

CYPE(6)-13-23 - Papur i'w nodi 18

Dear Committee,

We are contacting the Committee to highlight the National Deaf Children's Society Cymru's warning of a looming educational crisis for deaf learners in Wales if the decline in the number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) is not reversed.

National Deaf Children's Society Cymru has already written to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language regarding the matter. We would welcome the Committee's support in pressing for a workable solution to increase the number of Teachers of the Deaf on a sustainable long-term basis.

Teachers of the Deaf play a vital role in supporting deaf children by visiting them at home, in the early years and at school or college to give them specialist teaching. They advise parents, teachers and other school staff on how best to support deaf children's learning.

However, recent research¹ shows that Wales has lost 1 in 5 Teachers of the Deaf since 2011 and that one-third of them are set to retire within the next decade or so. The service is already struggling with capacity, and this is set to worsen if the decline in Teacher of the Deaf numbers is allowed to continue.

To close the educational attainment gap of up to 20% between deaf learners and their hearing peers, and to properly provide early years support for families with newly identified deaf children, more Teachers of the Deaf are needed. With the right support in place, deaf children can achieve anything their hearing peers can, but this isn't currently happening and many fall behind.

Under the Additional Learning Needs Code, local authorities are responsible for planning their ALN workforce and are required to keep this under review (Chapter 7).

This Cross-Party Group calls for a clear steer from Welsh Government to local authorities on the need for Teachers of the Deaf, to secure the improvements we need to see in the educational outcomes of deaf children. Local authorities must take this into account in their workforce planning and address the lack of provision.

Professionals tell National Deaf Children's Society Cymru that much of the work around the implementation of the ALN Reforms for deaf children falls to Teachers of the Deaf, in addition to their previous duties. One professional described this transferral process as "*a mammoth task*".

Professionals across Wales have indicated that there is a real need for more Teachers of the Deaf to ensure smooth implementation of the Reforms and embed support for deaf learners. To ensure there are enough appropriately qualified Teachers of the Deaf for services to use, urgent funding is needed now to increase the depth in the workforce for local authorities to rely on.

We ask the Committee to:

- Engage with National Deaf Children's Society Cymru on its campaign for an increase in the number of Teachers of the Deaf.
- Request that Welsh Government provides local authorities with a clear steer that they must genuinely and rigorously assess their Teacher of the Deaf provision as required under the ALN Code and commit to reviewing this assessment.

¹ <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/being-deaf-friendly/information-for-professionals/research-and-data/consortium-for-research-into-deaf-education-crude-reports/>

- Call for Welsh Government to provide local authorities with a short-term funding uplift to address the decline in the Qualified Teachers of the Deaf workforce.
- Consider the value of an apprenticeship system as a new route for qualification as a Teacher of the Deaf, such as that being developed in England.