

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and Education Committee

Ymchwiliad i Gwella Iechyd Emosiynol ac Iechyd Meddwl Plant a Phobl Ifanc | Inquiry into The Emotional and Mental Health of Children and Young People EMH 39

Ymateb gan: Y Gymdeithas Genedlaethol i Blant Byddar

Response from: National Deaf Children's Society

About Us

The National Deaf Children's Society Cymru is the national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people.

We support and represent the interests of deaf children and young people from birth through to independence.

In referring to “deaf” we refer to all levels of hearing loss, including mild to profound, unilateral and temporary.

Key information

- There are around 3,000 deaf children in Wales, 90% of whom attend a mainstream school
- Being deaf in a hearing orientated society can present a number of challenges with research demonstrating that deaf children are 60% more likely to experience mental health problems than other children¹.
- Research has indicated that generic CAMHS lack the expertise and skills in deafness to fully and effectively support and communicate directly with deaf children.²
- There is no specialist provision in Wales for deaf children and young people with a mental health condition making basic deaf awareness amongst all staff across education, health and social care essential.

Our response

As a result of *Breaking the Barriers: Meeting the Challenges, Better support for children and young people with emotional wellbeing and mental health needs – an action plan* (2010) access to CAMHS for deaf children was prioritised.

Subsequently, each Health Board is required to identify a lead professional for deaf CAMHS tasked with the development of links with education providers and the implementation of a specific training plan for CAMHS and associated staff. However, there is no specialist provision in Wales for deaf children and young people with a mental health condition. So, in order to ensure the voracity, quality and longevity of this earlier commitment, it will be necessary to develop specific performance measures in the *Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan* which address the needs of **all** deaf children and young people across Wales, an issue which NDCS Cymru raised with the Cabinet Secretary for Health last year.

¹ Department of Health and National Institute of Mental Health (2005). *Towards Equity and Access*.

² Beresford, B., Greco, V., Clarke, S., and Sutherland, H. (2008) An evaluation of specialist mental health services for deaf children, Research Works, 2008-02, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, York

Fundamentally, the importance of deaf awareness amongst professionals in the facilitation of deaf children and young people's access to CAMHS must be acknowledged – and would, in itself, represent a measurable performance indicator. The following examples demonstrate the importance we attach to this:

- the School Nursing service and the School Based Counselling service act as conduits to CAMHS, and we would, therefore, urge that school counsellors and school nurses, as well as the wider school family, receive basic deaf awareness training. To this end, we worked with the Welsh Government in 2010 to produce special guidance on deafness and counselling within the *School-based Counselling Operating Toolkit* (available [here](#));
- the GP is often the first point of contact for a deaf child or young person with mental health issues and it can be difficult to communicate effectively with a GP who is not deaf aware. Our Youth Advisory Board has produced the [My Life, My Health](#) resource pack for health professionals, deaf young people and their parents to improve access at the GP surgery;
- we also wish to draw the Committee's attention to our [Healthy Minds](#) resource which focuses on helping young deaf people to develop a positive sense of self and emotional health and wellbeing.

In summary

- It is imperative that the *Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan* reflects the vulnerability of deaf children and young people in terms of emotional health and wellbeing and adequately provides for the creation and maintenance of appropriate, accessible and timely services across Wales.
- Performance measures must be included in the *Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan* which specifically address the service provided to deaf children and young people.
- These performance measures must demonstrate commitment to collaborative working and continuous improvement.
- Established care pathways (including commissioned services delivered through Deaf CAMHS England) must be appropriately resourced.
- In order to test the application of these care pathways data must be collected routinely on throughput, diagnosis, source of referral and onward referral as well as waiting times to treatment.
- The newly-announced CAMHS practitioners directly supporting schools must have excellent deaf awareness and understand the particular issues faced by deaf children and young people in terms of emotional and mental health;
- School counsellors and school nurses must receive mandatory deaf awareness training to enable appropriate support and onward referral of deaf children and young people;
- All staff working in GP surgeries must receive training in deaf awareness and all surgeries must become deaf-friendly;
- Appropriate use and widespread dissemination of the listed resources herein.