

P-06-1430 Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 24 October 2024

Thank you for your recent communication regarding the above petition and for sharing the response received from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle, regarding the same petition.

I am aware that you have received a response from the National Deaf Children's Society and I would like to take the opportunity to echo what they have said. In my opinion the response from Lynne Neagle doesn't sufficiently address the significant issues that deaf children in Wales are currently facing and will continue to face for years to come unless positive changes and financial commitments are implemented.

As Hazel Badjie clearly highlighted in her response, the number of Teachers of the Deaf in Wales is falling and will continue to do so as a large proportion of the work force are nearing retirement age. As a parent of two deaf children, it is extremely disheartening, in fact devastating, to think that deaf Welsh children are not going to get the support they need to fulfil their potential. The relationship both my children have formed with their specialist support is wonderful to watch and the highly specialised support and guidance offered to mainstream teachers from the Sensory Support Service is invaluable.

As a mainstream educational practitioner of 17 years, I find myself in a very interesting position. I am acutely aware of the lack of deaf awareness and deaf education training that mainstream teachers receive whilst studying on a PGCE course, but also as part of any CPD programme or inset training. Historically, I have taught several deaf students in my own mainstream setting and will admit to having had no prior understanding of the barriers they face every day, as well as having no experience of suitable strategies to fully support their education. Obviously, that has changed significantly since my two children were identified as deaf. Having the experience of a frankly underprepared mainstream teacher and a parent of deaf children has clearly indicated the gaping chasm and lack of supportive scaffolding for deaf children compared to their hearing peers.

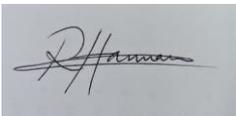
Bearing this in mind I was devastated to hear that my government recently rejected recommendation 32 from the CYPE Inquiry which called for a clear delivery plan to address the gaps in specialist teaching posts for ToDs. If you saw the new mother and father in tears over the diagnosis of deafness followed by the hope and relief offered from the specialist team for not only that deaf child, but their entire family, you would not be satisfied with the response from Lynne Neagle either. With this in mind, I urge, no I beg you and the committee to keep the petition open and ask more questions of the Welsh Government. How do the Government intend to support deaf children in Wales? How do they intend to support an adequate

supply of specialist Teacher's of the Deaf when we are seeing dropping numbers and an aging workforce? How are Welsh Assembly Government planning to support my children to ensure that they are not disadvantaged compared to their hearing peers? Will you choose to support Lola and Rudi? Or will you choose to let them down?

Our family currently feel incredibly lucky to receive the wonderful support that our sensory service provides, but I fear that things won't always be this way. In the last 6 years the service has had vacant teacher of the Deaf posts which were not allowed to be advertised due to financial issues. How many other local authorities are facing the same problems? How many deaf children are affected by this vacant post?

I recently read the Misson: Probable white paper and I would like to share something from it that resonated with me. "Excellent listening and spoken language outcomes are probable for children with hearing loss when we do what it takes. Hearing healthcare professionals and families should shoot for the moon." As petition committee chair you have a chance to keep the petition open, push Welsh Assembly Government to answer some tougher questions and to help all deaf children in Wales and their families shoot for the moon, why would you not?

Yours ever hopefully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ros Hannam', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Ros Hannam