

**Y Grŵp Trawsbleidiol
ar Faterion Pobl
Fyddar**

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**Cross-Party Group on
Deaf Issues**

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GOHEBIAETH CORRESPONDENCE

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12 November 2023

Dear Members of the Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee

GCSE British Sign Language

At the Cross-Party Group for Deaf Issues (the Group) meeting on 30 June 2023, it was agreed that the Chair would write to you on behalf of the Group to bring to your attention significant concerns raised regarding the introduction of the GCSE British Sign Language (BSL) and its potential impact on deaf education in Wales.

During our discussion, Group members highlighted the issue of the GCSE BSL set to be introduced in England in September 2025. While the Department of Education in London launched a consultation on this matter, it is crucial to note that Qualifications Wales has announced the development of a 'Made-for-Wales' GCSE in BSL. The focus of our agenda item shifted to address the Welsh GCSE BSL specifically.

The Group has concerns regarding the potential shortage of qualified teachers for the new GCSE BSL. In England, where the GCSE BSL will be available from September 2025, there are worries that hearing teachers may be recruited to teach BSL due to a lack of deaf teachers. This could pose a significant challenge, as these hearing teachers may not have the requisite levels of BSL skill to effectively teach the language. We wish to emphasise the importance of prioritising the development

of a generation of fluent BSL users, particularly among deaf children, before rushing into the implementation of a GCSE in BSL in Wales.

The British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People Cymru representative of the Group also noted that Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People are already receiving requests for teaching resources, and there is a need to establish foundational support before introducing the GCSE in Wales.

In light of these concerns, the Group agreed that the Chair would write to the Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee, the Welsh Joint Education Committee and Qualifications Wales to express our reservations and seek further clarification on the readiness and implications of introducing GCSE BSL in Wales.

Therefore, on behalf of the Group, I kindly request that you consider these important matters during your scrutiny of the GCSE BSL initiative. We believe it is crucial to ensure that the introduction of GCSE BSL is well-planned and considers the unique needs and challenges faced by the Deaf community in Wales.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your insights and guidance on ensuring the successful implementation of GCSE BSL in Wales, and to receiving your response accordingly.

Yours faithfully

Mark Isherwood

Mark Isherwood MS

Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Deaf Issues