

**Y Grŵp Trawsbleidiol
ar Faterion Pobl
Fyddar**

Senedd Cymru
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**Cross-Party Group on
Deaf Issues**

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GOHEBIAETH CORRESPONDENCE

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12 November 2023

Dear Members of the Petitions Committee

Deaf education and Petition for a Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People Workforce Strategy

At the Cross-Party Group for Deaf Issues (the Group) meeting on 26 October 2023, it was agreed that the Chair would write to you on behalf of the Group to seek your support for Rosamund Hannam's petition (No: 245870), asking for a financial commitment from the Welsh Government to restore Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (ToD) numbers in Wales. The petition has, at the time of writing this letter, collected 464 signatures.

Hazel Badjie, Head of Policy and Influence for Wales at the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) delivered a presentation at our recent meeting. She alerted the Group to alarming inadequacies in specialist education support for deaf children, with a mere 37 hours per year per child being allocated. This insufficient provision is compounded by an ongoing reduction in the numbers of ToDs over the past decade, constituting a 20% decrease or a concerning 1 in 5 ratio. She believes that this critical shortage impedes the ability of deaf children to access timely and comprehensive support. Equally troubling is the issue of family engagement, where parents often face overwhelming decisions without adequate information and support. The importance of early intervention cannot be overstated, as it is crucial for nurturing child development, supporting language and communication skills, and enabling deaf children to achieve their full potential. As aptly articulated by Ms Hannam, 'deaf children must thrive, not simply cope.' Unfortunately, family

experiences often include isolation, shock, and a lack of awareness about deaf-related knowledge, underscoring the urgent need for a more robust and accessible support system. We believe that addressing these issues is integral to ensuring that every deaf child in Wales has the opportunity to thrive in their educational journey.

I raised this matter in the Senedd on 3 May 2023. In response, the Minister for Education and the Welsh Language referenced the workforce strategy, highlighting that the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms and Code specifically include references to ToDs. Local authorities and schools were urged to consult to meet the learning needs of deaf students, and a financial commitment was made toward the postgraduate funding route. We would appreciate an update on these efforts.

The Group's members emphasised the specific need for more deaf ToDs, noting that the current route/pathway is not nurtured, resulting in a workforce that lacks diversity and fails to represent the people it serves. This issue demands immediate attention to ensure that the educational needs of deaf students are adequately addressed by a qualified and diverse workforce.

In light of the above, we would be grateful if the Petitions Committee could recommend that the matter be debated in the Senedd, to ensure that the shortage of ToDs and the state of the deaf education system in Wales is at the forefront of the Welsh Government and Members of the Senedd's minds.

Thank you for your time and consideration. The Group looks forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully

Mark Isherwood

Mark Isherwood MS

Chair of the Cross-Party Group on Deaf Issues