

**P-06-1430 Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers - Correspondence from the Petitioner to Committee, 22 April 2025**



The National Deaf Children's Society welcomes the opportunity to contribute further to the Petitions Committee's work on Petition P-06-1430 - Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers. Following our review of the letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Education, we wish to recommend that the Committee keeps the petition open in order to allow the Welsh Government's Strategic Education Workforce Plan to be published and scrutinised.

We welcome the sentiments expressed by the Cabinet Secretary on the importance of skilled Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs). Given the drop in trained and qualified ToDs across Wales, as indicated by successive CRIDE reports and previously brought to the Committee's attention, this is we believe a step in the right direction and we hope this will result in a tangible positive difference to the lives and education outcomes of deaf children.

We are optimistic over the Cabinet Secretary highlighting that the Review will focus on recruitment and retention, and workload pressures. We know that there is a Wales-wide issue in this regard for ToDs; for example peripatetic ToDs, whose focus will be across large areas, are facing real challenges in terms of workload. Given their wide-ranging responsibilities, as they assist not just the deaf child but also their family and their school in deaf awareness, inclusion and accessibility, it is crucial that these professionals are valued, respected and given the appropriate levels of support. In order for deaf children to be fully supported in their educational development, local authorities need to be empowered to fully meet the needs of all deaf learners.

We also know that issues in relation to recruitment and retention and workload pressures are currently faced by many specialist roles across the education sector. Given her point in relation to the range of important roles across the sector, we are interested to see how the Welsh Government plans to integrate ToDs into their wider thinking in supporting the diverse needs of children. This is particularly important when we consider upcoming policy and legislation, for instance the Welsh Language and Education Bill which aims to expand Welsh medium provision; or upcoming changes in NewBorn hearing screening which will likely result in more diagnoses of childhood deafness.

However, we are disappointed to see that the Cabinet Secretary has not explicitly committed to including the voluntary and community sector in the development of the Strategic Education Workforce Plan, neither in the letter nor the attached statement. The sector has a wealth of knowledge and expertise that the Welsh Government could, and we would argue should, take into consideration. We are concerned that the lack of this expertise in the Plan's development could result in easily preventable shortcomings that would not only negatively impact deaf children, but all learners. As such, we would strongly urge the Cabinet Secretary to also include the VCS sector in a meaningful way during the development of the Plan, and stress again that should we be approached we would proactively seek to achieve synergy with planned changes in other parts of the system, seeking to ensure no deaf child is left behind.