

Sent by email

Buffy Williams MS
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

30th April 2024

Dear Buffy Williams MS,

**Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Children, Young People
And Education Committee**

On behalf of the National Deaf Children's Society, we would like to extend a warm congratulations to you following your successful election and subsequent appointment as Chair of the CYPE Committee. We look forward to working with you closely in the years to come to improve the lives of deaf children and young people across Wales.

As you will already be aware, the National Deaf Children's Society contributed to the consultation and evidence giving in the inquiry on the access to education and childcare for disabled children. Whilst we eagerly await the release of the committee's report and its recommendations to the Welsh Government, we have also heard that its findings are heart-wrenching. As the leading charity for Deaf children and young people in Wales and across the UK, we stand ready and willing to continue our work with the committee under your leadership to help improve the standards and outcomes for disabled children in Wales in this spirit of the inquiry.

You may also know that a petition calling for further investment into Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) has recently finished collecting signatures. We played a pivotal role in supporting the petitioner, Ros Hannam, in the development and promotion of this petition. Given childhood deafness is low incidence and being fully aware of the current landscape in relation to the Additional Learning Needs reforms, we were heartened to see that the petition managed to gain 1,431 signatures – a number equal to roughly 62% of the deaf children in Wales according to our most recent annual Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) [report](#).

Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) play a vital role in not just supporting the child, but the family and the school in the development of the child's education and social progression. Unlike in England and Scotland, Wales has no specialist schools for deaf

We are the Na
the leading charity for deaf children.

Chief Executive: Susan Daniels OBE

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The National Deaf Children's Society is a registered charity in England and Wales (1016532) and in Scotland (SC040779). Company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 2752456

**Y Gymdeithas Genedlaethol i Blant Byddar ydyn ni,
y brif elusen ar gyfer plant byddar.**

Prif Weithredwr: Susan Daniels OBE

Swyddfa gofrestrredig: Ground Floor South, Castle House, 37–45 Paul Street, Llundain EC2A 4LS

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learners, meaning most deaf children are educated in mainstream schools. ToDs guide both the family and the school in advising what equipment would be best to support the child alongside assisting in their education, which is crucial as every child is different with different needs and preferences. It is a role that is of great importance given most schools and teachers will be unfamiliar in matters relating to deafness and that 90% of deaf children are born into hearing families with no personal experience.

In our evidence to the committee, we noted our concern that the number of ToDs has been dwindling over the years. Compared to 2011 levels, in our 2023 CRIDE report we highlighted that there has been a 17% reduction in ToDs across the country. Additionally, roughly one in three of the ToDs currently in the workforce are also due to hit retirement age over the next decade. Given the length of time it takes to train to become a ToD, if the Welsh Government does not commit to urgent action, there is a very real possibility of deaf children facing a crisis in education that could take years to rectify, alongside needing significant additional investment.

We are mindful of the comments of the former Minister for Education where he stressed that local authorities have access to resources to invest in the ALN workforce. Whilst we are deeply grateful for this investment, ToDs on the ground tell us that LAs appear to use this by trying to keep provisions at the same level as they currently are, rather than expanding them. We worry that this approach, especially given the 17% reduction since 2011, may result in deaf children not being able to access the support they need.

Given the impending release of the committee's report and indeed the petition's development, it is our deeply held hope that the CYPE Committee and the Petitions Committee will work together alongside us to call on the Welsh Government to ensure deaf children are not left behind in the classroom by ensuring there is a sustainable ToD workforce strategy in place.

We are open to meet with you to discuss the report and its findings following its release. In the meantime, the National Deaf Children's Society will also be attending the first "Y Farchnad" on 14th May and we would of course be incredibly grateful should you, and/or other members of the committee, stop by to speak to us in the Oriel.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

With very best wishes,

H. Badjie

Hazel Badjie
Head of Policy and Influencing in Wales

K. Sawdon

Kieran Sawdon
Wales Policy and Campaigns Officer