

# P-06-1430 Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 04 Tachwedd 2024  
Petitions Committee | 04 November 2024

Reference: SR24/8813-3

**Petition Number:** P-06-1430

**Petition title:** Support deaf children by making a financial commitment to restoring Teacher of the Deaf numbers

**Text of petition:** Teachers of the Deaf play a vital role in supporting the language and communication development of deaf children. They provide advice to families of deaf children, visiting them at school or college – supporting their education and provide guidance to mainstream teachers on deaf awareness.

But Wales has lost one-in-five Teachers of the Deaf since 2011. There are around 2,300 deaf children in Wales.

I am mum to 5-year-old Lola, who is profoundly deaf and 2-year-old Rudi, who is severely deaf.

More Details: Deaf children living in a hearing world need ongoing support. But Lola and Rudi currently receive just one hour of support a week from a Teacher of the Deaf. Calculated over a year, during school time, that's 37 hours, which does not even equate to my working week. I believe all deaf children should see a Teacher of the Deaf at least once a week regardless of level of deafness.

Lola is in a mainstream primary school, which is right for her, but had she gone to a special provision, she would be seeing specialists and other deaf



children every day. Her progress is aspirational but if the technology fails, we have very little to fall back on.

I believe there is also a vital need for more targeted support for the parents of deaf children. More than nine-in-ten deaf children are born to hearing parents, with no experience of deafness. When we discovered Lola was deaf, I was shellshocked. I was also oblivious to my complete lack of deaf knowledge.

## 1. Background

There are around **2,260 deaf children** living in Wales ([Consortium for Research in Deaf Education \(CRIDE\) survey 2023](#)). The term deaf is used to refer to children with all levels of deafness, from mild through to profound, including deafness in one ear or temporary deafness such as glue ear. Some deaf children, especially those with temporary hearing loss, may not be included in the CRIDE figures for Wales.

Wales has **no specialist schools** for deaf learners. 81% of deaf children attend **mainstream schools**, whilst 8% attend mainstream schools with resource provisions, 9% attend special schools and 1% are home educated. Deafness is not a learning disability, and with the right support deaf children should be able to achieve on a par with their hearing peers. However, around a quarter (24%) of deaf children have an identified Additional Learning Need.

**Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToD)** are teachers who have completed a postgraduate level course which is either self-funded or funded by the local authority or school. These courses are run by universities located in either England or Scotland.

The [British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People](#) provide information and support for the [specialist role of the QToD](#).

### In Wales:

- QToD numbers have **reduced by 1 in 5 (20%)** since 2011.
- In 2023 there were 65 QToD posts in Wales with **2% vacancies**.

- The number of QToDs working in a **peripatetic role (generally, peripatetic (or advisory) QToDs work for local education authority advisory and support services for deaf children and young people)** has increased by 3% since 2022 and fallen by 17% since the survey began in 2011.
- 36% of peripatetic QToDs (working in resource provisions or schools/colleges not specifically for deaf children) are aged 50 or over and likely to retire in the next 10-15 years.

## 1.1. The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

Under the provisions of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, every learner with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) should be given a statutory **Individual Development Plan (IDP)** setting out their needs and the interventions they require. The Welsh Government issued the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales in 2021, which sets out the detail of how schools, colleges, local authorities and health boards should, and must, meet their responsibilities under the Act.

The National Society for Deaf Children Cymru have proposed that **virtually all deaf children** should **routinely be regarded as eligible for an IDP**. However, they report that in their members survey conducted in 2022 only **a quarter of families of deaf children said their child had an IDP** and professionals reported **ongoing confusion** over eligibility.

## 1.2. GCSE British Sign Language

Qualifications Wales has announced the development of a 'Made-for-Wales' GCSE in BSL with the first teaching to commence in **September 2027**.

The Senedd Cross Party Group on Deaf Issues wrote to the Children Young People and Education Committee (CYPE) stating that the British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People Cymru have noted that teachers of deaf children and young people are already receiving requests for teaching resources, and there is a need to establish foundational support for deaf learners before introducing the GCSE in Wales. There is concern that the new GCSE will put further pressure on the QToD workforce and that hearing teachers who are not QToD and who therefore could lack the requisite levels of BSL skill, could be recruited to teach the language.

The National Deaf Children's Society said in their [response to Qualifications Wales' consultation](#):

we strongly support Qualification Wales' intention to ensure there are opportunities to learn BSL and to introduce the BSL GCSE currently being developed in England to Wales.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government commissioned a [Rapid Evidence Assessment of the effectiveness of educational interventions to support children and young people with hearing impairment](#) (2019) and summarised the evidence as guidance, [Support for children and young people with hearing impairment in educational settings](#). The report makes this comment on professional roles:

Specialist staff are needed to undertake and/or advise on additional learning provision and inclusive practice and differentiation. [...]in England and Wales the traditional coordination of this complex arrangement of educational support is generally undertaken by qualified ToD. Given deafness is a low incidence need, mainstream education practitioners are unlikely to develop or retain specialist knowledge through their ongoing practice (as they will only rarely come across a deaf child). This makes the advice on interventions they receive from ToD especially important.

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

### 3.1. Children, Young People and Education Committee

On 16 July 2024, the Children, Young People and Education Committee published its report, [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#)

The Committee's inquiry considered childcare and education access for disabled children and young people. It included a recommendation that:

The Welsh Government sets out a clear delivery plan for addressing gaps in specialist teaching posts, for Teachers of the Deaf, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired, to ensure that all children and young people can access this support when needed. This delivery plan should have clear

targets, deliverables and timeframes so it can be monitored and scrutinised.

## 3.2. Petitions Committee

A petition, [P-04-628 To improve access to Education and services in British Sign Language](#), was considered by the Petitions Committee in March 2015. The Committee's [subsequent report](#) (October 2018), recommended:

that the Welsh Government continues its engagement with the Welsh Local Government Association on Workforce Planning for SEN specialist services, with a particular focus on teachers working with Deaf and hard of hearing children and young people. This should include consideration of the longer term sustainability of these services.

The [Welsh Government responded](#) in November 2018 stating:

We are fully committed to supporting the training of teachers of the Deaf. This year we have allocated a total of £289,000 over three years to support professional training of the local authority based sensory workforce. This funding includes training in British Sign Language (BSL) at various levels, and post-graduate training for six teachers of the Deaf.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.