

Ann Jones AM
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay

3 July 2015

Dear *Ann*

Petition P-04-628 To Improve Access to Education and Services in British Sign Language

The Petitions Committee has been considering the following petition from DEFFO, which has collected 1,162 signatures.

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language to improve the quality of life for Deaf people of all ages.

Improve Access for families to learn BSL: When a child is diagnosed as being Deaf/hard of hearing parents should be offered free/subsidised BSL lessons (BSL level one costs approximately £300 per person). By using speech alone, Deaf children struggle/fail to develop communication skills missing important milestones. Learning other languages through BSL (English/Welsh) will improve the child's understanding and comprehension.

Introduce BSL on the National Curriculum: Deaf Children and young people who are taught BSL at an early age will have better access to their education and an improved wellbeing. BSL should be available in schools and taught by qualified Deaf teachers, for all to learn as this would achieve better access for all in society. We believe that BSL should be offered as a language for all learners as a qualification. GCSE Welsh (and other modern languages) are not always offered to Deaf students: this also needs to be improved.





Improving access to Education in BSL for Deaf Children and Young People: currently they have limited access to Education in BSL, and often experience under qualified support. There is a massive gap in the education of Deaf children, as many are wrongly treated as having a Learning Disability. This has a negative impact on their development in life, reducing independence with poor education, resulting in under-employment. They need adequately qualified Communication Support Workers available in school.

Making Services and resources accessible in BSL for Deaf young people: enabling BSL users to access information in their preferred language via digital resources to services such as Education, Health care, Social Services and public transport, giving them equality to access as an equivalent to Welsh Language access.

At our meeting on 2 June, the Committee agreed to draw the petition to the attention of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and, assuming it is referred to your Committee, to ask that DEFFO is included in any consultation on the forthcoming Bill on additional learning needs. However I recognise that in the intervening period, the Minister has announced his intention to consult on a draft Bill, with a view to introducing a Bill early in the new Assembly Term. Given that, should the Committee be considering undertaking any pre legislative work in this area, I would be grateful if you could bear the DEFFO petitioners in mind.

Further information on the Petitions Committee's consideration of the petition is available at:

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ielIssueDetails.aspx?Ild=12394&Opt=3>

I would be grateful if you could forward any response to the Committee's Clerking team at SeneddPetitions@Assembly.Wales

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William".

William Powell AC/AM
Cadeirydd/ Chair