaf BSL users provided direct feedback on accessibility in BSL.

Cultural engagement and community education

BDA Scotland also delivers cultural tours in BSL to educate Deaf BSL users about Scottish culture and local heritage. Topics have included **Robert Burns** and his works, **Charles Rennie Mackintosh,** and **Glasgow Black History**. In addition, we run community engagement events on wider societal issues, such as environmental topics including littering and waste-clearing initiatives.

Feedback from participants has highlighted how valuable these activities were, with many commenting that they wished they had learned this information at school, and that they had walked past historic buildings for years

National Advisory Group

without knowing their significance.

Covid-19 and accessible communication

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Scotland became the first UK nation to provide **live BSL/English interpreters** at daily government briefings, in line with the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. BDA Scotland further supported the Deaf community by producing BSL summary updates to ensure information reached as many Deaf people as possible throughout the pandemic.

When lockdowns restricted face-to-face engagement, BDA Scotland adapted by hosting online consultation sessions to gather feedback on the progress of BSL Local Plans. These findings were published as reports, available on the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 website.

BDA Scotland also introduced **BSL Blethers**, live streamed weekly during the pandemic, and later, monthly. Covering topics such as health, mental health, Deaf young people, crafts, Deaf clubs, sport, and the environment, the sessions proved so popular that they continue five years later.

Ongoing national progress

BSL access has also improved across democratic processes, with **First Minister's Questions** now regularly supported by BSL/English interpreters.

Following the completion of the first six-year National Plan cycle in 2023, BDA Scotland held 25 consultation events involving 384 Deaf BSL users. This led to the publication of the **second BSL National Plan 2023–2029** in November 2023.

BDA Scotland then supported councils and NHS Boards in consulting with the Deaf community before publishing its **BSL Local Plans in May 2024**. All councils and NHS Boards now have BSL Local Plans and/or BSL information available on their websites. BDA Scotland also facilitated co-production networking sessions to strengthen collaboration between Deaf community, councils, NHS Boards, and councillors.

Building stronger access and confidence

BDA Scotland continues to build bridges through Deaf club visits, engagement events such as BSL Health Fest, Equality for All, and consultations on services including Contact Scotland BSL and the National Care Service Charter of Rights.

Through the **BSL Helpline**, BDA Scotland supports Deaf BSL users to access council and NHS services in their first language. We also deliver **'Know Your Rights' workshops**, supporting Deaf BSL users and Deaf young people in particular to understand their rights within education, public services, and wider society.

BDA Scotland provides BSL/English translation services to make public services and the Scottish Government accessible to the Deaf community. We have also interviewed Deaf people about their lived experiences relating to councils and the NHS, which we have shared via our social media platforms.

Mark Griffin, Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP)

Kate Forbes, Deputy First Minister (DFM) with the Deaf group

Our work is supported by accessible social media content, including our BSL Blethers livestreams and interviews with Deaf BSL users. More information can be found on BDA Scotland's Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/BDAscotland/

Wider impact

More than ten years on from the passing of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, BSL is increasingly visible, helping to make Scotland one of the best places in the world for BSL users to live, work, visit, and learn.

The Scottish Government-funded **Contact Scotland BSL** service now provides free, unlimited, 24/7 BSL video relay service (VRS) interpreting for all BSL users in Scotland.

There has also been a noticeable increase in Deaf BSL users being recruited and employed across the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament, councils, and the NHS, supporting the growth of Deaf people's employment in mainstream careers.

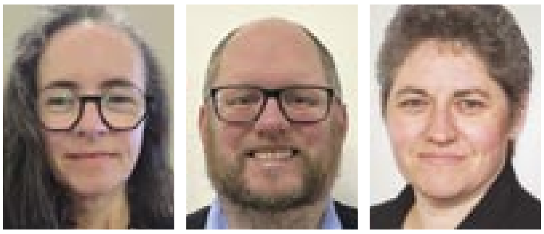
Avril Hepner, BSL Scotland Manager, comments: *"The lived experiences of Deaf BSL users and Deaf young people are at the heart of everything we do in Scotland. Their stories and involvement have brought Deaf people together, strengthened communities, and highlighted many positive examples of good practice across Scotland, where Deaf people and Deaf young people work collaboratively with public services and listed authorities.*

BDA Scotland works closely with councils, NHS Boards and the Scottish Government. None of this work would be possible without the continued support of the Deaf community, the Scottish Government, and Inspiring Scotland through the Equality & Human Rights Fund, for which BDA Scotland is extremely grateful."

About BDA Scotland

BDA Scotland's work is funded by the Scottish Government's Equality and Human Rights Fund to support the Deaf community in Scotland and to work with listed authorities on their BSL Local Plans. The Deaf and BSL users team includes **Helen Morgans-Wenhold**, who is responsible for our work with local authorities, and James Barnes-Miller, responsible for Health and Other Public Bodies.

For more information, please email **Avril Hepner** at avril.hepner@bda.org.uk



About BDA Scotland

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History and politics of deafness

Meghan Luton, a PhD student exploring the maternity and motherhood experiences of deaf BSL-using women, explores an overview of deaf-related history

Reprinted with permission from the AIMS Journal (2024), Vol 36(4)Introduction

Deafness, defined as a partial or total inability to perceive or understand sound, currently affects an estimated one in five people in the UK.[1] Deafness is defined within four categories, mild, moderate, severe, and profound.[2] At the last census, in England and Wales, 21,971 people aged three and over reported using a signed language as their first language.[3]

A study of deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users found that their general health was poorer than that of the general population, with higher rates of misdiagnosis and undertreatment of conditions.[4] Furthermore, in maternity, deaf women are more likely to have caesareans or lengthy hospital stays following birth.[5] Historical issues within the Deaf community and a lack of recognition of BSL as a language create complexities in self-advocacy and access to healthcare.

This article will briefly outline deaf history. It will also discuss the competing ideas of deafness as a disability or deafness as a culture to lend context to issues faced by women accessing maternity services.

Deaf history

Sign language is a visual language and so there is limited recorded historical data about deaf people. Traditionally, deaf history and deaf stories have been passed down either by the written interpretations of hearing people observing the community or by storytelling from one deaf generation to the next until they could be recorded by photography or videography.[6] There is evidence of a Deaf community using a manual alphabet in the writings of Socrates and Plato.[7]

There was a perception that deafness was a curse or a punishment from God meaning deaf people were not allowed to attend church, receive an education, make wills, or inherit assets from their families.[6] Finally, in 1760, a French monk named Abbé de l'Éppé, believing that deaf children should have access to a religious education, developed a 'manual method' of educating deaf children.[8] L'Éppé's methods were a success and deaf children were able to leave school and get jobs as, among other things, doctors, teachers, and lawyers.[8] At the same time, in the United Kingdom (UK), Thomas Braidwood opened a school that also employed a manual language in combination with English. Braidwood saw comparable successes, with the first Teacher of the Deaf in Britain having been educated at Braidwood's Academy.[7]

However, the 18th century also saw the beginnings of a more systematic oppression of the Deaf community. Samuel Heinicke, a teacher in Germany, believed that speech formed the basis of intellectual ability and that the use of signing impaired language development. He developed an oral method of education, where children were taught to speak using taste, touch, and vibration. Sign language was banned in these classrooms. The debate between oral or manual methods of instruction for deaf children persisted for many years.[9]

In 1880, the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) held their second meeting in Milan, Italy. The conference had only one deaf person in attendance and the demonstration of the oral method used children who were deafened – meaning they could already speak before they went deaf.[10] The students were prepared by the teachers and the audience members and were not allowed to interact with the children. No evidence of the attainment of signing children was presented. Despite these notable flaws, attendees voted in favour of oral only education for deaf children (Leigh and Marschark, 2016). This led to an immediate and widespread ban on sign language in education. It also resulted in the immediate loss of jobs for large numbers of deaf people, in particular, deaf educators.[11]

Deaf adults across the years have reported being tied down to prevent them from using their hands, and years of speech and language therapy that forced them to learn to speak.[12] This resulted in large numbers of children leaving school with little to no functional education beyond being able to make sound.[7] This left them in limbo between a hearing world they could not fully access and a deaf world that they could not fully communicate within.[13]

The ban on sign language in education continued until 1980 but it was not until 2010, that the ICED formally rejected the 1880 resolutions and acknowledged the harm that had been done to generations of the Deaf community through its actions.

BSL as a recognised language

The legal recognition of sign languages has been slow to achieve.[14] In the 1960s, an American linguist, William Stokoe, proved that American Sign Language (ASL) was a fully formed and grammatically sound language, distinct from American English.[15] His work inspired similar research in the UK. However, it was not until 2003 that the UK government recognised BSL as a language. Scotland's BSL Act was introduced in 2015 and, after significant campaigning, the BSL Act was given royal assent in April 2022 and came into force in June 2022. The Act recognises BSL as an official language of England, Wales, and Scotland. Work is now ongoing to ensure that the Act gives deaf people their legal right to information in their first, and sometimes only, language.[16]

Deafness as a disability

Following the decisions of the 1880 Milan conference, deaf adults were no longer able to educate deaf children and pass on deaf history or culture.[17] Society saw deafness as a disability and something in need of a cure.[11] Rather than being educated and integrated members of society, deaf people had to conform to the hearing world by speaking and 'hearing' via aids and lipreading.[11] The medical model of disability was applied to deaf people. Medicalised discourse romanticises people who are seen to overcome their disability and promotes the idea that everyone should aspire to be 'normal'.[17,18] The medical model places a focus on curing or removing the impairment. In the case of deafness, by using cochlear implantation or genetic screening.[19,20] Disability is seen as personal loss or a tragedy that has befallen the individual.[21]

Conversely, the social model asserts that people had (and have) disability imposed on them by structures that "unnecessarily isolated and excluded [them] from full participation in society".[22] These structures include societal perceptions, building designs, or governmental policies.[23] For example, a deaf person missing a train due to a platform change being announced over a Tannoy system rather than displayed on the platform screens. In this example, the deafness is not necessarily the issue but rather that the train station did not display the information in an accessible way.

Critics of the social model highlight that it oversimplifies the issue of disability, creates a binary model and links all disabled people together as a homogenous group.[24.18] It cannot be assumed that people experience the same issue in the same way or that there is overall shared experience of disability.[18,17,25] Oliver and Barnes (2012)[21] highlight that it is unrealistic to say that all socially created barriers can be removed thereby resolving all issues for disabled people. Much disability research is now moving away from a binary approach and tries to understand disability through both the medical and social issues unique to an individual.

Deafness as a cultural identity

It is important to recognise that many deaf people do not identify as disabled at all. Many profoundly deaf people may feel part of a cultural and linguistic minority, particularly when they use BSL as their first language.[26] Previous studies have used the term Deaf, with a capital 'D', a noun, used to denote a cultural identity. Deaf with a small 'd' was used as a descriptor of hearing status rather than identity. This approach is well recognised in the literature. However, in line with the criticisms of disability models, it is coming under criticism for oversimplifying the complex issue of identity within the Deaf community.[27,28] For example, Davis (1995)[17] argues that someone may be deaf and primarily use BSL but not feel that they are a member of the Deaf community. Alternatively, the hearing child of a deaf adult (CODA) may have been raised with BSL as their first language, be a member of the Deaf community but not have the same issues owing to being able to hear.

In the Deaf community, terms such as 'hearing impaired' or 'hearing loss' may be considered offensive.[29] Deaf people may argue that they are not impaired, nor did they have any hearing to lose. Despite this, medical literature and national guidelines continue to use the terms. This forces deaf people to attend 'hearing impaired units' at school or tick 'hearing impaired' on health questionnaires.[30] In response to the term 'hearing loss', the term 'Deaf Gain' was coined in the 1990s. Deaf Gain argues that there are advantages to being deaf that include a shared language and identity, a global community, and a different perspective of the world.[31]

More recently, the commercialisation and misrepresentation of sign language in the media and by hearing people for their own gain, has become an important topic in the Deaf community. In particular, hearing people with limited signing experience (for example, having learnt level 1, a qualification predominantly focused on vocabulary rather than grammar or culture) using BSL to promote themselves on social media (SeeHear, 2020)[32] or using 'fake' sign language. Further to this, mainstream media frequently use Makaton or Sign Supported English (SSE) interchangeably with BSL (BBC Newsbeat, 2019).[33] Makaton and SSE are both invented communication tools designed to support communication in English, whereas BSL is a naturally occurring and legally recognised language.[34]

The advent of baby sign has also brokered debate in the Deaf community. Baby sign is used by hearing families to improve language acquisition in babies by signing important, key words.[35] This comes after years of the families of deaf children being told that signing will harm language acquisition.[12] This has caused frustration in the Deaf community, who were denied access to their own language or have been told that their own deafness will lead to language delay in their hearing children.[12,35] While baby sign is actively promoted and encouraged for hearing children, deaf children are still being denied access to sign language.[36] They continue to have their language development assessed in English without recognising acquisition of BSL. Furthermore, the argument persists that parents must choose between oralism or sign language and that a child cannot or should not acquire both.[36]

Even within the Deaf community, finding consensus is complex and there are many different and even opposing views held. While some groups are calling for bilateral cochlear implants (CIs) to be provided to adults on the National Health Service (NHS),[38] other groups discuss how CIs and other 'cures' are a form of ethnic cleansing.[39,40] Deaf BSL users, who identify as members of a Deaf community, argue that, when integrated into the Deaf community, they are not disabled, and that rather it is the hearing non-signers who are the ones who are impaired.[41] However, this idea is complicated by the way that accessibility support is provided. For example, many young deaf adults say they do not identify as disabled but to get support to attend university they must apply for Disabled Student Allowance.[42]

Developing a 'deaf identity' is a complex issue. Deaf children born to deaf parents will acquire their culture naturally through a shared language and world view.[12] However, 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents.[43] A desire to have a shared family identity combined with the increased use of CIs and other aids can lead to deaf children identifying as hearing.[44] Sometimes, when a child is not able to cope in mainstream school, the shift to a deaf unit or even a deaf school can be a shock. Children may feel a sense of grief to find out that they are 'deaf' and not 'hearing'.

Many deaf children do not experience deaf culture until much later in life. In a recent programme about students at Gallaudet University, a university for deaf students in Washington, DC, America, it was clear that there are ongoing issues with young deaf people finding their deaf identity.[45] Students talked about not realising there was a culture that they could be part of until arriving at university. Some students then decided to dispose of their aids and fully join the Deaf community. Other students reported feeling a deaf hierarchy predicated on how well you represented being 'deaf'. For example, deaf signing children with deaf parents were considered 'more deaf' than deaf children who used oral methods of communication. They also felt pressure to conform to a fully deaf identity when they felt that using a mixture of communication methods helped them to navigate the hearing and the deaf world.

It is important to recognise that literature by deaf academics has shown a focus on issues of audism,[46] hearing privilege and cultural appropriation since the 1980s. These conversations may put deaf issues more on par with minority culture debates. This means that deaf people may be an oppressed linguistic minority rather than a disability group.[12,11]

The health of deaf people

Deaf people are less likely to have general knowledge about good health and healthcare systems.[48,49] This is likely due to the fact that they do not pick up incidental information, such as overhearing dinner table conversations, and have limited access to interpreted or subtitled media.[47,50,51] The research that informed the 2014 SignHealth 'Sick Of It'[52] report found that the health of the deaf signing population in the UK is poorer compared to the general population despite lower rates of smoking or alcohol consumption.[4] This study found higher rates of misdiagnosis and that deaf people were unwilling or unable to attend their general practitioner (GP) as often as they wished due to not having access to adequate communication.[4]

When looking at maternity care, there is limited data about pregnancy outcomes for deaf women. Two American studies looking at the outcomes for deaf signing women found they were more likely to have a caesarean section, or an increased length of hospital stay following vaginal birth.[5,53] One of the studies further found that deaf mothers were more likely to have pregnancy complications such as placental abruption or pre-eclampsia.[5] They were also more likely to have pre-existing hypertension or diabetes.[5]

It appears from these studies that deaf women are more at risk of complex, and potentially traumatic, births that result in longer hospital stays. While it is difficult to apply these findings to the UK population, the Sick Of It report found deaf BSL users, a sample which included women of childbearing age, were more likely to have hypertension or diabetes (Emond et al, 2015), a factor which could be contributing to the poorer outcomes noted.

Deaf women report similar rates of mild to moderate postnatal depression (PND) but are less likely to report severe PND.[54] The researchers suggest that this may be due to not wishing to report PND for fear of being seen as a bad mother or not having access to the resources to report. It may also be because deaf mothers are often part of a community and so have access to culturally sensitive peer support from other women.[55] Research and statistics exploring PND specifically in the Deaf community is lacking, but it is notable that rates of mental health issues are reported to be two or three times higher in the Deaf community than in the general population.[56] There is little current, up-to-date UK based research exploring the experience of deaf BSL-using women accessing maternity services specifically. The challenges faced by both deaf women and the midwives who care for them are unique to the circumstances they face and so other healthcare guidance, while applicable in many scenarios, cannot address all the concerns that deaf women have when pregnant, giving birth, or being a mother.

Conclusion

This article has offered a summary of research into deaf history and culture in order to highlight that the Deaf community is not a homogenous group for whom a single policy approach will work. Midwives and other maternity care providers should have an understanding of the multifaceted complexities arising from the family a deaf woman is born into, their access to language and education and their healthcare literacy. By doing so, they are better able to work with women and their families to produce individualised care plans, including communication and education needs.

Meghan is a senior lecturer in Midwifery and Programme Leader for the three-year programme at Middlesex University. She is currently completing her PhD exploring the maternity and motherhood experiences of deaf BSL-using women.

References

The reference list for this article is available via this link:
For the full list of references, see
www.batod.org.uk/information/batod-association-magazine-2026

University of Edinburgh ToD course: Postgraduate Diploma in Inclusive Education (deaf learners pathway)

Rachel O'Neill outlines the current course offerings at the University of Edinburgh

The Promoting Achievement and Curriculum Access course (20 credits) has just finished, so students are now starting their assignments. This course is about some of the core functions of ToDs: understanding language policies, knowing about how notetaking, captions, interpreting, and classroom acoustics work in relation to deaf pupils, and considering different types of individual plans across the UK. The assignment asks the students to use literacy theories and online tools to judge the literacy challenges of two year groups separated by six years. With a deaf learner who has reading delays in mind, they discuss how to make the texts and the subject accessible and how to narrow the achievement gap over time.

As part of the activities, the group will construct a joint response to the Scottish Government's current consultation on school acoustics, technology, and space. We debated whether the UK BB93 could be more firmly embedded in Scottish law, or alternatively, perhaps we need new Scottish building regulations.

Over the two blocks of this course, there were also two enrichment EdSign lectures available in the evenings: Dr Patrick Rosenburg from University College London (UCL) reporting on recent research on reading comprehension and British Sign Language (BSL) fluency, and Caroline McGrotty from Trinity College Dublin reporting on her research about Irish Sign Language (ISL)/English interpreting in Irish higher education settings: the crucial triad between the interpreter, the lecturer, and the deaf student. If other BATOD members want to join EdSign lectures, there is a Facebook group. Many lectures are live streamed and recorded. They are always available in English and BSL.

The enrichment activities are organised by deaf academic Dr Audrey Cameron. The next one on 11th March is an online panel of three QToDs who have been through the Scottish course discussing their experience of working in remote and rural areas. Tara Lancaster from the Highlands, Ashley Sword from Dumfries and Galloway, and Elena Adair from Argyll and Bute. Between them they have navigated the real challenges of rural deaf education – limited resources, sign language access, professional isolation – and found ways to thrive.

We had a large cohort of 22 new students in 2025–26 which has been enjoyable, including one from England. The cohort started with a new ten-credit course, Study Skills in Education, which is open to students on the deaf education and blind/low vision pathways. Students enjoyed reading very recent articles about deaf, blind, and

Students on the Promoting Achievement and Curriculum Access course in February 2026 discussing transitions and deaf children's rights low vision, and deafblind children and young people. They learnt about the different paradigms of educational researchers and compared two articles for their assignment. Ratings were more positive than the previous generic course called Source of Knowledge taken by most master's students at Moray House School of Education and Sport. This new course is at Level 10 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), which means it is at honours level rather than master's level; in this way, it can act as a bridging course for teachers returning to study.

The next course the students will tackle is Audiology in April and May. Again, they will come to Moray House for two blocks. Students report the great advantage of meeting regularly face to face because they get to know each other, become friends, and can turn to each other for professional advice into the future.

There is still time to get your application in for the September 2026 start. Please look online at this address: https://edin.ac/47gZO7S and contact me, the deaf education pathway co-ordinator, to ask any questions. I have a pack I can email you with further information Rachel.oneill@ed.ac.uk ■

Rachel O'Neill is a senior lecturer in deaf education at the University of Edinburgh where she teaches on the Postgraduate Diploma to qualify Teachers of Deaf Children. Her research interests include language policies, literacies, and bilingual education.

Mary Hare Professional Courses

If you are looking to take the next step within deaf education, Mary Hare Professional Courses offer a range postgraduate and BTEC qualifications:

- We offer QToD training and are National Finalists for 'Specialist Training Provider'.
- Opportunity to train as an Educational Audiologist from September 2026 (Early Years focus options available). A Bursary is available, courtesy of Demant Foundation, to the first 15 enrollees.

- Single Module CPD (subject to contract) will be available in September 2026 for selected modules for both Educational Audiology and Teaching Deaf Learners courses.
- We are the only programme that offers a BETC Level 3 Award Teaching Assistant course for working with D/deaf learners.

You can find out more information at our **Online Open Event** (14 May) where you can speak to course leaders and find out more: www.maryhare.org.uk/events/professional-courses-online-open-event-2026

Mary Hare
SCHOOL

Raising standards in deaf education: Professional training, partnership, and sector impact

Sarah Davis and **Dr Joy Rosenberg** share their annual update from deaf education mandatory qualification course providers

A unique offer in professional training

Mary Hare remains the only provider in the South offering the Mandatory Qualification (MQ) for Teachers of D/deaf Children and Young People (ToD) and the United Kingdom's (UK) only Educational Audiology postgraduate programme. Additionally, in September 2025, Mary Hare Courses offered the only Teacher for Sensory Impaired (TfSI; QToD) apprenticeship in England. **This apprenticeship was recognised at a parliamentary reception as one of six national finalists in our category for an Apprenticeship Training Award.** All courses prepare professionals for specialist roles that bridge education, technology, and family support.

Our ToD programme trains qualified teachers to support D/deaf learners from birth to 25 years across diverse settings – mainstream schools, resource bases, and specialist schools – using a full range of communication approaches. The curriculum aligns with the competencies required for the MQ, ensuring graduates are ready to deliver inclusive, evidence-based practice.

The Educational Audiology course is equally distinctive. It equips clinicians and qualified ToDs to act as vital links between home, school, and clinic, with a strong emphasis on hearing technology and functional listening. Graduates can register professionally with the Academy for Healthcare Science, and the course offers flexible entry through stand-alone modules, enabling participants to 'dip a toe' before committing to the full postgraduate diploma (PGDip). Excitingly, for entry to the 2026 cohort, there is a **partial bursary** for the first 15 Educational Audiology accepted places, courtesy of the Demant Foundation, totalling £2,000 over two years of study.

Blended learning for modern professionals

Our courses combine academic depth with practical experience through a blended learning model. Students benefit from asynchronous online study complemented by residential weekends at our Arlington Manor campus – creating opportunities for networking, peer learning, and hands-on workshops. This approach is consistently praised for its flexibility and the depth of professional engagement it fosters.

Practical skill development is central to our offer. Work-based placements, audiology labs, and interactive sessions ensure that theory translates into confident practice. Recent dissertations have explored timely topics such as

speech-in-noise testing and early intervention strategies, with several featured at national conferences.

Mary Hare is committed to embedding D/deaf perspectives within our programmes; we actively involve D/deaf professionals as both module and session leaders and welcome D/deaf students into each cohort.

Evidence-based benefits of blended and face-to-face learning

Mary Hare is strongly committed to the evidence-based benefits of combining distance learning with high-quality, face-to-face professional education. Research consistently shows that blended learning models incorporating in-person teaching lead to higher levels of academic achievement, stronger aspirations, and greater overall success, with the face-to-face element contributing uniquely to engagement, motivation, and a sense of belonging. These sessions support richer peer and tutor interaction, cultivate professional community, and provide opportunities for real-time feedback – factors repeatedly linked with improved learning outcomes. Our students echo this evidence: ToD trainees report that “face-to-face activities with peer groups got us motivated” and valued the “brilliant hands-on resources and practical current ideas”, alongside the opportunity for “hands-on experience and practice with current test boxes and hearing aids”. Educational Audiology students likewise describe residential weekends as transformative, noting “plenty of opportunity for valuable discussions and practical demonstrations”, and reflecting that “the people I met and professional friendships I made were invaluable”. Many highlight that informal moments – “coffee times spent chatting were as vital as the lectures” – greatly enhanced their understanding and confidence. These experiences reinforce the wider research base: face-to-face engagement enriches professional identity, deepens technical skill development, and supports social learning that cannot be fully replicated online.

Expanding access

Our Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Level 3 Award for Teaching Assistants (for those who are working with D/deaf children and young people), delivered in partnership with Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service, continues to grow. We offer accessible, distance-learning opportunities for support staff. It is designed to develop the skills and knowledge required to support learning in schools. The course explores key areas such as understanding sensory impairment and special educational needs, the principles of hearing loss and personal amplification and how to overcome barriers to listening in classrooms through supportive technology. Learners also examine the impact of deafness on children’s learning and development and develop practical strategies for providing tailored support to D/deaf children and young people. This vocational BTEC course combines theory with practical application, enabling teaching assistants to enhance classroom support and contribute effectively to pupil progress. The course is ideal for those already working with D/deaf learners and it provides a strong foundation for career progression and further study in teaching and education.

Looking ahead

The past year has seen significant developments, including

a new academic partnership with **Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)**, ensuring our postgraduate programmes remain robust and research informed. This collaboration strengthens our ability to deliver cutting-edge training that meets the needs of today's professionals and tomorrow's learners.

Mary Hare courses are committed to innovation, collaboration and excellence in D/deaf education. By continuing to expand access, embed lived experience, and champion evidence-based practice, we aim to empower professionals across the UK to deliver the very best outcomes for D/deaf children and young people.

Uniquely, LJMU is the only UK higher-education provider offering a fully tripartite suite of sensory-impairment qualifications – supporting professionals specialising in multi-sensory impairment (MSI), vision impairment (VI), and deafness; as well as delivering these programmes in partnership with specialist schools, ensuring that trainees gain high-quality, context-embedded experience that reflects the complex realities of sensory practice. This tripartite model is unparalleled nationally and significantly enhances the professional pathways available to the sector.

Mary Hare's influence extends beyond its own programmes and into the wider professional landscape through its long-standing relationship with BATOD. The current principal of Mary Hare School will shortly take up the presidency of BATOD, ensuring that the insights of practitioners, trainees and families remain strongly represented in national discussions on policy, practice, and professional standards. This continues a tradition of leadership within the organisation: Paul Simpson, BATOD's former National Executive Officer, previously taught at Mary Hare and served on programme committees and the governing body, contributing directly to the organisation's pedagogical direction. The reach of Mary Hare's training is also reflected in the achievements of its alumni. Following her engagement with the Policy and Practice module, one recent graduate pursued an issue of examination equity with exceptional determination, contributing to changes in how General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Dance is assessed for deaf students – demonstrating the real-world impact that our programmes have on inclusion, professional advocacy, and national educational frameworks. These connections collectively reinforce Mary Hare's credibility, sector leadership, and commitment to shaping the future of deaf education across the UK.

In 2026–2027, not only will our second cohort of trainee ToDs and educational audiologists be transitioning to LJMU, but a range of single-module continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and Master of Arts (MA)/Master of Science (MSc) top-up modules will also be available (subject to contract at the time of writing). As we look ahead to this exciting next chapter, we are reminded of the real-world impact the programme is already having – captured powerfully by one head of service who shared that the course has "not only has it upskilled [the student], it has given him such motivation too". This feedback reinforces our commitment to providing training that is both academically rigorous and deeply transformative for practitioners and the children, young people, and families they serve. ■

Sarah Davis is the Course Lecturer and Dr Joy F Rosenberg is the Director of Courses at Mary Hare.

University of Birmingham MA/MQ in Education of Children with Multi-Sensory Impairments

Hester Richardson shares their annual update from multi-sensory impairment education mandatory qualification course providers

Year Two: Building a community

This year will see a second year of students complete the updated Mandatory Qualification (MQ)/Master of Arts (MA) programme of study here at the University of Birmingham, and it has been wonderful to see the success, learning, and impact on practice that students have shared with us. In fact, one of the most rewarding aspects of delivering the programme has been hearing those informal reflections on how a change to classroom layout, or training delivered to colleagues has been reflected in the responses of a child, or a different relationship with a school.

A quick reminder:

- The Education of Children and Young People with multi-sensory impairments
- MA/MQ at the University of Birmingham offers a range of flexible pathways for study:
- For qualified teachers, this can involve a Mandatory Qualification (MQ) combined with either a Postgraduate Diploma or an MA.
- We welcome all practitioners: for non-teachers, the PGDip or MA can be studied as a qualification in its own right.
- Learning is distance-based, takes place across six modules studied over two years, and is designed to fit around work and practice involving children or young people with MSI).
- For those continuing to a third year and completing the MA, there is an opportunity to undertake a research project as part of a final dissertation.

A continually improving programme of study

Since I began the development and delivery of the programme in 2022, more than forty individuals have completed their studies at Birmingham, some of these through an updated legacy programme, many through the new iteration. However, it is an absolute truth that learning has been a two-way process as students' feedback has been fundamental in our continued improvement and development of the programme.

Students from all three sensory pathways celebrate their success during the Christmas Degree ceremony

Feedback tells us that we have maintained the rigour of the Quality Standards the programme is built around but have also delivered the learning required in a way that is accessible, flexible, and designed to fit the needs of learners who are balancing home, family, study, and work. Our high success-rate reflects this too: more than 50% of last year's graduates decided to stick with us for a third year in order to study for a Masters' degree. I feel that this really reflects our success in ensuring that professional learning at postgraduate level can be both accessible and achievable. I'm especially proud of supporting the confidence of those course members who did not initially see themselves as MA scholars – especially those for whom English is a second language – to become candidates for a Masters' degree. Making learning intuitive, meaningful, and accessible has been an ongoing priority of the programme, so it is good to see the impact of this in the enthusiasm of these MA scholars. Moreover, in an area as under-researched as the education of children with MSI, signposting a clear pathway towards academic research for experienced practitioners is key.

A particular highlight this December was the inauguration of a degree/certification ceremony, where we were able to celebrate the

Delegates to the inaugural MSI and Sensory specialists Conference – May 2025

achievements of our students across all three Sensory Programmes at the Great Hall in Birmingham, where the burgeoning of a new sense of community was really evident. We look forward to many more such ceremonies in the year to come.

A growing MSI community

A really important aspect of the development and continued success of the MSI MA/MQ programme has been the sense of community which has built up as the programme gets into its stride. This sense of community first became apparent during our 2024 summer study weekend, when we were joined online by Dr Leda Kamenopoulou from University College London (UCL), discussing multi-sensory impairments against a background of educational psychological approaches. We were also joined in person by Dr Jo Fitzsimons, sharing her expertise and research on the role of taste and smell, as well as by Deafblind UK, Usher's Kids, and Professor Maggie Woodhouse from Cardiff University. As the weekend progressed, the excitement, enthusiasm, and genuine commitment to making things better for children with MSI was part of a truly infectious atmosphere, and it was this sense of a wider MSI community which prompted the idea for a first MSI practitioner-focused conference.

MSI-focused conference for MSI and sensory specialists

As part of our initiative to create stronger links between the University and the professional community we serve, the University of Birmingham MSI Programme, Kent County Council (CC) and National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) held an inaugural conference on MSI aimed at sensory specialists. We really recognise the appetite within our community for up-to-date, practitioner-focused learning on the topic of MSI in children. Finding the sweet spot between research-focused events, or those aiming to build basic awareness of sensory impairments, the focus for this conference was on high-quality, evidence-based knowledge, built on meaningful research, but providing practical strategies that specialist teachers can use. With that in mind, we welcomed Dr Paul Hart as our main speaker, and a range of workshop facilitators including Dionne Nmai, an occupational therapist (OT) with MSI expertise, Dr David Turton, a QTMSI children's habilitation specialist, and Kim Hodges, a QTMSI who is also a sensory team leader.

Feedback for the event was overwhelmingly positive, meaning that we hope to make this an annual event to support the continued professional development of the MSI teaching community, and the wider sensory specialists community. With this in mind, the second conference will be held in London, supported by UCL as well as Kent CC, NatSIP, and the University of Birmingham, on 16th June. We are already excited about the speakers who have agreed to attend, and we are hopeful that this conference will become a central pillar of the growing sense of community this article celebrates.

Other exciting developments

The University of Birmingham MSI MA/MQ programme is also excited to be involved in the newly opened centre for research in MSI supported by Deafblind UK at Birmingham

City University. The inaugural event brought together researchers and sponsors from across the United Kingdom and further afield, and I look forward very much to being further involved in a collaboration which aims to bring together knowledge from the different sectors of education, health, and social services – the three elements of support for children with MSI and their families working together.

Where next?

All of this together makes it feel like a very exciting time for the world of MSI, and the MSI MA/MQ programme feels both privileged and proud to have been a part of all these new developments. However, we are also very much aware that success rests in our ability to continue to reflect, and to respond to the changing needs of children with MSI and the workforce that supports them. We all await the announcements from Westminster and our devolved governments on next steps in the support for children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and stand ready to respond to these when they are announced.

Dr Peter Simcock, Claire Manford, and Hester celebrate the unveiling of the Deafblind Research Centre Plaque

Above all, a key aim for the MA/MQ at the University of Birmingham is to continue to offer learning which the wider professional community will find meaningful and relevant. We are always open to feedback, from current students, previous alumni, and the colleagues who work with them. If colleagues have any questions, suggestions, or ideas on how we can improve and make our learning relevant and meaningful, we really welcome it. I'd be very grateful if you were able to share any thoughts you have about what we should offer, where we should go next, how we can best support your roles. My email address is always available: h.richardson.1@bham.ac.uk do please get in touch if I can help in any way.

If you are interested in finding out more about our programmes supporting the education of children with multi-sensory impairments, please either contact me – h.richardson.1@bham.ac.uk, or visit our website. Teachers of Children and Young People with Multi-Sensory Impairment (Deafblindness) MA / PGDip – University of Birmingham ■

Hester Richardson qualified as a Teacher of Children with Visual Impairment (VI) in 2001 and has worked with children with VI since 1997, starting in a specialist school for children with VI before moving to work as a peripatetic specialist teacher in London. She qualified as a Teacher of Children with MSI in 2015 and worked from 2012 to 2022 as a Senior Specialist Teacher in MSI and VI in Cardiff, managing a large and successful team. During a long career as a specialist teacher, she has enjoyed the opportunities to develop her skills in the extra-curricular support of children with sensory impairment, volunteering as a ski guide and guide runner. Her particular interests are in teaching early literacy and numeracy through Braille and tactile means, and in developing early communication with little ones who are deafblind from birth.

Since moving to the University of Birmingham to develop and deliver the PGDip/MA/MQ in MSI, Hester continues to pursue her own studies. She is currently in the second year of a part-time PhD, investigating ways of improving our success in identifying children who are deafblind early on in their contact with SEN specialists, and she has gained a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, so that she can learn more about teaching adults through distance and inclusive teaching and learning. Hester is committed to accessible education that includes all learners, whether teaching children with sensory impairment, or teaching adults returning to higher education and balancing work and study.

Mandatory qualification in multi-sensory impairment

Caireen Sutherland and **Michelle Jones** share their annual update from multi-sensory impairment education mandatory qualification course providers

The Mandatory Qualification (MQ) in Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI) run by Seashell Trust and affiliated to Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) is now open for applications for its third cohort, starting in September 2026.

This relatively new course launched in Autumn 2024, after being commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2023 as an additional provider of the Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) MQ in MSI/Deafblindness.

There are insufficient specialist qualified teachers of multi-sensory impairments (QTMSIs) working across the sector and within the United Kingdom (UK), which results in the likely underdiagnosis, recognition, and support of MSI/deafblind children and young people in the UK. It is a Catch-22 whether underdiagnosis and under-recognition of MSI or the lack of MSI specialist teachers comes first; the most important thing is that we need more QTMSIs to carry out this important individual, expert work.

The Seashell course has been designed, developed, and is delivered with diversity of choice and approach in mind to those interested in training in MSI/deafblindness.

Seashell has created their bespoke course to fit round busy, working lives and to ensure there is practical application of the learning for teachers from the moment they start the course.

A Year 1 student commented:

"From the very beginning, I was struck by how thoughtfully the course was structured – flexible enough to fit around a demanding workload, yet rich with content that challenged and inspired me. It struck the perfect balance between theory and practice, with each concept anchored in real-world application, making it feel immediately relevant to my work with students in higher education."

The course has a blended learning approach and online content has been developed to be varied and engaging, using a range of presentation styles, formats, and levels of interactivity. It is structured across eight 15-credit modules, four per academic year, each with a core theme ranging from functional assessments through curriculum, skill development, communication, and much more. The content is delivered both synchronously and asynchronously, with live tutorials, innovative online content, in person study sessions at Seashell campus, visits, and teaching placement.

A Year 2 student commented:

"I particularly valued the hands-on, immersive elements such as site visits and guest speakers, which gave me a glimpse of environments specifically designed to support and empower young people with MSI. Seeing best practice in action was incredibly motivating and showed me what is possible when the right expertise and understanding are in place. It has already changed the way I design support: I now approach each student holistically, more confident in adapting environments, communication methods, and learning materials to suit their individual profiles."

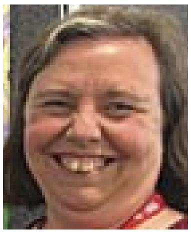
The Seashell course is delivered in collaboration with LJMU who facilitate access to academic resources, the online learning platform, and award the degree at the end of the two years. Seashell provides specialist knowledge and experience, and access to the many different aspects of the MSI/deafblind world.

This course embraces a collaborative approach from its partnership with LJMU through to content writing and delivery. A broad range of professionals from across education, health, and social care, as well as families and young people present individual passions and areas of interest, whichincludes national and international MSI practitioners. The programme lead and tutor team oversee the quality and consistency of the course, ensuring the course flows and seamlessly incorporates the standards for the MQ as laid out by the DfE and is underpinned by theory, evidence and research into learning, development in neurotypical children, and then, crucially, in those with MSI.

Seashell is a proactive, committed, and passionate member of the MSI community and recognises that the strength of this specialist area comes from the knowledge and skills within the sector itself and that Seashell is just one part of that. To capture this, and train reflective practitioners who are committed to and part of the wider sector, the Seashell course has uniquely brought the voices and knowledge of colleagues into the course.

Course tutors

This course uniquely captures and shares the knowledge from a range of professionals across the two-year content; however, the Seashell programme lead, Caireen Sutherland, and course tutor, Michelle Jones, are present throughout and available for the students. ■



Caireen is an experienced qualified teacher of MSI and VI and has worked in the field of sensory impairment, in a range of settings and sectors, for 20 years. She is co-chair of National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) and supports initiatives across the sector to maintain and deliver best quality MSI/deafblind practice. She presents regularly at national and international conferences, as well as having published various articles and book chapters.

Michelle is the head of the Seashell Sensory Support Service and a qualified teacher of MSI who has worked for 25 years across a range of settings and organisations within the sensory impairment sector. Michelle regularly speaks at national events and is passionate about training the next generation of MSI teachers.

BATOD Audiology Refreshers

This BATOD project began in May 2022. It was jointly funded by **William Demant Foundation** and BATOD, working in partnership with **DeafKidz International** (DKI) as project coordinators, along with the **British Society of Audiology** (BSA), the lead partner.

Six working groups made up of dedicated chairs, co-chairs and experts working in deaf education, audiology and technology across the UK developed new and updated content on

1. **Anatomy and physiology of the ear**
2. **Aetiology and types of deafness**
3. **Auditory perception and hearing testing**
4. **Acoustics and physics of sound**
5. **Listening skills and functional hearing**
6. **Hearing technologies**

1. Anatomy and physiology of the ear

More topics

1.1. Overview of the ear ›
1.2. The outer ear ›
1.3. The middle ear ›
1.4. The inner ear ›
1.5. The central auditory pathway ›

Resources

1.1. Overview of the ear
1.2. The outer ear
1.3. The middle ear
1.4. The inner ear
1.5. The central auditory pathway

The resource is open-access and regularly updated. For more information on this resource or if you would like to make a suggestion or contribution, please send an email to: BATODAudiologyRefreshers@batod.org.uk

www.batod.org.uk/resources-category/audiology-refreshers

BATOD
British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

Specialist Deaf Curriculum Framework (SDCF)

Appeal from the resources development group

When you're using the SDCF, you'll see that for each core area there are links to resources that you might find useful. But maybe you have come across other resources that you think other people should know about – or even developed some of your own! If so, please email your suggestion to the resources development group at deafframework@batod.org.uk, we'd love to hear from you.

Become a QToD with the University of Leeds

Helen Niemec, Caroline Chettleburgh, and **Prof Ruth Swanwick** outline the current course offerings at the University of Leeds

At the University of Leeds, we recognise that beginning the mandatory qualification to become a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) is a major professional and personal commitment. Many of our students balance demanding caseloads, busy school environments, and family responsibilities. That's why our programme continues to evolve, ensuring it remains achievable, relevant, and deeply supportive.

Over the past year, we have reviewed and enhanced our curriculum to make it even more streamlined, coherent, and responsive to developments across deaf education and the wider educational landscape. Our latest updates are designed to help you progress confidently and successfully through the course and graduate as a QToD with a strong contemporary understanding of the field.

Our programme

Your experience matters and we build on it right from the start of the course. We know that professionals joining us at Leeds bring a wealth of expertise, and when you join our programme, you also join a community, learning alongside peers who share your commitment to improving outcomes for deaf children and young people.

Each September a new cohort of students join the existing cohort, working together on the Semester 1 module, then splitting onto bespoke Year 1 and Year 2 paths in Semester 2 to develop and deepen their understanding of deaf education.

The example below shows how your learning would be mapped out over two years if you were to start with us in September 2026.

Each module is carefully structured to help you build a secure knowledge base and explore contemporary issues and debates in the profession. The materials support you to strengthen your ability to think critically, reflect meaningfully, and apply theory to practice, with the opportunity to demonstrate your practical skills through a range of authentic assessments.

If you are already working as a Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (ToD), you will only need to complete one assessed placement (with the option of a peripatetic placement that continues to be extremely popular), as your current role already supports the development of mandatory competencies. For those not yet in post, we support you to complete a first-year placement to ensure you gain the full breadth of experience required. All placements are supported by experienced QToDs across a range of settings and guided by our Regional Tutors, giving you valuable in-person supervision and opportunities to learn directly from skilled practitioners.

We recognise that many students may not have engaged in academic study for some time, so dedicated academic and assessment support is embedded throughout the programme. Our experienced Learning Advisors and Academic Literacy specialists from the Library and School of Education provide tailored guidance, helping you build confidence and develop the skills needed for successful postgraduate study. When you join the course, you'll complete an academic skills audit to identify areas for development, and our team will work with you on these throughout your studies.

Year 1	**Modules**
Semester 1 – September 2026	Educational Audiology (30 credits)
Semester 2 – January 2026	The Ecological Context of Deaf Education (30 credits)
Summer – MA students only	Research Skills (15 credits)
Year 2	**Modules**
Semester 1 – September 2027	Deafness and Development (30 credits)
Semester 2 – January 2027	Facilitating Learning in Deaf Education (15 credits) Professional Placement (15 credits)
Semester 1, 2 & summer – MA students only	Research Project in Deaf Education (45 credits)
For the Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) (QToD), students complete 120 credits For the Master of Arts (MA) in QToD students complete 180 credits	

In addition to academic support, you will have regular access to course tutors for ongoing guidance and personalised feedback, ensuring you feel supported at every stage. We also run monthly online drop-in sessions where you can ask questions, share progress, and connect with tutors and peers in an informal, supportive space. Students consistently tell us that this combination of structured academic support and ongoing tutor access not only helps them succeed in assessments but also strengthens their day-to-day professional practice.

What employers say about their students studying at Leeds

Our strong, long-standing relationships with schools and services for deaf children and young people, supported through our partnerships with work-based mentors and teaching placement mentors, ensure that you will be well guided throughout your training. These mentors play a vital role in bridging theory and practice, helping you apply the research and academic learning from the programme directly to your day-to-day practice.

Feedback from employers tells us that they feel their students get a good grounding in supporting the development of deaf children's communication and language skills. Coming on the course enables students to develop a good understanding of the specialist nature of the QToD role. They report that the trainee ToDs value the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of the theory, which they can then apply practically to their work with deaf children and young people. They benefit from being able to discuss their learning with the Leeds staff and each other and are encouraged to think critically and self-reflect. Employers value the fact that their students have full access to the wider university, particularly the library and academic skills support.

With thanks to all the services who have provided feedback.

Deaf education at Leeds on social media

In response to feedback and requests from our current students and community of alumni, we are delighted to announce the launch of our new social media presence – Deaf Education at the University of Leeds. This is a place to share what is happening at Leeds and in the world of deaf education and to connect and have discussions with like-minded people involved in the education of deaf children and young people. We look forward to engaging with you there!

Deaf Education at the University of Leeds

@deafeducationleeds

Research at the University of Leeds

Update from Helen

Learning is a lifelong journey, and as Programme Leader, I believe it's essential to continue developing my own professional knowledge and expertise. Alongside leading the programme and teaching across the School of Education and beyond, I am also undertaking a Doctor of Education (EdD) degree within the school. This ongoing learning not only enriches my academic practice but also feeds directly into the programme, ensuring that teaching, content, and discussions remain current, research-informed, and grounded in real-world experience.

My doctoral research explores the experiences of parents and carers involved in the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) programme in the United Kingdom (UK), from its introduction in 2002 to the present day. While early research focused largely on audiological outcomes and initial service evaluations, far less is known about how families' experiences have evolved over time, especially as roles and responsibilities within audiology, education, and early intervention have shifted.

Undertaking my own doctoral studies also allows me to genuinely empathise with students on the programme, particularly in terms of balancing professional responsibilities with academic work. Navigating this dual role myself helps me better understand the pressures, motivations, and achievements of our learners, and strengthens the support I can offer throughout your journey with us.

Update from Ruth

At Leeds we are continuing to develop our research into the lives and languages of deaf children who grow up in bi/multilingual contexts. We are excited to announce the start of a new funded project that will bring together world-leading arts and humanities researchers in the UK and Germany to address the complex social, cultural, and linguistic questions of what it means to grow up as a deaf child in different migrant contexts of the UK and Germany.

Prof Ruth Swanwick, together with Dr Kate Rowley (University College London), and Prof Nicole Marx and Prof Wolfgang Mann (University of Cologne) have been awarded funding under the bilateral Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) partnership with the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) to investigate how deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children in multilingual migrant households experience and develop their language repertoires.

This new collaborative UK–Germany team will examine how social, geographical, and migration contexts influence language use and repertoire development and explore ways of capturing these multilingual experiences in a methodologically robust and context-sensitive way.

The project's transnational focus leverages the UK's established institutional support for multilingual learners and Germany's experience with high recent migration to ultimately contribute to policy development and provide recommendations for sustainable linguistic support for DHH migrant children across Europe.

The very early stages of this project have focused on developing the wider research team and we are delighted to have appointed Dr Nathalie Czeke as the UK research assistant. Natalie will work between the Leeds and London centres to initially build the project participant group of families and liaise with education and health stakeholders in preparation for the project fieldwork that will comprise in-depth case studies that will analyse and explain the contexts of language development for DHH migrant children. Nathalie will also facilitate the coordination across the UK and German research sites to ensure consistency across our research approaches and processes.

We are very keen to include families, schools, services, and interested deaf education practitioners in all stages of our research, from project design through to data analysis and dissemination. It is our intention to not only expand our knowledge on multilingual linguistic repertoires in diverse settings but to also develop informed guidelines for researching, assessing, and explaining language use and development in marginalised communities. We would especially love to hear from you if you work with DHH children from migrant contexts. As the project develops, there will be updates on our website, but you are also welcome to email us for information and updates:

Prof Ruth Swanwick, Principal Investigator, University of Leeds, School of Education
r.a.swanwick@education.leeds.ac.uk

Dr Kate Rowley, Co-Investigator, University College London
kate.rowley@ucl.ac.uk

Dr Nathalie Czeke, Research Assistant, University of Leeds, School of Education) ednczk@leeds.ac.uk

Get in touch!

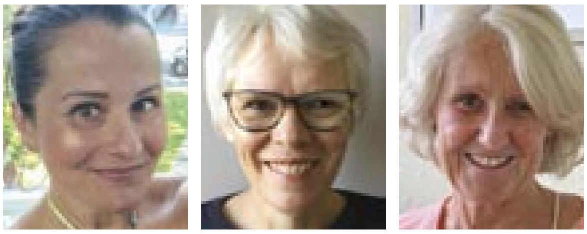
Find out more by emailing us at deaf-ed@leeds.ac.uk – we are always happy to chat via phone or Teams.

Or visit our course pages

Or join the conversations on social media

Deaf Education at the University of Leeds

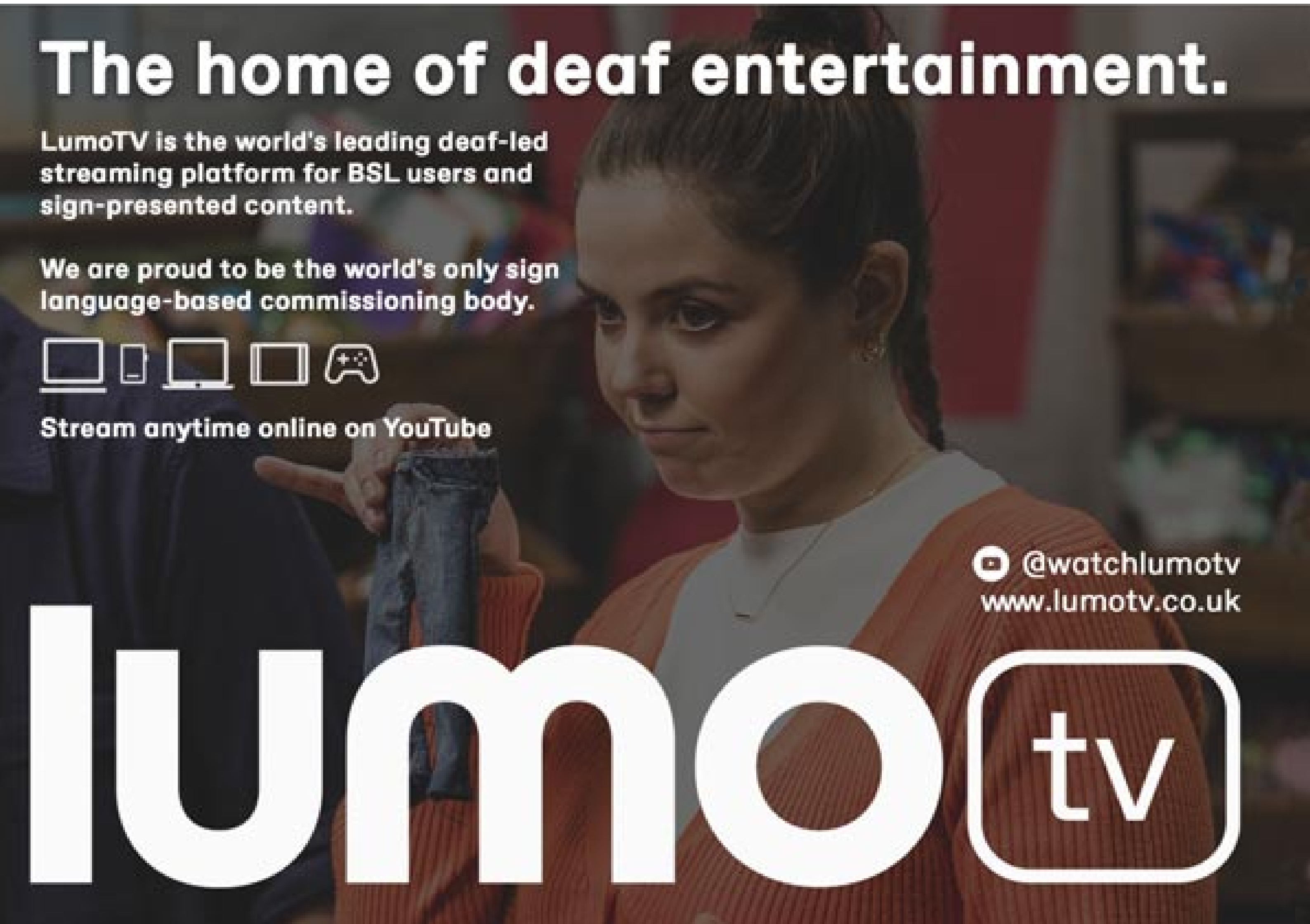
@deafeducationleeds



Helen Niemiec is a lecturer in deaf education and Programme Leader MA/PG Dip Deaf Education (QToD) at the University of Leeds.

Caroline Chettleburgh is a regional tutor on the MA/PGDip Deaf Education (QToD) at the University of Leeds.

Prof Ruth Swanwick is the Principal Investigator at the University of Leeds, School of Education.



Manchester Deaf Education

Dr Lindsey Jones and **Dr Helen Chilton**, Senior Lecturers in Deaf Education, share their annual update from deaf education mandatory qualification course providers

Our course at Manchester is built upon over 100 years of expertise and at the end of each year we reflect upon what we can do to strengthen the programme and secure its success for the next 100 years. We continually reflect upon what we do well at Manchester and what we can do to offer our students the best possible learning experience and equip them to meet the ever-evolving needs of D/deaf children, young people and the families that support them. We know that our newly qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (NQToDs) need to be resilient and flexible with a pragmatic yet solution focused attitude responsive to the individualised needs of each child or young person that they work with. At Manchester we spend time laying secure foundations to develop students' knowledge, skills, and understanding of language and communication, literacy and audiology providing multiple opportunities for students to apply learning to real life contexts.

Our commitment to reach, value and impact in deaf education

At Manchester we work with our students and stakeholders to ensure that each of our graduates adds value to the field of deaf education. We have a strong ethos of working to bridge the research practice gap and do this through our Research to Practice Conferences that displays the real-world impact of our work. At the November 2025 conference we welcomed our June 2025 graduates to share their continuing professional development (CPD) packages, developed with us as part of the assessment for the Policy & Practice unit of the mandatory qualification (MQ).

Modes of study, flexibility by design and exit routes

We want all our learners to feel part of Team Manchester and work across the multiple routes to study to provide this experience. We have a wide geographical spread represented across our cohorts, but we capitalise on the University's excellent facilities and remote meeting technology to ensure that all learners studying with us have many opportunities to come together, network and build relationships.

Our full-time and part time on-campus students are with us each week on campus, our e-blended learners join us on campus twice a year (in both years of study) and make the most of our facilities during their on-campus workshops. We offer group and one-to-one tutorials as well as creating water cooler moments in our online cafes where students can join us for a remote coffee and chat. Feeling connected to the University of Manchester is important to us and creating a sense of belonging allows us to develop professional and personalised relationships with our learners.

Facilities at Manchester

University of Manchester has dedicated audiological facilities for deaf education students. These help us to offer a robust practical component to our teaching, mapping to the mandatory competencies and the most up to date research in the field as well as across disciplines. Our teaching room has soundfield technology, we have a fully equipped audiology laboratory as well as a specialist equipment for speech discrimination testing. The lab is equipped with a range of hearing aids and assistive listening devices which our students work with using both the FP35 and the Auricle HiT. We motivate our students to become experts in the field with a commitment to disseminate knowledge to support the CPD of colleagues working in the field. The programme team work closely with colleagues in Speech and Language Therapy and Audiology which gives learners unrivalled access to expertise from our related disciplines through guest lectures and tailored resources.

Placements

Our excellent relationships with schools and services for D/deaf children and young people (CYP) continues to grow and our partners welcome students to complete their teaching placements with them across a range of settings across the breadth of the United Kingdom (UK).

At Manchester, all our students do two 20-day placements of the complexity of the role and our work with Heads of Service nationally shows us that this is vital: we are training our students to become specialist teachers and time spent honing the essential skills is time well spent. We consider two assessed placements to be the minimum preparation that learners need to broach the diversity of the needs of D/deaf CYP across the 0–25-year age range, taking into consideration communication choices, educational settings and multi-disciplinary approaches that are required to secure outcomes in language and learning.

We want our learners to be able to demonstrate increasing confidence and understanding of the role and feel that this prepares them for the diverse challenges they might encounter in the field. The Department for Education (DfE) (England) is clear that this qualification must be firmly embedded in practice and, for this, the opportunities to do so in training are vital to ensure sufficient skills and knowledge in the profession. We arrange our placements for learners based on their learning needs and local availability. We try to ensure that placements give contrasting experiences wherever possible.

BATOD readers or those connected to our programmes via their supervisory roles will know that the first placement is assessed by physical visits to schools from supervisors. For their second (qualifying) placement, learners are assessed by their supervisors using Swivl technology. This small, remote camera enables supervisors to access the lesson remotely and develops reflective practice, a vital skill for our learners to take forward into their role as a NQToDs. The use of this technology for the last 11 years, along with our adaptive approach to teaching and learning, has seen the Deaf Education team at Manchester acknowledged with a teaching excellence award and continues to see us leading the way in ensuring learners have high levels of reflective practice. Swivl also allows the opportunity to quality assure learners irrelevant of where they are placed in the country so that we can be sure that they meet the requirements of the qualification and role which is reassuring to employers of our students

Bursaries to Support Study at Manchester

At Manchester we understand the challenges of recruiting ToDs for schools and services, and we also know the importance of bringing new teachers into the profession. For a decade, we have been able to offer bursaries so that teachers working with CYP outside of deaf education are able to train with us.

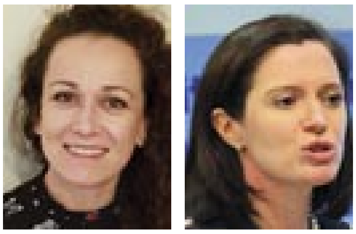
We ask you to encourage qualified teachers who you think would make a real difference to the lives of deaf children and young people to apply to us at Manchester Deaf Education bursaries | Biology, Medicine, Health | University of Manchester and to apply for one of our bursaries.

Our Birkdale Bursary awards up to four students per year who can show a commitment to raising standards in deaf education. We continue to offer the Lawrence Werth bursary to two students per year who can demonstrate exceptional classroom practice, and we now also offer the Jennifer Gough Bursary for learners who can demonstrate the potential for excellence in the use of technology in the field. You can find out more about our bursaries and how to apply here: Deaf Education bursaries | Biology, Medicine, Health | University of Manchester

Get in Touch!

If you would like to join Team Manchester or if you have any questions about our course and whether it is right for you or your potential trainee, please contact us: Helen.Chilton@manchester.ac.uk or Lindsey.Jones@manchester.ac.uk

If you would like to learn more about our programme from our learners take a look at our blogs where our students tell you what training at Manchester has meant to them. Our students and our graduates are the best adverts for our programme; we are incredibly proud of them, their achievements and all that they do in Deaf Education.
deaf education – Biology, Medicine and Health Student Blog (wordpress.com)



Dr Lindsey Jones is a Senior Lecturer in Deaf Education at the University of Manchester.

Dr Helen Chilton, is a Senior Lecturer in Deaf Education at the University of Manchester.

Affiliation – Division of Psychology, Communication and Human Neuroscience, University of Manchester.

Interested in building and supporting community around an upcoming research project?

Reframing Multilingualism: Examining the multilingual experiences and repertoires of DHH children growing up in migrant contexts of Germany and the UK

The University of Leeds, University College London and University of Cologne are kicking off their joint research project with a first meeting this spring. The new AHRC-DFG-funded collaboration across the UK and Germany will investigate how deaf and hard-of-hearing children in migrant families experience multilingualism. The team will test and refine culturally and context-sensitive research methodologies to document the linguistic repertoires and communication practices of young deaf and hard-of-hearing children at primary school age (5 - 11 years).

Do you work with young deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their multilingual migrant families? Are you interested in supporting the research project and building a community around it? Please feel free to contact one of the following email addresses to stay up-to-date and get involved with the project; benefit from the international collaboration and gain new knowledge to support your own work, as well as the children and families you are working with.

Prof Ruth Swanwick (University of Leeds): R.A.Swanwick@education.leeds.ac.uk

Dr Nathalie Czeke (University of Leeds): N.Czeke@leeds.ac.uk

Dr Kate Rowley (University College London): Kate.Rowley@ucl.ac.uk

For more information, please also see the project's website:
https://multi-dhh.uni-koeln.de/

Developments and celebrations at the University of Birmingham

Dr Emmanouela Terlektsi and **Angie Wootten** provide an overview of the Postgraduate Diploma(PGDip)/Master of Arts (MA) University of Birmingham course

Last year, we shared the exciting redesign of the PGDip/MA Deaf Education pathway within the Sensory Impairment course at the University of Birmingham. The programme has seen several milestones, culminating this year in the first-ever formal graduation of PGDip students from the restructured pathway – a joyful celebration for students, their families, and staff alike. A key feature of the redesign is the new teaching practice module, completely overhauled to provide a practical, hands-on learning experience for students.

When our previous article was published, the first cohort had completed all but one module: ‘Effective Teaching of Learners with Sensory Impairment.’ At that stage, we were able to describe the module but not yet report on its outcomes or the steps being taken to further enhance it. In this article, we catch up on progress, reflect on the successes of the first cohort, share insights from the research we have been undertaking, highlight the delivery of international training sessions, and, most importantly, celebrate the landmark graduation of our PGDip students.

Module 6: ‘Effective teaching of learners with sensory impairment’

As the title suggests, this last module of the course is designed so that students can showcase their skills and knowledge in making impact in the classroom. It is one of the two modules of the course which all students on the Sensory Impairment course undertake. As might be imagined, a substantial amount of discussion and reflection occurred between Module Leads multi-sensory impairment (MSI), vision impairment (VI), and deaf education) as to which aspects of the module must be harmonised and which could show more specialist individuality. Cherished methods and materials needed careful reappraisal and, in some cases, redevelopment. It was far from easy!

The module is entirely practical and is made up of two elements: one relates to teaching practice (Portfolio 1), the other to a range of professional activities associated with the role of the Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) (Portfolio 2). Each represents 50% of the grade for this final module.

Portfolio 1 contents are:

- Observations of two learners (focus on cognitive and social/emotional factors)
- Acoustic environment audit
- Audiological Assessment: regular checks, trouble shooting, maintenance
- 'Thumbnail profiles' of six learners
- Four lesson plans
- Additional documents to demonstrate particular MQ standards
- (Optional) Scheme of work, classroom support plan *(5000 words maximum).*

Portfolio 2 contents are:

- Reflection on five professional visits
- Newsletter for parents with a particular focus
- Powerpoint for staff focused on removing barriers for a deaf learner
- Report for a defined audience: assessment interpretation and recommendations *(4000 words maximum)*
- British Sign Language (BSL)/Irish Sign Language (ISL) Level 1 certificate.

Not only were the expectations for submission now different, assessment mode and means were now completely changed. The implication of this was the need for thorough explanation for students and the re-training of supervisors. New guidance was also needed for internal mentors.

Instruction began early in the course to accustom students to the new style of the module and the activities they would be carrying out. In parallel, supervisors were retrained and new assessment tools explained. Help was always on hand if needed. As far as possible, exemplars and frameworks were provided. Tutorial support ensured a more confident understanding and, once it came to teaching practice, supervisors gave students the reassurance and guidance needed to upload completed documents.

Our Year 2 students rose to the occasion, producing informative and creative portfolios representing their reflective journeys through teaching practice and the professional activities they had carried out throughout the year.

Module 6

Portfolio 1	Portfolio 2
Teaching practice (15 days) TP folder of evidence 50%	3 x practice-based activities Reflection on a Log of Visits BSL/ISL Stage 1 certificate 50%

Feedback suggested the benefit that students derived from the range of classroom and practical tasks they had engaged with.

Well done to the cohort of 2023–2025!

Moderation

Although we put in place a mechanism to moderate Portfolio 2 (moderated by tutors and Leads), work was still needed to establish moderation for Portfolio 1 (including teaching practice). This year a streaming technique will be used to enable the Module Lead to view supervised lessons simultaneously and, in a spirit of constructive conversation, to moderate the required sample.

Recruitment of supervisors

In a related development, the need for more placement supervisors became apparent. You may have seen the advert on the BATOD website calling for expressions of interest in the role. This has resulted in a healthy interest with around 40 QToD colleagues attending a recent introductory online session about the role.

Graduation

Until last year, students completing the PGDip in Deaf Education at the University of Birmingham had never had the opportunity to participate in a formal graduation ceremony – a fact often expressed with disappointment during our annual consultative meetings. Each year, students would raise the desire to mark and celebrate their achievement, highlighting the importance of formally recognising their hard work and dedication.

In 2025 this long-standing aspiration was finally realised. For the first time, PGDip graduates in the School of Education were invited to participate in a formal graduation, setting an exciting precedent. Building on this success, students were able to enjoy their own inaugural graduation in December 2025. The ceremony, held in the iconic Great Hall of the Aston Webb Building, was a joyful and memorable occasion, with graduates joined by their families, tutors, and Programme Leads. The event celebrated not only academic achievement but also the dedication, resilience, and collaborative spirit that define the University's Deaf Education and Sensory Programmes.

Research

NDCS project: 'Evaluating the impact of peripatetic Teachers of Deaf children and young people (ToDs) on deaf children's outcomes'

Last year, in collaboration with the Sandwell Local Authority Sensory Support Team, we explored whether and how the impact of peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) on deaf children could be measured, using a mixed-methods approach. A final report was delivered to the NDCS in July 2025, and the findings were shared with around 180 colleagues via a BATOD webinar on 17th September, which sparked an engaging Q&A session. Parents, deaf young people, and professionals were all positive about the support provided by peripatetic ToDs and expressed a desire for more support. The research concluded that a 'whole-child approach' – considering progress records and the views of parents, teachers, and other professionals – is needed to measure impact effectively. Key recommendations include using multiple data sources to reflect individual children's needs, keeping clear and consistent records, and applying SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) targets, alongside monitoring tools such as

Success from the Start to track progress and support collaboration. The full report can be found at the NDCS website.

Identifying educational strategies to support deaf autistic children

We are pleased to announce that we are in the final stages of our British Academy grant on identifying educational strategies to support deaf autistic children.

This study, supported by a British Academy grant, aimed to identify and characterise effective practices for supporting the inclusion of deaf children with autism. Building on the methodology of Powers et al (1999, 2001), it comprised two phases. Phase 1 used a two-part online questionnaire, following stakeholder focus groups and a pilot, to identify settings of excellent practice and explore the rationale behind their recommendations. In phase 2, six settings were selected based on phase 1 nominations, and data were collected through interviews, document analysis, and observations.

Preliminary analysis from both phases highlights the complexity of good practice. Inclusion is universally supported across mainstream and special settings, with strong emphasis on promoting language, social-emotional skills, self-esteem, independence, positive identity, and social competence. Effective practices also rely on ongoing partnerships between schools, services, and families, underlining the importance of collaborative approaches to support deaf children with autism.

Training overseas

On 6th February 2026, Emmanouela had the privilege of speaking in person at the long-standing all-day in-service seminar for QToDs, hosted by the School for the Deaf in Cyprus. She delivered a training session on evaluation and assessment methods to support deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students in both inclusive and specialist educational settings. The seminar brought together a dedicated group of professionals, including all QToDs across the island, coordinators for deaf students in secondary education, and Inspectors of special and general education from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

Participating in this event highlighted the emphasis we place on international collaboration in advancing Deaf Education and Inclusion. It was inspiring to engage with such committed educators, and plans are already underway to build on this partnership for future training and development initiatives. ■

Dr Emmanouela Terlektsi is an Associate Professor in the Disability Inclusion and Special Needs Department (DISN) and the Programme co-Coordinator of the Deaf Education course at the School of Education, Universityof Birmingham.

Angie Wootten is Assistant Course Coordinator, Module Lead, and a Teaching Fellow in the same department.

Respecting the impact of hearing loss and harnessing modern technologies

Joseph Manjaly, Consultant Otologist, describes bone conduction hearing devices and implants in 2026

Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) are at the very frontline when it comes to deeply understanding the functional impact of unmanaged hearing loss and communication barriers. As Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) surgeons, we are grateful for the expert nuanced support and understanding you provide our patients who are so often misunderstood and enduring an uphill climb against increased daily listening effort and the impact on social life, ear, nose and throat employment challenges, and family strain.

When surgical options are being considered, we as surgeons are also tasked with weighing up the aims and benefits of surgery against the complexity and risk. But both of these things have evolved significantly over the years, and there is a lot we still need to do to catchup in our approach.

Even in the case of single-sided deafness, I am often encouraging my trainees to recognise and validate with patients the hidden functional impact – listening in noise, the head shadow effect, high listening effort, and difficulty localising sound, as well as the broader impact on education and mental health. Without framing and appreciating the problem first, both doctor and patient are much more unlikely to embark on a journey that involves an operation and any form of permanently implanted device.

One area that has evolved most significantly is the area of active bone conduction and middle ear implants. It's no surprise that most generalist clinicians will not easily have detailed knowledge of the currently available options and criteria. With the evolution of bone anchored hearing implant surgery, combined with the advent of three new magnetic implant options in the last six years, it also takes some time in the clinic to bring patients and parents to the point of understanding their options.

Bone conduction implants are suitable for patients with hearing loss for whom conventional hearing aids have not been successful, and where middle ear hearing reconstruction has been successful/feasible.

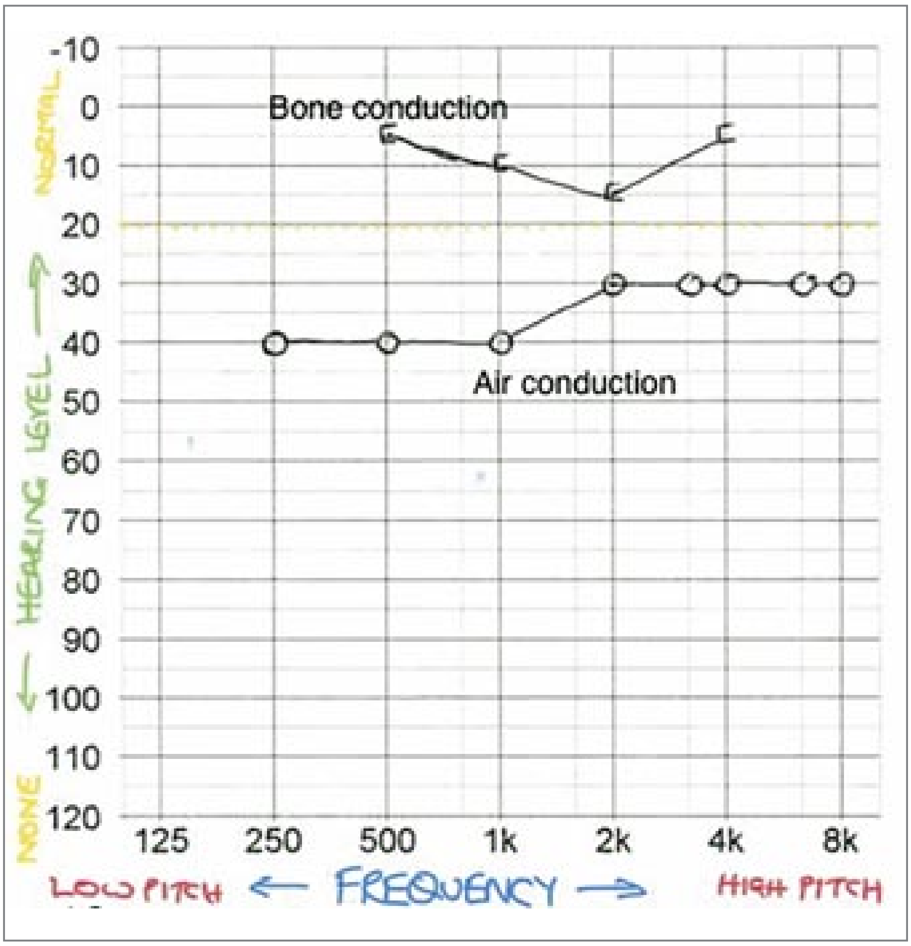
In this article I'll run you through the options for patients considering bone conduction hearing devices, which will hopefully augment your conversations when your patients come to you with questions.

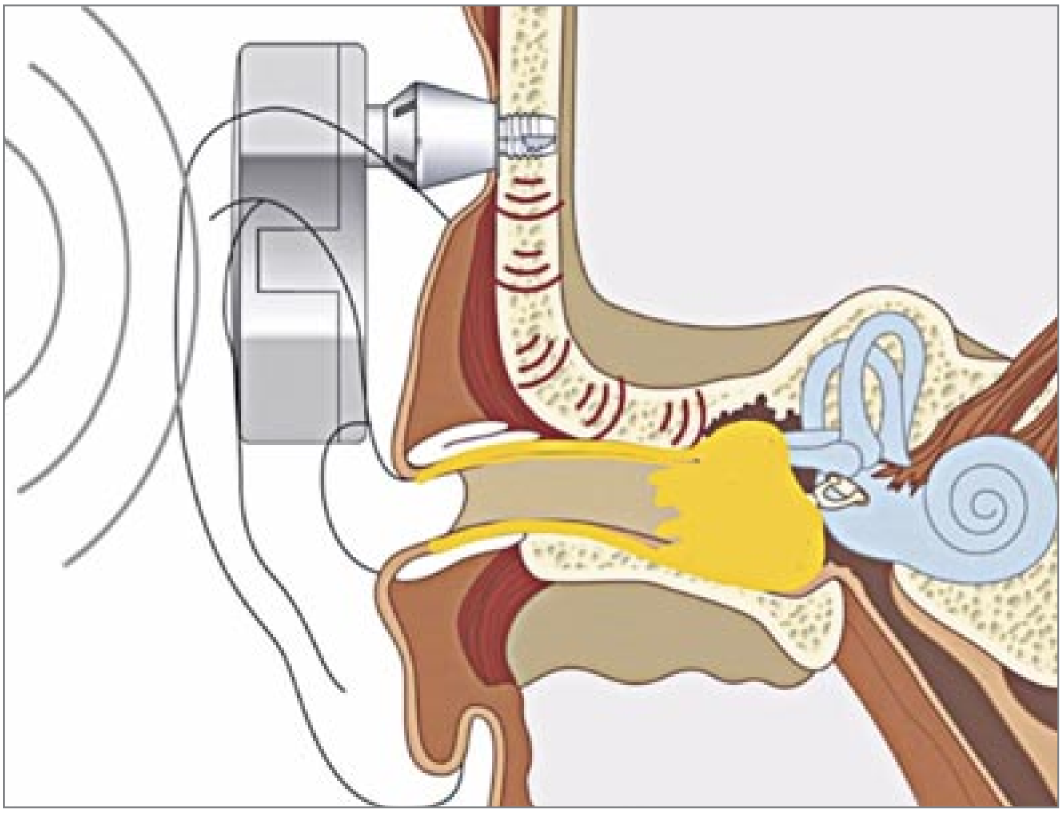
The magic of bone conduction

To determine if bone conduction devices are suitable, we look at the audiogram, specifically the bone conduction thresholds, rather than the overall hearing levels (air conduction thresholds). Many people with outer and middle ear problems have poor hearing, but their bone conduction thresholds are quite good, a route we can't utilise with a regular hearing aid.

With bone conduction, we bypass the poorly functioning ear canal and middle ear entirely. The device picks up sound, converts it into a vibration, and delivers that vibration directly to the skull bone. This bone vibration travels directly to the inner ear on that side, where vibrations are converted into electrical signals for the brain, just as they normally would be.

A fascinating historical example is Beethoven who, as he became deaf, would bite on his conductor's baton and press the other end to his piano to 'hear' the music





through the bones in his jaw.

Bone conduction can also help individuals with no microphonic hearing on one side, a condition known as single sided deafness (or unilateral profound deafness). If a device is placed on the deaf side, the vibration travels across the skull and stimulates the hearing ear on the other side. This effectively re-routes sound, overcoming the head shadow effect and preventing you from missing an entire hemisphere of sound, whether it's someone calling from your deaf side or unseen traffic.

Step 1: The non-surgical trial

Before any discussion of surgery, a trial with a non-surgical device is crucial. It's the only way to experience this unique way of hearing, and it allows your audiology team to measure the potential benefit. For some, this type of device can even be a long-term solution to avoid surgery.

The classic non-surgical solution is the bone anchored hearing aid (BAHA) on softband. A processor, identical to one used with a surgical implant, clicks onto a plastic plate, held firmly against the mastoid bone behind the ear by an elastic headband. This is an essential starting point for babies and young children to provide early access to sound. The BHM (Berl Hörgeräte Manufaktur) Contact Mini is another lower-cost option used by many audiology units.

For older children and adults, the cosmetic aspect can be a drawback. The SoundArc by Cochlear addresses this with a more stylish, lightweight frame, worn like glasses, positioning the vibrating component correctly. While more cosmetically acceptable for some, non-surgical devices still have limitations like potential headaches and whistling feedback.

To avoid pressure, an adhesive solution is available: the MED-EL ADHEAR. This uses a new sticky adhesive pad daily on the skin behind your ear, onto which an external processor clicks. The benefit is no pressure or headaches. However, the limitation is the volume that can be delivered through a device held on by a band or adhesive.

The key takeaway is that while these devices are excellent for a trial, they have limitations in wearability and power. If the trial is successful, and the patient feels they like the sound, but don't like wearing this device, or need higher levels of clarity and stronger amplification, then they're ready to consider a permanent, surgical solution.

Surgical option 1: Percutaneous implants

Surgical implants broadly fall into two categories: percutaneous and transcutaneous. Let's start with percutaneous implants, often known as BAHAs, which mean the implant shows 'through the skin'.

The surgery involves placing a small titanium implant into the skull bone. An abutment is attached to this, passing through a tiny opening in the skin. After healing, the sound processor clicks directly onto this abutment. This direct connection is the system's greatest strength, as there's no skin or soft tissue to dampen the vibration, ensuring pure, efficient energy transfer. This provides exceptional sound quality and the most power, making it suitable for people with more significant hearing losses. The most powerful percutaneous BAHA can even accommodate bone conduction hearing levels as low as 65dB

There are two main brands of percutaneous BAHA:

- The Cochlear BAHA System: Cochlear are pioneers in this field. Their latest processor is the BAHA 6 Max, which is small, very powerful, and features advanced sound processing and direct-to-phone connectivity. Abutments have evolved to be smaller with special coatings for better skin integration.
- The Oticon Ponto System: Oticon's latest processor is the Ponto 5 Superpower. With a strong background in conventional hearing aids, Oticon prides itself on sound processing technology that reduces listening effort. Oticon has also pioneered the MONO surgical technique

for adults, which uses a tiny circular biopsy punch for the abutment opening instead of raising a skin flap, leading to faster healing and better cosmetic results. Both Ponto and BAHA surgery for adults can often be performed under local anaesthetic as an outpatient procedure, taking as little as 10-15 minutes/

This is a significant evolution from pre-2012 surgeries, which were much larger operations under general anaesthetic with hair loss around the implant site.

Surgical option 2: Transcutaneous implants

The idea of a permanent abutment through the skin isn't for everyone. It requires daily cleaning, and though much rarer now, there's still a small risk of minor skin irritation and even implant loss. This led to the development of transcutaneous implants, where the vibrating part of the system is buried under the skin. As of 2025, we have three excellent options in this category.

With a transcutaneous device, an internal implant is secured to the bone, and an external processor is worn on the head, held in place by a magnetic connection through the skin to the implant underneath. When you remove the processor, your skin is completely intact – no cleaning, no wound. This offers a huge lifestyle and cosmetic advantage for many. These devices are 'active', meaning the part that creates the vibration is within the internal implant, making them far more effective than older, passive magnetic systems (like BAHA attract and Sophono)

Here are the three major transcutaneous options:

- MED-ELl Bonebridge: MED-EL introduced the first active transcutaneous implant. Its internal implant uses a Bending Wave Transducer, secured to the bone with two screws. The external processor is the SAMBA 2. This is a proven, reliable system used successfully for years. We've been implanting the slimmer Bonebridge version 2 since 2019, bringing this technology to those who prefer to avoid a percutaneous device. It's suitable for patients with bone conduction hearing levels of at least 45dB. Direct streaming to your phone requires a separate accessory (the Samba2Go pendant). A CT (computerised tomography) scan is typically needed to assess the bone volume required to house the implant, as this can influence positioning. Because the bone footprint is larger than for percutaneous BAHAs, fitting this implant can be challenging for some patients, especially those with previous extensive surgery.
- Cochlear Osia System: The Osia has been a very popular implant since its introduction in 2021. It aims to provide greater transcutaneous amplification while requiring the same bony footprint as a percutaneous BAHA. Its internal implant uses a Piezo Power™ transducer, which expands and contracts to create vibrations, offering more power in a given size and more effective amplification of higher frequencies. This is reflected in its candidacy range, including patients with bone conduction thresholds as low as 55dB (compared to 45dB for Bonebridge). The external Osia 2 Sound Processor offers direct streaming without an additional device, and patient feedback on its performance, particularly in noise, has been very positive. The main caution with Osia is its size; it's the largest of all transcutaneous implants. For patients with thin skin, this can result in a noticeable bump. Surgical positioning can also be more limited, often placing the magnetic processor higher and more noticeably than other implants.
- Oticon Medical Sentio: The newest transcutaneous implant, which we started offering in 2025, is the Oticon Medical Sentio. We're in the early stages of experience with this device, but I anticipate it will be very popular. It offers the same amplification power as the Bonebridge and is noticeably slimmer than the Osia. The surgery is relatively uncomplicated, and the internal implant is secured by screws and uses an electromagnetic transducer. The external processor is stylish, and Oticon's sound processing technology aims for clarity and improved conversation in noise. Currently, we offer this to adults and older children with bone conduction hearing of at least 45 decibels (dB). The internal component has the capability for more power, so a future larger external processor offering greater power and reserve for patients with worse bone conduction thresholds is anticipated. I also suspect the age licensing will drop to younger ages as more studies are completed. I'll provide updates on social media as we gather more long-term data.

The surgery for all active transcutaneous devices is generally more involved than for a percutaneous implant, typically requiring a general anaesthetic and around 60 minutes or less in surgery, meaning you'll usually spend most of the day in the hospital. Technically, all implants could be installed with local anaesthetic, but this is a discussion to have with your surgeon based on your individual factors.

The critical comparison: percutaneous vs transcutaneous

The most common dilemma for a patient is how to choose between percutaneous and transcutaneous? A direct abutment or a hidden magnet? All devices mentioned are fully funded by the United Kingdom (UK) National Health Service (NHS), and patients can have one for each ear if needed. All implant processors come in a range of customisable colours. So, what else is important in making the decision?

Here are the five biggest considerations to help choose:

1. Power and future-proofing

The audiogram is key here. A percutaneous system's direct link offers the widest fitting range and can handle more severe conductive and mixed hearing losses. This also provides more 'reserve'. As we age, our inner ear function can naturally decline. A more powerful implant means it's more likely to be sufficient for your needs in 10, 15, or 20 years. That said, the transcutaneous implants we have are still very powerful and suitable for the vast majority of candidates. But if your bone conduction hearing levels are close to the line, one might consider a device that offers more room for your hearing to worsen, ensuring maximum longevity.

2. Lifestyle, cosmesis, and daily care

On the surface, you might wonder why you'd choose a visible implant if a hidden one is an option. With a transcutaneous implant, no one sees the implant when the processor is in your pocket, and there's no daily cleaning. However, there's a trade-off. The external processors are inherently a bit thicker and bulkier to house the magnet and can create more of a bulge under the hair. We've found that these processors often need to be sited higher on the skull rather than discreetly tucked behind the ear, sometimes making the ‘discrete’ option more noticeable when worn.

A percutaneous abutment is always visible, but the processor itself can be much smaller and more discreet. The downside is that percutaneous implants require more daily care – a quick clean with a soft wipe, similar to cleaning a piercing. This is a daily commitment, and neglecting it can lead to persistent wound issues, hospital visits for nursing attention and creams, and even the risk of the implant needing removal.

3. Retention and skin issues

A percutaneous device clicks on and is incredibly secure, very difficult to knock off. A transcutaneous device is held on by a magnet. While the magnets are strong, a hard knock or even pulling a jumper over your head can sometimes dislodge it. This can be a concern for very active individuals or children, and processor loss is a real issue. Magnet strength can be adjusted, but too strong a magnet can cause pressure, redness, and pain on the skin – it's a fine balance.

4. The surgery and recovery

As mentioned, percutaneous surgery is quicker and often done under local anaesthetic, making it less invasive. This is a popular choice for patients who have undergone multiple surgeries for chronic middle ear disease and prefer a simple, minimally disruptive solution. Transcutaneous surgery typically requires a general anaesthetic, though you should discuss this with your individual surgeon.

Guide to Bone Conduction Implant choice 2025 QR code for full-length deep-dive video including multiple language captions @earsurgeonjoe	Percutaneous BAHA (Cochlear BAHA/Oticon Ponto)	Med-el Bonebridge	Cochlear OSIA	Oticon Sentio
Surgery to both ears possible?	✓	✓	✓	✓
Limited by bone availability on CT scan?	No	sometimes affects suitability/position	No	less likely to affect suitability
Bone conduction hearing level requirement/'reserve'	65dB or better	45dB or better	55dB or better	45dB or better (?to be expanded with future processor)
Visibility	abutment shows through skin processor smallest & most hidden	shallow bump & no skin penetration wider processor	no skin penetration larger bump stretching if thin skin wider processor situated higher	shallow bump & no skin penetration wider processor
Complications seen in more than 1 patient	need for abutment maintenance extrusions & knocks	discomfort	skin soreness magnet retention difficulty	new device TBC
Battery type & typical duration	zinc-air disposable 5-10 days	zinc-air disposable 8-10 days	zinc-air disposable 2-3 days	zinc-air disposable 5-7 days
Battery safety compartment	tamper-resistant door	tamper-resistant sleeve	tamper-resistant door	tamper-resistant battery lid
MRI safety with magnet	3T	1.5T	3T	1.5T
MRI brain shadow?	No	Yes (covers ear)	Yes (covers brain)	Yes (covers brain)
Anaesthesia & surgery duration	Local anaesthetic Outpatient day-case 15 mins per side	Usually General anaesthetic (discuss with surgeon)	Usually General anaesthetic (discuss with surgeon)	Usually General anaesthetic (discuss with surgeon)
Streaming to phone	Direct	Indirect via lanyard device	Direct	Direct
Age licensing	5+	5+ (Europe) 12+ (USA)	5+	12+ (at present)
Duration between surgery & switch-on	6-8 weeks+	2-3 weeks+	4 weeks+	2-3 weeks+
Colour choice				

Recovery is straightforward for both, but the timeline differs. With a percutaneous abutment, we often wait four to eight weeks for the skin to fully integrate with the titanium before ‘loading’ it with the processor. With a transcutaneous implant, patients can sometimes be switched on a little sooner, perhaps two to four weeks post-operation.

5. MRI compatibility and the MRI shadow

This is a vital consideration. While all these devices are safe for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans, their compatibility differs. With a percutaneous implant, you simply remove the processor. The tiny titanium screw is safe in any MRI scanner up to three Tesla. It creates a very small artifact or ‘shadow’ on the scan, unlikely to interfere with a diagnosis on any future brain imaging.

With a transcutaneous implant, the internal magnet is the issue. The Bonebridge, Osia, and Sentio all allow for safe MRI scans. For Bonebridge and Sentio, this is up to 1.5 Tesla; for Osia, it's 3 Tesla, and sometimes special headband precautions are used by radiographers. Crucially, all these magnetic implants create a significant shadow on an MRI brain scan, which can obscure the view of the brain on that side. This is vital if a patient has a condition requiring future brain scans, particularly for patients who have had chronic middle ear disease surgery (eg for cholesteatoma) and rely on future MRI scanning to detect disease recurrence. This factor alone can significantly narrow the decision for many patients.

Other factors to consider

For those who enjoy in-depth research, here are eight other frequently asked questions that influence patients' decisions:

- Anatomy: Based on bone thickness and the position of vital structures, are all implant types possible? Will there be any implications for where it is positioned? A CT scan is sometimes needed, especially for transcutaneous devices with a larger internal ‘footprint’. Also, if I need implants for both ears, can both be installed during the same operation, or does it need to be done one at a time?
- Connectivity: Which devices will stream directly to a mobile phone (iPhone/Android)? Which require an extra streaming accessory? What is the app likely to use? Are there any niche requirements, such as being a musician? It's worth visiting the manufacturer's websites, as audiology appointments may have limited time for this. Check the latest compatibility list for the exact phone model and operating system.
- The 'other' ear: If already wearing a hearing aid in my other ear, will this device be compatible if the patient ever needs a conventional hearing aid in that ear? An audiologist can help answer this.
- Dexterity and batteries: It is sometimes worth holding and attaching dummy versions of the processors. How easy is the battery changing? Is it rechargeable or disposable? What's the typical battery life? For children, is the battery compartment tamper-proof?
- Helmets and headwear: If the individual regularly wears a [cycling helmet/hard hat/headscarf], How will each processor type work with this? Can we trial the position?
- Age licensing: Some devices have age licensing restrictions. Some are not licensed for very young children. Are there any medical considerations that might necessitate an off-licence decision?
- Accessories: What accessories come as standard? Items like a remote microphone or a television streamer can make a huge difference, and the bundles offered by each company can vary.
- Could a middle ear implant be an option? This is a different implant type, but there's often overlap, and many patients could be suitable for either. It's particularly good for people with hearing loss related to ear canal problems but a healthy middle ear space. The currently available option is the Vibrant Soundbridge implant by Med-el, which I’ve not covered in this article.

The importance of multi-professional involvement

Decisions over hearing implantation need a multi-disciplinary team (MDT). This isn't just a surgeon's or an audiologist's decision. It's a significant choice, and we want to ensure we get it right. It often involves a complex weighing of factors. For bone conduction implants, at a minimum, recommendations will involve a surgeon and audiologist, and may also include a speech therapist, Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD), psychologist, and radiologist.

The process is then enriched when a patient and family understand what works best for their life and individual circumstances. I've compiled all this information into a single comparison table to assist both patients and clinicians globally.

Final thoughts

This has been a complete deep dive into the world of bone conduction implants in 2025. This technology evolves almost every year and the challenge is to ensure patients have access to all suitable devices. As you can see, there is no single ‘best’ device, but there is almost certainly a best device for each patient based on hearing, lifestyle, and priorities.

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BATOD Acoustic Quality Standards 2026

David Canning, QToD and Educational Audiologist, reports on the consultation and revised publication that articulates *Process, Purpose, and Practice*

What does an acoustically accessible classroom for deaf children and young people (CYP) look like in practice – and how do we evidence it with clarity and professional confidence?

Across the United Kingdom (UK), Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs), educational audiologists, and allied professionals regularly encounter classrooms where speech is technically audible but not fully accessible. In such environments, small acoustic compromises can translate into significant listening effort, reduced language access, and increased fatigue.

The revised BATOD Acoustic Standards have been developed to provide a clear, professionally owned framework for defining and evaluating acoustic quality in educational settings serving deaf CYP.

A professionally reviewed framework

The Acoustic Standards were reviewed following a UK-wide survey of professionals and allied specialists working directly with deaf CYP. Contributions were received from QToDs, educational audiologists, acousticians, inclusion leaders, and other practitioners across the four nations.

The consultation generated detailed professional commentary, reflecting both technical insight and lived experience of classroom practice. These responses were carefully reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the revised Position Statement.

The resulting standards are robust, educationally grounded, and proportionate in application. They are intended to support inclusive education rather than introduce additional burden.

A living document with a clear version of record

As with other BATOD frameworks, the Acoustic Standards are designed as a living professional document. Only formally published and dated versions constitute the agreed 'version of record'. The current published version is v1.0 (February 2026).

Feedback is welcomed via survey@batod.org.uk and is reviewed through established governance processes, ensuring stability for users while remaining responsive to professional experience.

What the Acoustic Standards establish in summary

1. Background noise

Unoccupied ambient noise should not exceed 35 decibels A-weighted (dBA), measured in accordance with **Building Bulletin** (BB) 93 methodologies.

Attention should be given to low-frequency noise components arising from mechanical systems and building services, recognising the impact of upward spread of masking and listening fatigue.

2. Reverberation time

Reverberation time should not exceed 0.4 seconds across each octave band from 125 hertz (Hz) to 4000 Hz,

The room assessment, which takes just a few minutes to complete, produces a summary table as below (detailed report is also available if selected). Below are examples of two assessments carried out in different rooms:

Acoustic Compliance Summary

BNL	SNR	RT60	Audit
✓	✓	✓	✓
20.8 dB	29.5 dB	0.28 s	Green
≤35 dB	≥20 dB	≤0.4 s	11 questions

Overall Room Status

EXCELLENT - Fully Compliant

BATOD Acoustics Position Statement v1.0

And

Acoustic Compliance Summary

BNL	SNR	RT60	Audit
✕	✕	✕	⚠
41.9 dB	5.7 dB	0.73 s	Amber
≤35 dB	≥20 dB	≤0.4 s	11 questions

Overall Room Status

URGENT ACTION REQUIRED

BATOD Acoustics Position Statement v1.0

reflecting the listening needs of deaf learners.

3. Signal-to-noise ratio

A minimum +20 dB signal-to-noise ratio at ear level should be achieved for deaf learners and others with special hearing or communication needs.

From Standards to practice: paper and webapp working together

The Acoustic Standards are supported by a structured Classroom Acoustic Audit Tool, available in a web-based format. The Position Statement defines the standards; the audit tool operationalises them.

The web application mirrors the intent of the published standards while offering structured data capture, traffic light categorisation, automated summaries, and exportable reports. It has been designed to reduce administrative workload rather than increase it.

The web app is currently in development but is considered sufficiently mature for release, with structured feedback actively invited.

Practitioner reflection

An educational audiologist who trialled the Classroom Acoustic Audit Tool commented:

"I particularly valued the potential 'live' aspect of the app. I recently walked around an entire secondary school reviewing acoustics, and it felt rather like an inspection, with staff waiting for the outcome. The app offers the opportunity to engage senior leaders in the process so that they better understand what constitutes good and poor acoustic features in their environment.

The instant results are a significant strength. Overall, it is a really useful and user-friendly tool."

Final reflection

Room acoustics are often invisible. For deaf CYP and all with special hearing needs they are not.

The revised Acoustic Standards clarify what good acoustics look like. The Classroom Acoustic Audit Tool makes it accessible to all staff in schools. Together, they provide the profession with a shared practical and proportionate framework for improving acoustic access.

David Canning, QToD and Educational Audiologist, led on the consultation and revised publication that articulates Process, Purpose, and Practice *on behalf of BATOD.*

BALMs

Do you enjoy modifying the language in material to be accessible for deaf readers? Have you considered the BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers (BALM) role?

On successful completion of both the Tier 1 and Tier 2 courses, we will invite BATOD members to become a member of the BATOD panel of exam language modifiers. BATOD currently works with a small number of exam boards including AQA, CCEA, NCFE, Pearson/Edexcel, and WJEC.

The current BATOD co-ordinator is Susie Marques. The co-ordinator receives the requests from exam boards and will then contact you to ask if you are interested in taking on language modification assignments for different exam boards, as work becomes available. Some exam boards have an induction process which they organise. When you accept the work, you are working for the exam board and BATOD knows no more about how the work goes. The exam board will expect you to keep to the contract you sign, and they pay you directly for the work. They communicate with the BALM co-ordinator about the quality of the BALM work.

It is difficult to check continuing competency of the exam boards, because they do not always take up the modifiers' suggestions. If you have any concerns about the accessibility of examination papers, do let BATOD know via exec@batod.org.uk. BATOD has an active Statutory Assessment and Examination Access Arrangements working group that regularly engages with JCQ, SQA, Ofqual, and Access Consultation Forum.

If you have any questions or would like to find out more about the BALM role, please email langmod@batod.org.uk

If you have a query for the Statutory Assessment and Examination Access Arrangements working group, please email exec@batod.org.uk (examples of past queries are available on the BATOD website).

Statutory assessment and examination access arrangements

Resources

A GCSE final year pupil has just had moderate sensori-neural deafness identified. Can the school apply for extenuating circumstances?

Access arrangements documents (BATOD Statutory assessment and examination access working group)

BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers (BALMs)

BATOD Tier 2 Online Language Modification

BATOD's role in examinations and testing

Bluetooth hearing aids and exams

Deaf Studies: topics and information

Below are more details on the Deaf Studies module. We have taken the four outcomes from the Deaf Studies module as part of the ToD course in Scotland, and applied them there (saves reinventing the wheel). However, the Deaf studies working group came up with topics that we felt would be beneficial to our BATOD members and other professionals in deaf education. Below you will see the outcomes in *italic*, and the topics in **bold**. There is a total of 12 topics. These topics will be delivered as part of a pilot over 18 months–2 years, consisting of a 90-minute presentation to include a Q&A delivered remotely, to be held on Wednesdays from 4 to 5.30pm. All listings are on the Events page on the BATOD website and the bookings will be available via Eventbrite

1. Show a critical understanding of the different constructions of deafness, eg medical, social and cultural.

1a. The medical and social models of disability – and the impact of the cultural model on deafness

This module addressing the medical and social models of disability will explore the nuanced dynamics of deafness and its broader implications. It will critically examine the d/Deaf label, acknowledging the cultural and linguistic significance of capital 'D' Deaf for those identifying with Deaf culture, compared to lowercase 'd' deafness, often linked to auditory medical definitions. 'Sensory loss', 'hearing impairment', and 'hearing loss' are terms frequently preferred by audiology, framing deafness within a clinical perspective that prioritizes interventions like cochlear implants (CIs) and hearing aids (HAs). These medical approaches, while aiming to mitigate sensory barriers, could impact the social and emotional well-being of individuals by shaping their identity and experiences. The module would also address families' trauma, often intensified by the predominantly medical focus on deafness, highlighting the importance of navigating these challenges with sensitivity and understanding. Finally, it would champion positive terminology and the social model, emphasizing an inclusive perspective that values diversity and advocates for removing societal barriers rather than solely focusing on 'fixing' impairments. In essence, the cultural model emphasises the unique aspects of Deaf culture, while the social model focuses on systemic changes needed to create an inclusive society for everyone, regardless of their challenges.

1b. Positive terminology

This topic on positive terminology could explore the impactful shift in language and attitudes surrounding deafness, guided by the 'Positive use of language' by BATOD. The document advocates for removing the outdated 'hearing impairment' label, emphasizing terminology that reflects empowerment and inclusivity. This module would delve into the background of the 'Positive use of language' document, tracing its development as a response to the growing recognition of the Social model of disability. It could highlight the importance of positive Deaf role models across various professions, underscoring how their visibility inspires and challenges misconceptions. Central to the module would be the principle of being Deaf-led in discussions about deafness, ensuring authentic representation and perspectives. Lastly, it could address the value of hearing professionals engaging with Deaf professionals in practice, fostering collaboration that exemplifies inclusivity and mutual learning.

1c. Developing language and communication, and social and emotional wellbeing in deaf CYP

This topic on Developing language and communication, and social and emotional wellbeing in deaf children and young people (CYP) will focus on addressing the crucial role of language acquisition in shaping their overall development and identity. It will delve into the challenges of language deprivation, emphasizing the importance of early exposure to accessible communication modes to ensure linguistic and cognitive growth. The topic will explore bilingualism as a powerful tool in fostering both deaf identity and broader social integration, allowing deaf CYP to navigate and thrive in both Deaf and hearing communities. Various modes of communication, including the comparison of makaton, which is a sign system supporting spoken language, versus sign languages like BSL (British Sign Language) and Sign Supported English (SSE), will be critically analyzed to highlight their functions and impacts. The topic will also tie these elements to the social and emotional wellbeing of deaf CYP, illustrating how empowering communication supports their sense of belonging, confidence, and emotional resilience.

2. Show a critical understanding of the notions of deaf communities and deaf culture.

2a. Building cultural awareness and inclusive practice in deaf education

This session focuses on developing cultural awareness and inclusive, community-led practice in deaf education through real life experience and grassroots perspectives. Drawing on work across Deaf spaces in the UK, Ireland, and Europe, the session explores how language, culture, identity, and background shape how Deaf children, young people, and families experience education. Participants will reflect on how everyday decisions, communication styles, and professional expectations can either support belonging or unintentionally create barriers. Through discussion and practical examples, the session highlights the importance of listening to community voices, working across difference, and learning from lived experience. It demonstrates how inclusive, relationship-based approaches strengthen trust, engagement, and learning outcomes. By the end of the session, participants will have a clearer understanding of how culturally responsive, Deaf-led practice can improve learning environments and support more confident, connected, and resilient Deaf learners.

2b. The history of deaf education (and local Deaf schools/provisions)

The 1880 Milan Conference marked a turning point in deaf education, favouring oralism over sign language and shaping policies for decades. Conrad and Warnock later contributed significant insights into deaf education, advocating for more inclusive approaches. The READY study further examined the effectiveness of various educational strategies, reflecting the evolving terminology that acknowledges a range of approaches to Deaf learning. Over time, provisions for Deaf students have shifted, transitioning from specialist schools to resourced provisions and mainstream education, offering diverse opportunities for communication and learning. The impact of technology on deaf education has been profound, introducing innovations such as CIs, digital HAs, and improved accessibility tools, reshaping how deaf individuals engage with learning and the broader world.

2c. Deaf Space

Deaf spaces take many different forms. They can be organised in institutions, such as clubs, associations, schools, universities, and conferences, or come into existence informally, such as cafés, family gatherings, or spontaneous encounters. They exist offline and online. Within these spaces, deaf people connect through shared experiences and sign languages, but they also set up spaces around specific shared interests, backgrounds, or life experiences in addition to deafness, such as in queer deaf spaces, or Deaf spaces consisting mostly of migrants. Deaf spaces can be supportive and celebratory, but they can also be exclusionary, reflecting differences related to language background, race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, or migration histories. Exploring this diversity of Deaf spaces shows how deaf people actively build environments that foreground sign language communication, while also negotiating inclusion and exclusion in complex ways.

3. Be familiar with the key aspects of deaf history and heritage, especially in relation to deaf education.

3a. The ban on sign language in deaf education and the impact on deaf people's lives today

The historic ban on sign language in deaf education has had lasting consequences, deeply shaping the experiences of Deaf individuals today. The exclusion of Deaf professionals from teaching roles led to white women being appointed as educators for deaf CYP, often without lived experience of Deaf culture. This systemic shift contributed to audism – the belief that spoken language is superior – limiting opportunities for Deaf individuals to pursue careers and develop professional identities. The impact on deaf children was profound, as they were often deprived of natural language acquisition in sign language, affecting their cognitive, social, and professional development. Even today, Deaf professionals continue to navigate barriers created by these historical injustices, working to reclaim spaces within education and beyond to empower future generations. The resilience of the Deaf community is evident in efforts to restore sign language's rightful place in education, combat audism, and promote inclusive learning environments that respect Deaf culture and identity.

3b. The use of amplification and technology in deaf people's lives outside of clinical settings

Deaf history and heritage reveal the evolving role of amplification and technology beyond clinical settings, profoundly impacting deaf education and daily life. While early approaches to deaf education often prioritised speech and hearing through amplification devices, modern technology has expanded accessibility and autonomy for Deaf individuals. Innovations such as captioning, video relay services, and digital communication tools have empowered Deaf people to engage with education, work, and social interactions on their own terms. The integration of technology into Deaf culture reflects the community's resilience in adapting resources to fit its needs, fostering greater independence and inclusion. These advancements highlight the significance of understanding Deaf history – not just in medical contexts but in the broader pursuit of equity, identity, and cultural pride.

3c. Developing a positive deaf identity

Deaf history and education play a vital role in shaping a positive Deaf identity, celebrating the richness of Deaf culture and its contributions across various fields. The arts serve as a powerful platform for representation, with initiatives such as BBC *See Hear* and Deafinitely Theatre showcasing Deaf talent and stories that resonate with the Deaf community. Beyond the arts, Deaf individuals are making strides in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), proving that barriers can be dismantled with proper access and support. Intersectionality is also key in understanding the diverse experiences within the Deaf community, recognizing identities such as Deaf and LGBTQIA+, Black Deaf etc, and ensuring inclusivity across different backgrounds. Resources like the Scottish Sensory Centre provide essential support, offering information and advocacy to empower Deaf individuals. Embracing the concept of Deaf Gain – where Deaf perspectives enrich society – helps redefine accessibility, innovation, and representation, reinforcing the importance of Deaf history in driving positive change for future generations.

4. Be familiar with and be able to use the resources of a range of deaf organisations and deaf media.

4a. History of Deaflympics (+ Deaf sports) and its impact on deaf people's lives

This topic aims to equip learners with knowledge of various Deaf organisations and Deaf media, fostering an understanding of their significance in community engagement, advocacy, and representation. A key focus is Deaf UK Sport, which provides opportunities for Deaf athletes to compete at national and international levels. Eligibility criteria for playing on national Deaf teams require a hearing level of 55 decibels (dB) or worse in the better ear, with rugby adopting a slightly lower threshold. The achievements of Great Britain (GB) and Ireland in international competitions highlight the skill and dedication within Deaf sports, reinforcing pride and visibility. Beyond competition, Deaf sports play a crucial role in the social and emotional well-being of Deaf young people (YP), offering spaces for belonging, identity-building, and camaraderie. By familiarising themselves with these organisations and media platforms, learners vcan engage more effectively with the Deaf community and advocate for inclusivity and recognition in sporting environments.

4b. Arts, film and culture within the Deaf community

This topic aims to familiarise learners with the vast resources available within Deaf organisations and Deaf media, empowering them to engage with and contribute to these platforms. *BSL Zone*, BBC's *See Hear*, and Deafinitely Theatre provide essential representation and storytelling, ensuring Deaf voices are heard across television, theatre, arts, and digital media. Opportunities to get involved in arts, TV and media, such as Deaf Set, BSL Zone's behind-the-camera database, and Deafinitely Theatre encourage Deaf creatives from a diverse range of backgrounds to shape their industry. FUSE Theatre, along with accessibility services like Stagetext and TheatreSign, enhance the experience for Deaf audiences, although many theatres require signing up for their access schemes to fully benefit from these resources. By understanding and utilising these platforms, learners can support Deaf-led initiatives, celebrate Deaf arts and culture, and advocate for wider accessibility in entertainment and media. Please note this topic will be delivered by a range of deaf professionals within the arts, film, TV, and media sector focusing on their particular area of expertise.

4c. Supporting young deaf people in preparation for adulthood

This topic aims to ensure learners are familiar with and can effectively access the diverse resources available through Deaf organisations and media. Understanding national variations in Access to Work policies is essential for navigating employment opportunities, as support differs across regions. Assistive Listening Technology, including Bluetooth streaming and devices like Roger On V2, enhances accessibility in remote meetings and lectures, empowering Deaf individuals in professional and educational settings. CaptionConnect facilitates real-time accessibility, while Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and carer passes improve inclusion at events such as theatre performances. Organisations like SignHealth and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) provide critical advocacy and health services, offering tailored support based on individual needs. For further and higher education, preparing early for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) through Student Finance ensures access to necessary accommodations. The Disabled Freedom Pass in London and varying benefits, such as Ireland's Disability Allowance (DA), highlight the need for awareness of local policies. Services provided by Remark!, Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD), and SignHealth – ranging from support workers to direct payments or personal budgets – help families navigate education, particularly for those with or without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). By understanding these resources, learners can advocate for accessibility and empower Deaf individuals in everyday life.

Topics		Dates of Presentation/Q+A
Show a critical understanding of the different constructions of deafness, eg medical, social and cultural		
1a. The medical and social models of disability – and the impact of the cultural model on deafness	Emma O'Sullivan	Weds 25th March 2026 4–5.30pm
1b. Positive terminology	Martine Monksfield	Weds 15th April 2026 4–5.30pm
1c. Developing language and communication, and social and emotional wellbeing in deaf CYP	Kate Rowley / Katie Rogers	Weds 29th April 2026 4–5.30pm
Show a critical understanding of the notions of Deaf communities and Deaf culture		
2a. The history of our (local) Deaf community	Robert Adam	Weds 6th May 2026 4–5.30pm
2b. Building cultural awareness and inclusive practice in deaf education	Lydia Gratis	Weds 20th May 2026 4–5.30pm
2c. Deaf Space	Annelies Kusters	Weds 17th June 2026 4–5.30pm
Be familiar with the key aspects of deaf history and heritage, especially in relation to deaf education		
3a. The ban of sign language in deaf education and the impact on deaf people's lives today	Robert Adam	Weds 24th June 2026 4–5.30pm
3b. The use of amplification and technology in deaf people's lives outside of a clinical setting	Dr Celia Hulme	Weds 16th September 2026
3c. Developing a positive Deaf identity	Dr Dai O'Brien	Weds 30th September 2026 4–5.30pm
Be familiar with and be able to use the resources of a range of a deaf organisations and deaf media		
4a. History of Deaflympics (+ Deaf sports) and its impact on deaf people's lives	Stuart Harrison	Weds 14th October 2026 4–5.30pm
4b. Arts, film and culture within the Deaf community	William Mager	Weds 4th November 2026 4–5.30pm
4c. Supporting young deaf people in preparation for adulthood	Conor Mervyn	Weds 18th November 2026 4–5.30pm

Strengthening best practice in deaf education

Jessica Rosser provides a summary of the 'Lived experience and deaf identity' theme from the BATOD South West (England) Conference

The BATOD South West conference on 3rd October 2025 brought together professionals from across the region for a day of rich insight, reflection, and forward-thinking discussion. The conference was held at Elmfield School for Deaf Children at their new site on Sheridan Road in Bristol. Kate Persaud, the current headteacher, kindly allowed the conference to be held at the school, and thanks to the hard work and excellent organisation of Jade Philip and the BATOD South West team, the event was an overwhelming success.

With 38 feedback forms submitted, the overwhelming message from delegates was that the event provided a powerful reminder of the importance of Deaf-led perspectives and the need to continually evolve best practice in deaf education. Attendees consistently described the day as inspiring, informative, and essential for reinforcing the value of lived experience at the heart of their work.

The conference opened with the West of England Hearing Implant Programme (WEHIP) presentation, which many participants described as a timely refresher that reaffirmed their understanding of the process. Delegates noted that the session helped consolidate approaches already used in practice, while raising valuable queries about the growing involvement of educational psychologists and the potential to strengthen links with audiology teams. Several attendees expressed an interest in seeing case studies supported by WEHIP Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs), highlighting a desire for greater applied examples to support ongoing professional development. Feedback showed that this session enabled practitioners to revisit core principles and reflect on how multi-disciplinary collaboration can continue to enhance outcomes for deaf children.

An impactful contribution came from Dr Janette, who presented in place of her daughter, Helen Willis. Her deeply personal and informative session was widely praised, receiving some of the strongest ratings of the day. Delegates described the presentation as powerful, thought-provoking, and inspiring, with many noting that it deepened their understanding of the lived experience of children and young people with cochlear implants. The session also generated discussion about how schools might restructure aspects of the day to better support deaf learners. While some participants felt there was a great deal of content, the consensus was that Dr Janette's insights provided a vital reminder of the complexity of Deaf identity and the importance of centring families' voices within educational planning. This session supported best practice by challenging professionals to maintain a holistic, person-centred approach, and to consider how systems might be adapted to better meet learners' communication and wellbeing needs.

A further highlight was the Deaf Education Staff panel. Hearing directly from Deaf adults about their educational journeys was described as "exactly what Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People need to hear" reminding practitioners of the long-term impact of decisions made in classroom and service settings. Participants reflected on the similarities and differences between the individual stories shared, acknowledging both the progress made in recent years and the challenges that remain. Many delegates remarked that the panel reinforced the importance of representation, Deaf role models, and authentic testimony as key components of high-quality practice. The panel encouraged services to continue embedding deaf-led perspectives in curriculum planning, staff training, and pupil support.

The interactive session offered delegates the opportunity to reflect on local service delivery and share ideas with colleagues. Although feedback varied, many professionals found it helpful to hear what others across the region are doing and to consider how different models might be adapted to their own contexts. This element of the day supported best practice through professional networking and collaborative problem-solving, helping teams identify new approaches that could strengthen provision.

One of the most widely celebrated sessions came from keynote speaker Matt Jenkins, whose presentation was described as "powerful", "eye-opening", and "inspirational". Delegates responded with enthusiasm to his clear metaphors, academic grounding, and authentic storytelling, with several stating they could have listened for an entire day. Matt's session reinforced the complexity and individuality of Deaf identity, and highlighted the crucial role that Deaf adults play as role models. His presentation supported professionals to reflect critically on assumptions, consider the diversity of Deaf experience and remain committed to personalising support for each learner. The response was overwhelmingly positive, confirming the impact of high-quality Deaf-led training on professional practice.

The exhibitor stands provided another opportunity for staff to engage with emerging resources and technologies. Attendees praised MED-EL's rehabilitation materials, expressed interest in exploring Puffin Maths further, and enjoyed the video demonstrations showing surgical processes and frequency responses. Feedback highlighted the value of hands-on engagement with products that can enhance teaching and learning. Delegates also raised constructive suggestions, including a request for consistent captioning throughout the day and the importance of presenters maintaining clear visual communication.

Across the day, many attendees took the time to acknowledge the high standard of organisation and the relevance of the programme. Comments such as "best conference in years" and "as good as the National Conference" reflect the level of professional value gained. As well as praise, delegates also offered thoughtful reflections on language sensitivity, particularly regarding descriptions of Deaf and hearing siblings, highlighting the profession's continued commitment to respectful, identity-affirming terminology.

Overall, the conference provided a vital space for QToDs and associated professionals to reconnect with the lived experiences of deaf individuals and to refresh their understanding of best practice. Across all sessions, a clear theme emerged: embedding deaf perspectives, fostering meaningful participation, and maintaining high expectations are essential for delivering high-quality deaf education. Delegates left the event equipped with new insights, renewed motivation, and a strengthened sense of purpose, and committed to ensuring that their work continues to evolve alongside the voices and identities of the deaf children and young people they support. ■

Jessica Rosser is the Headteacher at Longwill School for Deaf Children in Birmingham.

The role of the Educational Audiologist

The Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People role is diverse. The **BATOD publications: 'Articulating the specialism' series** provides an insight to the different professional capacities. The series now includes the 'Role of Educational Audiologist'.

Other publications in the series include:

Qualified Teacher for Deaf Children and Young People working in an auditory implant centre (ICQTOD)

The role of the QToD in HE

The role of the QToD in FE

The role of the QToD in mainstream settings

The role of the QToD in early years

Revised Quality Standards for Assistive Listening Technology

The BATOD website hosts the revised publication. The ***Quality Standards for Assistive Listening Technology: The use of wireless remote microphone systems to support easier listening*** was published by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) in collaboration with the Assistive Listening Technology Working Group (ALTWG) in September 2025. It can be accessed from BATOD webpage www.batod.org.uk/information/2025-quality-standards-for-assistive-listening-technology-the-use-of-wireless-remote-microphone-systems-to-support-easier-listening

This resource is split into two parts:

- A set of Quality Standards relating to the use of wireless remote microphone systems – commonly known as radio aids
- A set of Good Practice Guides containing practical information and strategies to achieve these Quality Standards, which are available on the ALTWG section of the BATOD website: www.batod.org.uk/altwg-quality-standards

BATOD is a long standing member of ALTWG and supports the statement that "recommendations from this resource should only be implemented after full consultation with parents, carers, and children and young people as appropriate."

BATOD North (England) Study Day

Kim Davies provides an overview of the 2025 Study Day 'Deaf education: Crafting connections' themed event

As always the BATOD North (England) committee had secured a varied and exciting selection of workshops this year. There was plenty of time at the start of the day for delegates to meet and greet, enjoy refreshments and catch up with colleagues from across 'The North'.

To start the day with her (first-time) presentation, we invited Imy Harris as our keynote speaker.

Vogue model, Deaf advocate, and contestant on The Great Pottery Throw Down 2025

Imy was born deaf and growing up, she relied on hearing aids and lipreading for communication. In 2023 she had cochlear implant surgery and, as well as now being able to hear better than before, she can enjoy music clearly for the first time. When she left school, she travelled solo to Australia, Thailand, and Bali, which was challenging due to her disability and the language barriers. After returning home, she took a pottery class and became hooked. With her recent feature in the iconic British Vogue magazine and time on the popular *The Great Pottery Throw Down* (TV programme), we were keen to find out where this all started for Imy and her plans going forward.

After this emotive and truly heartfelt lived experience introduction to the day, we headed off for a break to regroup, reflect, and enjoy some more refreshments with friends.

Delegates then moved off into their pre-booked workshops. The Eventbrite booking system once again worked with great success and with BATOD North Committee members stationed at each room, we were able to guide everyone to their workshop choices with ease.

The morning workshop choices were: 'Making sense of auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder (ANSD) in infants'; 'National Deaf Children's Society – Keeping it REAL'; 'Deafness and dyslexia'; and this year, three Manchester Alumni presentations!

Making sense of auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder (ANSD) in infants

Kai Uus delivered a highly engaging and informative session on auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder (ANSD) in children, offering a clear overview of its complex and varied presentation. She explained that ANSD involves normal outer hair cell function but absent or abnormal auditory brain responses (ABR), with possible sites of dysfunction ranging from the inner hair cells to the auditory nerve and brainstem. Kai highlighted key risk factors including prematurity, low birth weight, hypoxia and genetic causes such as otoferlin, and noted that ANSD accounts for around 10% of permanent childhood hearing loss at birth.

Throughout the session, Kai explored the wide spectrum of outcomes seen in children with ANSD – from near normal auditory function to complete lack of sound awareness. She described the fluctuating nature of ANSD, including temperature sensitivity in some cases, and highlighted that many children experience significant difficulty with speech perception in noise due to impaired temporal resolution. Kai emphasised the value of cortical auditory evoked potentials (CAEPs) in predicting functional outcomes and outlined the challenges of fitting hearing aids when thresholds cannot be reliably estimated. She also discussed the circumstances in which cochlear implants may be effective as well as their limitations when the underlying lesion is central.

Kai concluded by touching on emerging developments in gene therapy, particularly relating to otoferlin and highlighted the importance of honest, clear communication with families. Her session provided a rich and accessible overview of current knowledge and clinical considerations in ANSD, leaving delegates with a deeper understanding of this complex condition. (Summary provided by Suzanne Gray)

National Deaf Children's Society – Keeping it REAL

This workshop was presented by Faith Robyn and Katie Hyatt who are Chapter Leads for the new National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Connector Model.

Faith started the workshop discussing the trial of the REAL (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) projects in Manchester and Hull. The REAL project is an evidence-based programme that focuses on four strands of literacy: environmental print, books, early writing and oral language/communication. There are four sessions, a launch, and celebration event. The sessions have been adapted by the NDCS to be used with deaf children aged 0–5 years. NDCS overcame any barriers that families had by providing all the resources needed, laptop loans, taxis, interpreters, and dongles for internet access. The research following the trials was very positive and indicated that 90% of parents that joined the project recognised more literacy opportunities every day. After the successful trials, NDCS would like to roll this out further. They are looking at providing Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) face-to-face training opportunities and looking at providing grants for resources to local authorities for running the project.

The last part of the workshop discussed the new NDCS Connector Model. They are still recruiting in some areas, and other areas are up and running. The idea is that the Community Connector in the area will work with families of deaf children and sensory services to provide further support to families, especially in the early years. (Summary provided by Jess Allen) Kim Davis

Manchester alumni

The quality of the Manchester alumni research studies was so high this year that Ali decided to invite three speakers to share their fantastic work with us.

Romaphobia – language stereotyping

Andrea Varey shared her own heritage and experiences with the group as a preface to her study. She spoke so passionately and confidently on the topic of language and stereotyping, linked to our deaf traveller children. She explored many ill-conceived, negative terms, and conventions, their implications, their exclusivity (for our children) and the assumptions being faced by many of our deaf children and young people (CYP) based on their perceived ethnicity. She talked us through the barriers being faced on a daily basis, the isolation, and mistrust that has been built over many years.

She then spoke with positivity and confidence around how her case study can support our services to move forward and remove educational barriers for these young learners. Andrea offered us practical ideas to make, shape and influence the future and we all felt more confident and positive in our approach to ensuring that we all prioritise change and best practice for the future.

Pen pals

Emily Parke delivered a modern and accessible approach to pen pals. She explored practical approaches and shared case study evidence and materials to highlight the success of the programme in Leeds. Emily referenced the research and success (and potential pitfalls) of previous incarnations, while moving us forward into the 21st century in terms of how we can use pen pals to support writing, language development, pupil self-confidence, and create connections for our deaf CYP.

There were excellent tips and ideas for facilitating sessions, developing an inclusive approach and curriculum links to the fun and creative ways she has devised to build these relationships for some of the children on her caseload.

The 'pay-it-forward' element for future proofing the system was especially well received by the delegates and there were many questions and shared ideas highlighting just how important and excited the group were with this topic.

Early years deaf play groups

Natasha Carlton completed the session for us with her superb delivery on early years (EY) deaf play groups. She outlined her work unpicking and promoting the caregiver coaching model, and she took time to highlight the language development opportunities and high-quality, meaningful interactions that can be developed when these sessions are made available.

There were tips and ideas to maximise the opportunities and how to encourage and build confidence throughout for the caregivers involved. While the QToD can provide the 'keys', it will be the caregivers who ultimately bring the time, experience, skills and energy to the sessions.

The coaching model was broken down into five steps. The huge benefits of early intervention were woven throughout this session. Natasha also took care to note the importance of high-quality pairings and self-reflection to develop skills.

Empowering parents and supporting them in developing their skills and expertise is integral to language development. High-quality, meaningful interactions that build the family bond can support and develop confident and happy deaf CYP.

This was a jam-packed session with lots of relevant and challenging ideas shared and discussed. Though time was short, we ensured there were opportunities for Q&As and for the delegates to share their ideas, thoughts, and practice around these three very different, yet very relevant areas. (Summary provided by Kim Davis.)

Deafness and dyslexia

The 'Deafness and dyslexia' workshop led by Jane Angus from Discover Dyslexia was a really engaging informative workshop around what dyslexia is and strategies to support deaf learners. Jane is a QToD from Salford and was clear around definitions and the impact of dyslexia. Dyslexia, a specific learning difficulty, is more than just a reading and writing issue and Jane went through this in detail. A quick myth busters quiz was followed by information such as there is a 50/50 split between girls and boys who have dyslexia, and 10% of the population will have dyslexia.

In terms of deafness, it is important that we avoid literacy difficulties being incorrectly attributed to a child's deafness and how there is a cocktail of characteristics – is it deafness, dyslexia, or both? Jane shared ten important classroom strategies and interventions to consider including immersing pupils in words, access to texts, personalising the learning, and writing on Post-it notes so that things can be moved around. Jane's enthusiasm for supporting learners was clear and all those present came away with ideas as well as many things to consider in their practice.

Another workshop following on would be well received as there was so much more content on this topic and discussion to be had. It is highly recommended as an area of consideration for QToDs to look at and consider how strategies can be used in positive practice with many deaf pupils www.discoverdyslexia.co.uk (Summary provided by Marie Pearson)

As always, the morning sessions flew by, and it was time for lunch. As with last year, we timetabled the preferred longer lunch, the food selection was sensational, and indeed feedback from this year has informed us that this was the best range of refreshments so far.

The lunch break allowed time to talk with colleagues, and to browse the always amazing exhibitor stands. There was plenty of time to chat with the sponsors and learn about the new and exciting changes and developments within the world of deaf education. There were some really sensational developments and resources to peruse and of course plenty of freebies – as teachers we do like a freebie!

Our afternoon session began by hearing from our sponsors, moving seamlessly into the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Here we were treated to a noteworthy delivery from our BATOD President, Claire Jacks, and National Executive Officer (NEO), Teresa Quail.

After a quick comfort break we moved to the afternoon workshops: 'Inspiring deaf young people through sport: Destination Deaflympics' and 'Multi-sensory impairment and technology in everyday life'.

Inspiring deaf young people through sport: Destination Deaflympics

Becky Price and Shannon Howarth recently delivered an energetic and inspiring session dedicated to raising the profile of Deaflympics and engaging deaf children in sport across the United Kingdom. Their mission is clear: to ensure every deaf person has the opportunity to be active, inspired, and supported in sport – whether for fun, fitness, or competing on the world stage.

The need for this initiative is undeniable. Research shows that 47.8% of deaf children fail to meet the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity, and 40% of deaf young people experience mental health challenges, compared to 25% of their hearing peers. These figures highlight the urgent need for inclusive, accessible opportunities that promote both physical and mental well-being.

Destination Deaflympics aims to change that. Designed to inspire 8–16-year-olds and their families, the programme raises awareness of deaf sport, DeaflympicsGB, and the global Deaflympics movement. In the lead-up to the Deaflympics, a free programme was rolled out to deaf schools, resource bases, community groups, and sports clubs. The initiative offers practical resources, including activity cards, to help teachers and coaches create engaging sessions tailored for deaf participants.

During the recent workshop, QToDs explored these resources and collaborated on ways to implement them effectively. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive: the activities were

inclusive, accessible, and fun. Some peripatetic teachers even proposed hosting events where deaf pupils could come together to celebrate Deaflympics while enjoying sports activities. Deaf schools have already embraced the programme, reporting enthusiastic participation, and a growing interest in Deaflympics among their pupils.

This is more than a short-term project – it's a movement. By increasing physical activity and fostering a sense of community, Destination Deaflympics is paving the way for a future where deaf people are empowered through sport. (Summary provided by Claire Cunliffe)

Multi-sensory (MSI) awareness

Michelle Jones, Head of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support and mandatory qualification (MQ), MSI Trainer, presented an interesting, practical and informative workshop and led us through:

- an understanding of the unique nature of MSI/deaf blindness as a distinct disability
- addressing misconceptions that the nature is a combined sight and hearing loss only
- practical ideas to take back to the workplace.

Michelle took us through the terminologies we may have come across, concluding that multi-sensory impairment (MSI) describes children in education. An adult social care term used is deaf blindness or dual-sensory impairment. There are also a range of terms used which define varying degrees of hearing and visual loss, such as multiply disabled visual impairment (MDVI).

An emphasis was placed on the uniqueness of MSI, which requires access and learning through the senses. Potential causes and conditions were outlined and discussed, sharing experiences of the group. These include genetics, prematurity, illness.

The impact of MSI was then explored. This affects:

- moving around
- communication and interaction
- access to the environment
- well-being.

The approach to addressing the needs of children and young people requires:

- the world to be brought to them
- a high level of support in forming early bonding
- a greater emphasis on shared play
- thinking outside the box
- a total communication approach
- a responsive environment
- responsive communication, eg reciprocal turn-taking
- consistency of approach.

Michelle highlighted ways in which this could be achieved: through preparation for learning boxes; use of tactile systems such as sign; or learning hand-under-hand as a non-intrusive way of demonstrating and giving confidence.

We then had an opportunity to try out hand-under-hand learning and supported teaching for ourselves. This led to further discussion and sharing of experiences and ideas to take back with us.

Further practical ideas shared and welcomed by the group included:

- how isolating a learning or social situation can be, and how not to over-support
- the importance of a young person sharing how they learn with others, leading to peer awareness
- giving a very young children a purpose, eg to raise their heads in hospital and interact with a person or something of interest
- use of a little room or reactive box – interesting objects hanging so a child connects with them and learns how to interact with them. (Summary provided by Clare Armitage)

Technology in everyday life

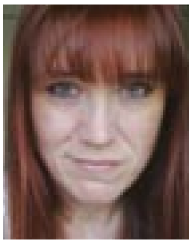
Living loud: A Deaf journey through technology and identity

Grace Pinson-Bradley, a profoundly Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) user, provided an honest and powerful workshop exploring the intersection of deaf identity and technology. Drawing from personal experience, Grace shared their journey growing up Deaf – navigating hearing aids, implants, and assistive listening devices – while staying rooted in the Deaf community and BSL. Grace discussed how technology is seen depends on the individual: it can be a tool, bridge, or part of their identity or it can be all three. This workshop offered a unique perspective on how technology shapes communication, access, and identity, inviting open discussion, reflection, and learning for all. (Summary provided by Jess Allen)

After a terrific day of connecting, we all came back together for the closing remarks. The BATOD North Committee representatives thanked all participants, delegates, interpreters, and the venue's organisers for keeping the day running so efficiently. As usual there was a 'call out' for more committee members (a great response this year). Evaluation QR codes were available to ensure that views could be captured and that we can keep building momentum in the North and support or planning for 2026.

The BATOD North Committee would like to take the opportunity to offer special thanks to everyone involved in the day (and those who supported but could not attend). Extra special thanks to Ali and Claire (co-chairs) for making this such a special and worthwhile day.

The demanding work of planning the BATOD North study day 2026 starts now… see you there!



Kim Davis is the Lead QToD for the Leeds Sensory Service. She is passionate about developing language fluency and effective communication as a basis for cognitive, social, and emotional development. She has worked throughout her career to champion equity so that the children and young people are happy, healthy and have the opportunities and support they need to reach their full potential.

BATOD's 'exam access' working group

BATOD's Statutory assessment and examination access arrangements working group (SA&EAAWG) outlines its work

The BATOD archive, which dates back to the early 1900s, reflects a long history among deaf education professionals of advocating for a fair playing field for deaf children and young people (CYP) in assessments and examinations. The BATOD magazines and National Executive Council (NEC) meeting records from the 1980s onwards reflect the role of BATOD in raising the awareness of the reasonable adjustments needs to be considered by the awarding bodies, regulatory bodies, educational settings, and specialist deaf education workforce. Paul Simpson, National Executive Officer (NEO, 1999–2023) was a staunch representative in many stakeholder meetings and training sessions in this area. Paul's legacy continues through the work of the United Kingdom (UK)-wide **Statutory assessment and examination access arrangements working group (SA&EAAWG)**.

The SA&EAAWG plays a critical role in providing support, guidance, and resources, and shaping equitable assessment practices for deaf CYP from source with the awarding bodies to the practice in the exam room. Its remit covers statutory assessments, national examinations, and the consistency of access arrangements across the UK.

The group's work is rooted in a learner's **normal way of working** and reviewing challenges and inconsistencies in assessment and exam access arrangements across all the age ranges, ie early years foundation profile to university assessments. They meet online three to four times each year, with additional meetings for those who volunteer for any sub-group activity. Some of the group's activity is email based, eg a collective response to a query from a member.

The SA&EAAWG brings together practising practitioners: Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) from specialist deaf schools, deaf resource provisions, local authority sensory support services, educational audiologists, dual qualified QToDs/special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos), exam officers, a retired communication support worker (CSW), BATOD NEO, BATOD Accredited Language Modifier (BALM) co-ordinator and representatives from the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) to ensure fair, evidence-based access to statutory assessments and examinations for deaf CYP. The group has long standing representation on the Ofqual Access Consultation Forum (ACF) and regularly engages with the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and Qualifications Scotland which replaced the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) on 1st February 2026. Different approaches across awarding bodies create challenges for consistency, emphasising the need for clearer national guidance and cross-agency dialogue.

Over recent years, the educational landscape has seen significant shifts, particularly with the expansion of digital assessments, evolving regulatory frameworks, and heightened awareness of inclusion. SA&EAAWG's work therefore addresses both immediate challenges and long-term systemic change, ensuring assessment practices remain fair, evidence-based, and embedded in the principle of normal ways of working.

Current areas of focus include:

- use of British Sign Language (BSL) as an access arrangement. This has been an established arrangement in Scotland for the last 20 years. The group appreciated learning about the Scottish system from the research conducted by Eileen Burns who sadly passed away in October 2025 before completing her Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- clarifying 50% extra time rules where confusion persists
- ensuring timed assessments are applied consistently
- ensuring compliant invigilation and parity in the interpretation of terms that can be signed or not in assessments
- interpreting JCQ rules for deaf learners, covering topics like read-aloud arrangements and separate invigilation
- considerations for use of technology, emphasising the need for learners to be supported to make informed decisions, respecting these may not align with the professionals' view of what is optimal reasonable adjustment
- gathering deaf-specific examples for timetable variations, complementing existing vision impairment examples presented in the JCQ **Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments** 2025/2026 publication.
- reiterating with awarding bodies and regularity bodies that the removal of hearing aids/cochlear implant speech processor due to misunderstandings relating to Bluetooth is discriminatory practice
- planning the third webinar event on examination access arrangements. The two webinars, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC) in 2021 and 2024, were popular. The post-event access to the recording assisted delegates with department planning and narratives with the settings they supported.

SA&EAAWG achievements and progress to date include:

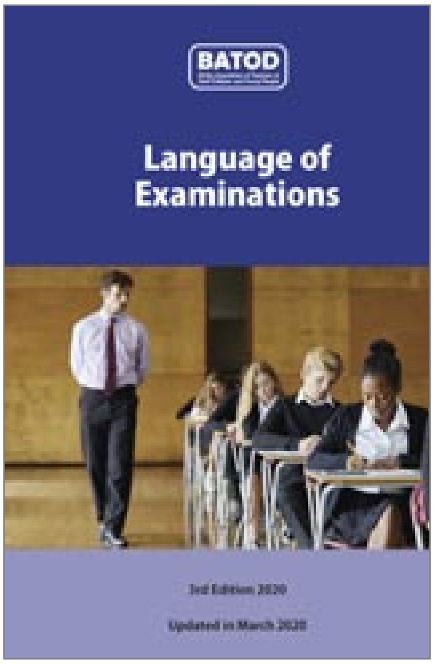
- influencing JCQ regulations (eg communication professionals, read-aloud provisions)
- delivering webinars (currently every two to three years with SSC)
- contributions of grassroots advocates whose research and advocacy will continue to inform practice
- contribution to consultations (eg BSL GCSE, Ofqual's 'Introducing principles into the General Conditions of Recognition', Department for Education curriculum, and assessment review)

- raising awareness about the need for specialist advice in exam access arrangements for deaf learners
- identifying areas of concern and creating discussions with awarding bodies and regulators to find solutions, eg a current task – standardise the interpretation of ‘technical words’ in exams, ensuring consistency in what must be fingerspelled or signed
- collaboration with awarding bodies and the Sign Bilingual Consortium to develop clear examples and best practices
- responding to queries from parents, teachers, and settings
- anonymising queries and the responses from the working group as posts on the BATOD website for wider benefit.

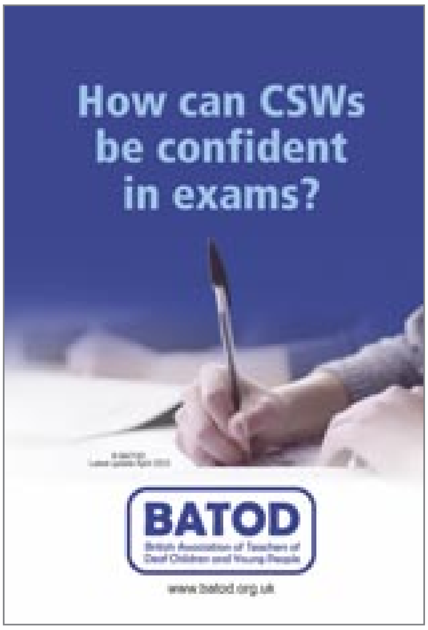
The group aims to influence national policy through consultation responses:

- contributing to the BATOD/NDCS Curriculum and assessment review calls for evidence
- leading on the response to Principle 2 of the Ofqual consultation ‘Introducing principles into the General Conditions of Recognition’
- Ofqual’s consultation on the use of formulae and equation sheets for GCSE Mathematics and equations for GCSE Physics and Combined Science in 2024
- Ofqual’s consultation about on-screen assessments (pending).

The group also aims to create and revise publications and resources. In response to queries over recent years, the group has contributed to a new publication by BATOD, in partnership with the British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA), with input from deaf musicians, on supporting access to music in lessons and examinations.



Past BATOD publications have included ‘Language of examinations 3rd edition’ and ‘Guidance for writing accessible examination questions’. Until 2022, Paul had co-authored, with Caireen Sutherland, the ‘Ensuring equal access to public examinations for candidates with sensory impairment’ published by National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP). Andrew Owen, current SA&EAAWG member, a retired Senior CSW and BSL/English interpreter, Deputy Chair of the former charity, adept, and revised the former adept publication as a BATOD publication ‘How can CSWs be confident in exams?’



Paul also co-created, with Rachel O’Neil and Nicky Weightman, the training route for BALMs. On successful completion of both the Tier 1 and 2 courses, BATOD members are invited to become a member of the BATOD panel of exam language modifiers. BATOD currently works with a number of exam boards including AQA, CCEA, NCFE, Pearson/Edexcel and WJEC.

Another significant legacy aspect of Paul’s work is the opportunity to shape key documents, such as the JCQ Access Arrangements guidance, which outlines normal ways of working principles, application procedures, technological allowances, and the responsibilities of SENCos, QToDs, and exam centre leads.

The SA&EAAWG continues to welcome members, flagging queries and concerns. Contact the group via exec@batod.org.uk

Teresa Quail is the BATOD National Executive Officer. Jane Morgan is a QToD based in a Welsh resource provision and is a BATOD Cymru member.

DeafEdUK forum

BATOD changed the QToD forum name to **DeafEdUK (DeafEducationUK)** to reflect the broader range of professionals welcome to join the forum. BATOD will accept requests from Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People undertaking the mandatory qualification, Educational Audiologists, Communication Support Workers, Audiology Technicians, support staff in EY/Primary, Secondary and Post 16.

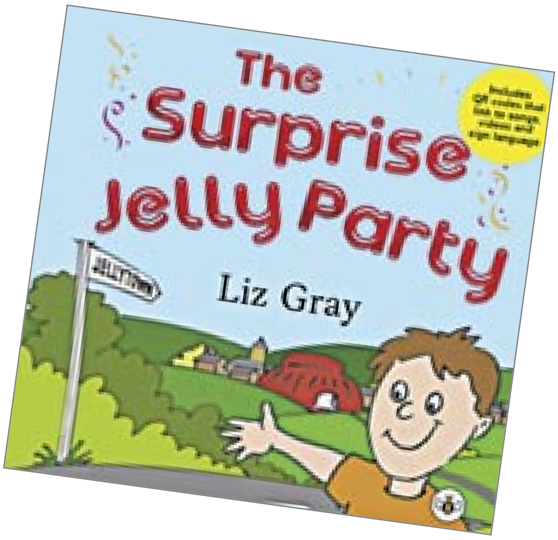
The forum is free for professionals working in Deaf Education to join. Please do make colleagues aware of this valued online discussion platform.

www.batod.org.uk/about-us/tod-email-forum

Review

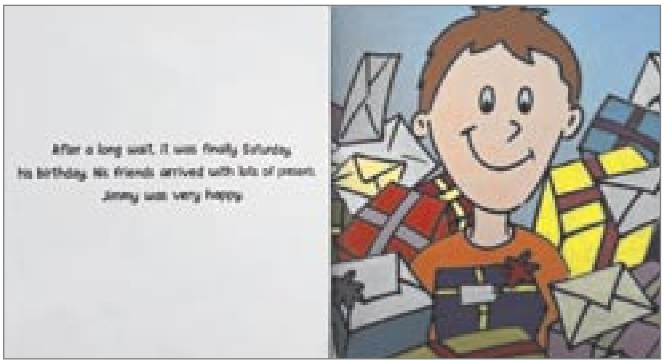
The surprise jelly party

Author: Liz Gray
Date of Publication: 2026
Publisher: Bumblebee Books
ISBN: 978-1-78796-080-0
Reviewer: Hannah Morgan – Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People, Vale of Glamorgan Council



This book is a story about a young boy (Jimmy Jones) who lives in Jellytown and he is going to have a birthday party. He plans the party with his family and friends, but the town has sold out of jelly. However, a delivery of jelly arrives at his party and surprises Jimmy and his friends.

The pages have bright and colourful illustrations with clear text.



After a long wait, it was finally Saturday,
his birthday. His friends arrived with lots of presents.
Jimmy was very happy.

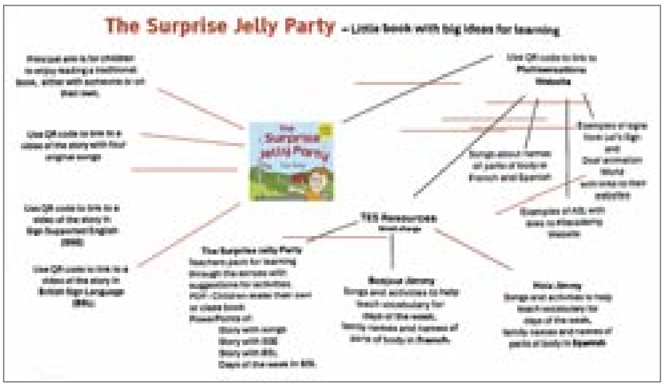
Initially, I was surprised that the book was small, but the author has explained that this is so that it is "easier to carry around with their devices". The book is aimed at young children; I think it is suitable for four-to-eight-year-olds, and it could also be used with older children who have additional needs. I think it is a shame that none of the characters seem to have hearing aids or cochlear implants.

This book is unique as the author has included QR codes. These codes are provided at the beginning of the book and link to the story presented in Sign Supported English and British Sign Language (BSL). The author, who is a retired teacher and mother of a son with special needs, wanted to create a book that is a multi-sensory experience and inclusive, not just for deaf children but that it also enables all to learn some sign language. At the back of the book are images of the BSL signs for key words used in the story and days of the week with QR codes.

Another unique feature of the story is that there are four original songs to go with certain parts of the story and there are also QR codes for these. The songs have accompanying actions.

There are also resources available to accompany the book in the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES) resources.

The author included this with the copy of my book:



The Surprise Jelly Party – Little book with big ideas for learning

The book could lend itself to a variety of activities/tasks to support language development, such as, colours, days of the week, sequencing, the 'j' sound, problem-solving, making lists, emotions. As the author states it is a "little book with big ideas for learning".

Facebook group for Educational CSWs (UK)

A new support group for Educational Communication Support Workers (CSWs) has been set-up. Regardless of where you work or what qualifications you hold, all Educational CSWs and teaching assistants working in a support role with a deaf child/young person can join.

www.facebook.com/share/ExXCg5kd5wscTXyb/

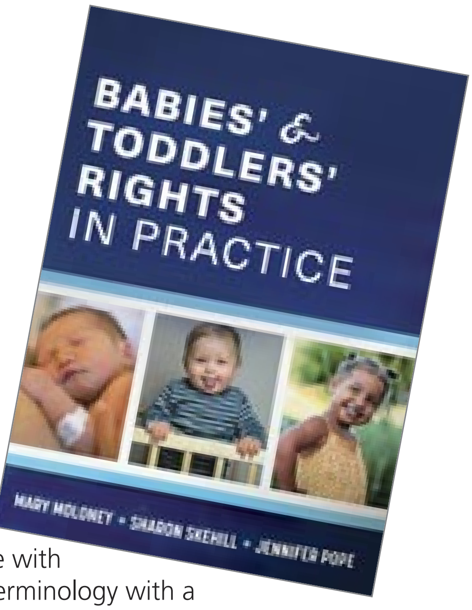
Missed a publication

Occasionally we learn from members that they have not received their journal or magazine. If you are concerned you may have missed an issue, please contact us as soon as possible exec@batod.org.uk

We will endeavour to send a replacement as soon as possible. However, if we are not informed of a missing issue for sometime, we may be unable to provide a replacement.

Review

Babies' and toddlers' rights in practice



Author:	Mary Moloney, Sharon Skehill, Jennifer Pope
Date of Publication:	2025
Publisher:	Boru Press Ltd
ISBN:	ISBN-10-173845455X ISBN-13-978-1738454556
Reviewer:	Jane Peters, QToD and Head of Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service

Babies and toddlers' rights in practice is, in my view, a well-researched and informative book that goes beyond exploring what is good practice when working with babies and toddlers through its focus on the fundamental rights all children have from birth. It is proposed by the authors that adherence to these principles will enable all children to thrive regardless of their economic, social, political, or cultural circumstances.

This fresh perspective, linked directly to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), explores through exploration of a range of topics the four domains that are set out in the UNCRC. These are defined as Protection, Provision, Development, and Participation, and they are the key golden threads that run through each chapter of the book.

The book starts with the importance of the first three years of life on nurturing relationships and brain development in this period of neural plasticity and synaptic pruning. The strengthening of neural connections through repeated experiences, the quality of the child's earliest environments and the role of genes as the blueprint for brain development reminds practitioners of the role those around the child play in supporting this development through safe and trusted relationships.

"Babies and toddlers need more than an adult to be present around them and occupying in play is not enough. A child requires participation in progressively more complex reciprocal activity on a regular basis with those they are in a trusted relationship with."

The book goes on to look at other topics such as holistic development, participatory rights, diversity, equity, and inclusion, observation, and babies as global citizens. In each chapter there are practical scenarios and activities to engage with alongside meaningful practical examples to help practitioners consider how they interact with children on a day-to-day basis in their setting. Challenge is provided to shift the perspective of viewing a baby or toddler as an individual with needs, to an image of the child as a competent developing individual who has a voice, who thrives on positive interaction and who requires nurture rather than care.

The writing style and format of the book I find is conversational and interactive with continual posing of questions for the reader to consider by asking them to draw on their own experiences and how this relates back to the child's rights. The concise introduction in each chapter sets the scene with clear explanation of terminology with a section on 'Key learning points' highlighting the important take home messages. The 'Reflection points' and 'Think about' aspects in each chapter are an integral part of the structure of the book and are a helpful tool to maintain engagement and practical application of the content. This focus on challenging the reader to reflect on how they interact with children in their role through the child's eyes and experiences, I found very insightful with the practice scenarios bringing to life how the rights of the child can be compromised by the challenges of practical management of everyday situations and environments.

As Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People, we know about the importance of the early experiences of babies and toddlers as the foundation for holistic development. This book is not aimed at practitioners who work with children who are deaf; yet I believe it is a useful resource which takes us back to some basic fundamentals. There is a challenge about pedagogy – 'the what we do and the way we do it' – in terms of supporting development and learning of the babies and toddlers we visit and how we work with families through seeing things through the lens of the child.

There is also a question around how we listen to the voice of the child who is deaf when they are at the early stages of language development. How do we advocate for them so that others understand their voice in early years settings or at home? Rethinking how babies express their views both verbally and non-verbally can be reflected in our work with families as together we attune, listen, and respond positively to their voice. We also have a role in supporting the right for our children to access early years education, which understands their needs as a young person who is deaf and who requires not just reasonable adjustments but to be immersed in a language-rich environment, where children thrive and where play is nurtured and inclusion is facilitated.

This is a useful book which is both informative and practical and ideal for those who are new to working with babies and toddlers. It is also for reflective practitioners who want to consider what we mean by the rights of all babies and toddlers through the child's lens.

Review

Let's go for a sound walk

Author: Karen Hardwicke
Illustrator: Lucy Rogers
Publisher: AVID Language
ISBN-10: 1913968782
ISBN-130: 978-1913968786
Price: Hardback £17.50; Kindle £10.99
Reviewer: Dawn Lewis, Peripatetic Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD), Herefordshire.

General overview: A colourful children's book for early years that explores the sounds around us.

The illustrations are vibrant and nostalgic, with a distinctive 1970s American style that sets the book apart from many AI-generated alternatives. The story follows two children, one with a visible cochlear implant, and introduces a range of indoor and outdoor environmental sounds through both text and imagery.

A key strength of the book is the additional material at the end, which includes clear examples of the Ling sounds, accompanying icons, and a helpful set of seven tips for reading with children.

I would particularly recommend this book to parents supporting a child who is beginning their hearing-aid journey. The representation of hearing-aid users is positive yet unobtrusive, and the guidance on testing Ling sounds is especially valuable. This can empower children to better understand and communicate their hearing needs.

I also plan to use this resource with a colleague who works with families who use English as an additional language. Sharing the book through modelling and interpretation will support families in developing a clearer understanding of their child's hearing loss.

The book is equally valuable for early years practitioners, offering a practical resource for introducing young children to the concept of listening skills and environmental awareness. It can be used effectively during sound-walk activities to help children identify, compare, and describe the sounds around them, supporting both language development and auditory discrimination. In addition, the book provides a helpful entry point for discussing hearing-aid technology in an age-appropriate way, enabling teachers to normalise assistive devices and promote inclusive conversations about how different children access sound in learning environments.

The writer is both a parent of a deaf child and a QToD, so this is why the book is pitched to fill that exact gap in the market for children's books with family support tips. The illustrator is also Deaf, hence the realistic pictures of the child with cochlear implants, putting them on the side and removing the external magnet when banging pots and pans.

I have also read, on a certain selling website, that with each sale a donation from every sale will be made by the author to GB Deaf Football to help keep the team playing.

Quick evaluation: Quality and Value for money: 5/5, Educational usefulness and Overall score: 4/5.

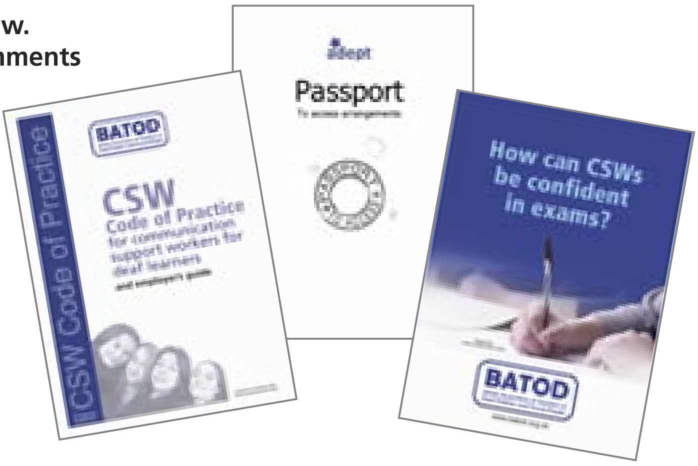
Feedback requested on the CSW publications

These CSW specific publications are due for review. BATOD and author, Andrew Owen, welcome comments on the content. Please contact exec@batod.org.uk

Code of Practice
www.batod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CSW-CodeOfPractice.pdf

How can CSWs be confident in exams?
www.batod.org.uk/resource/passport-to-access

Passport to access – recommended access arrangement requisites
www.batod.org.uk/resource/how-can-csws-be-confident-in-exams



BATOD was there representing you…

Between the NEC meetings, members of BATOD attend various meetings that are of particular interest to Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs). This list is not exhaustive.
Your representatives at the meetings listed (as known at the time of writing) included: Sarah Angove, Lisa Bull, Sibel Djemal, Steph Halder, Claire Jacks, Martine Monksfield, Andrew Owen, Teresa Quail, Sheila Squires and Stuart Whyte.

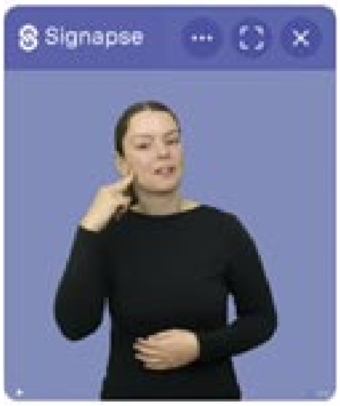
Date	External participants	Venue
December		
11	Ofqual – on screen assessment stakeholder briefing	Teams
January		
20	Association of noise consultants meeting	Teams
22	Department for Education (DfE) Assistive technology roundtable	London
February		
6	National Sensory Impairment (NatSIP) Steering group	Zoom
13	GL Assessment	Teams
17	Speech, Language and Communication Alliance	Teams
20	Trailblazer forum (Wales)	Teams
23	National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) Scotland/BATOD	Teams
25	Deafness and Hearing loss Alliance	Zoom
25	NatSIP forums meeting	Zoom
March		
4	Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE)	Teams
6	Ofqual Access consultation forum	Teams
16	Parliamentary event 'Deaf Voices: Breaking Through Barriers in Education'	London
19	National Special Educational Needs and Disability forum	Teams
25	British Deaf Association’s Parliamentary Reception	London
26	DCAL Advisory Board Meeting	Zoom

Please inform the National Executive Officer, Teresa Quail via exec@batod.org.uk if you know of any meetings where you feel representation on behalf of QToDs would be of benefit. Although there is no guarantee that BATOD would be able to attend every meeting, situations could be monitored and the interests of QToDs represented.

Revised ‘Moving towards using positive language around Deafness/Hard of Hearing’

The BATOD and Deaf Teachers (DToD) ‘Moving towards using positive language around Deafness/Hard of Hearing’ document’. It is available to download from the BATOD website
www.batod.org.uk/information/batod-and-deaf-teachers-publication-positive-use-of-language

The document is intended for BATOD members to support them in approaching local authorities (LAs) or settings where the terminology hearing impaired (HI) is used.
You may wish to add to this or amend according to the needs or context of the area/setting you are approaching.



BATOD membership

BATOD Membership fees 2025-6

BATOD activities are funded from your membership fee and some advertising income.

Colleagues who share your Magazine and Journal also benefit from BATOD negotiations with government and other influential bodies – but they are not contributing!

Full details of membership are available on the website and new members are able to join online at www.batod.org.uk

ToDs in training will be entitled to a £20 reduction in annual membership fee. This applies for the two years of the course.

The BATOD Treasurer may be contacted via treasurer@batod.org.uk

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