

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

**Consultation: Resourced Education Provision for children
with sensory impairments**

via Joseph Locke Primary School

A response by the National Deaf Children's Society

February 2020



1. About us

- 1.1. The National Deaf Children's Society is the leading national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. We represent the interests and campaign for the rights of all deaf children and young people from birth until they reach independence.
- 1.2. There are around 50,000 deaf children in the UK and three more are born every day. We support deaf children and their families, and work with decision-makers and professionals to overcome the barriers that hold deaf children back.
- 1.3. There are at least 166 deaf children living in Barnsley.
- 1.4. By deaf, we mean anyone with a permanent or temporary hearing loss. This could be a mild, moderate, severe or profound hearing loss. The term deaf does not presuppose the use of any one communication method and could refer to children who communicate orally or through sign language. We also include children who have a hearing loss in one ear.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on Barnsley Council's resourced education provision at Joseph Locke Primary School.
- 2.2. We focus our submission on deaf children and how the proposed changes may impact on the support that deaf children receive.
- 2.3. Our submission highlights our key concerns with the proposals. We are primarily concerned about the lack of options at primary level in resourced provision for deaf children.
- 2.4. We also make suggestions and recommendations, with the aim of ensuring that deaf children and their families remain at the heart of any changes and continue to have access to high quality specialist education support.

3. Our feedback in relation to the proposals

Overall, we welcome the proposals and the way in which Barnsley Council is prepared to reinvest the funding saved by the potential closure of Joseph Locke Resource Provision. We see this as good value for money and would not wish to see Teachers of the Deaf continuing to be placed in a provision where there are no deaf children. However, we do also have some concerns about the proposal which we have highlighted below.

3.1 Ensuring that there is not a misleading assertion that deaf children and their families in the wider peripatetic services will not be affected.

There could be an assumption that children who are currently using the wider peripatetic service will not be affected. Although we understand that the numbers of pupils using the provision is low/now non-existent, it would be misleading to assert that the proposals would have no effect on all pre-school and primary school deaf children. If the proposed change were to go ahead, parents would need to have a full understanding of the potential impact on their children in years to come.

We would therefore need to know that the local authority has considered future need. Has Barnsley Council identified any deaf children who may need the resource provision in the future, accounted for deaf children moving in to the area, or children developing severe or profound deafness in the early years?

We are therefore concerned that the proposals may lead a respondent to believe that the demand for resource base places is lower than it may really be.

3.2 Consultation with parents of deaf children

As the National Deaf Children's Society has only just become aware of this consultation, we are concerned that parents of deaf children attending the provision and indeed the parents of deaf children in the wider peripatetic service may also not be aware of the consultation. The local authority must fully engage parents, children, young people and professionals as part of the consultation process. Local authorities have

a responsibility under the Children and Families' Act 2014 Section 27(3) to fully consult these people.

“A local authority ... in exercising its functions under this section, the authority must consult children and young people in its area with special educational needs, and the parents of children in its area with special educational needs; children and young people in its area who have a disability, and the parents of children in its area who have a disability.”¹

In addition the council must consider the individual needs and wants of each deaf child and their family. Parents must feel that their child's individual situation is being taken into account and appreciated.

Paragraph 4.19 of the SEND Code of Practice clearly states that *“When considering any reorganisation of SEN provision decision makers must make clear how they are satisfied that the proposed alternative arrangements are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for children with SEN”*.

In reinvesting the money into the peripatetic service, you have indicated that you want to have specialist skills and expertise within all mainstream schools. However, there is nothing evidenced in the consultation document to suggest that the proposed changes would definitively lead to improvements in the standard, quality or range of provision for those deaf children who have possibly some of the highest needs in the service.

3.3 Consultation with neighbouring authorities

We are pleased to see that there is an acknowledgment that there are still some children who may need an out of authority placement and the SEND Code of Practice section 3.13 through to 3.19 clearly indicates that local authorities must work to integrate education, health and social care to ensure best possible outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Section 3.68 also indicates that partners should consider

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/27/enacted>

strategic planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with high levels of need across groups of authorities. We would encourage you to ensure that you have arrangements in place to ensure that out of authority placements can take place swiftly where necessary and that these options are placed on the Local Offer.

3.4 Removal of choice

If the proposal to close this resource provision were to go ahead, the range of education provision for deaf children would be significantly reduced. There would not be the option of attending a primary resource base in Barnsley and therefore parents would have less choice over their child's education. Statutory guidance relating to making changes to SEN provision states:

*“In planning and commissioning SEN provision or considering a proposal for change, LAs should aim for a flexible range of provision and support that can respond to the needs of individual pupils and parental preferences”.*²

Furthermore, if a resource base is not available locally, and parents do not feel the needs of their children could be met in mainstream school, something that NDCS is concerned about as well, it is likely that parents will opt for an 'out of area' placement. This could end up costing the local authority more as well as it possibly not being in the best interests of the child. We also have concerns about whether mainstream schools would be able to provide such a high level and wide spectrum of specialist support.

3.5 Importance of resource bases

As you will be aware deafness is a low incidence need and as such mainstream teachers are unlikely to gain experience and develop the knowledge and skills to ensure deaf children can access the curriculum. This is the reason why we have specialist Teachers of the Deaf who can

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514570/16-04-06_FINAL_SO_Guidance_DM.pdf

ensure deaf pupils make progress in their education. However, Teachers of the Deaf in your peripatetic service may not have the capacity or the skills required to support this particular group of children in mainstream as their needs are very different to those already placed in mainstream.

It has long been acknowledged that children placed in a resource base are placed there because they need:

- Above and beyond what a mainstream provision can offer with more intensive support from Teachers of the Deaf and support staff.
- A peer group to ensure that they do not experience such things as isolation particularly when a) they may be the only deaf child in that school b) their first language is BSL.
- A different sort of support to help them make good educational progress.
- Skills to move successfully into adulthood
- Support to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and self-esteem to be able to identify and manage risk.
- Support to enable them to develop good social skills, good levels of self-esteem and confidence and develop a positive deaf identity.

In the 2012 Ofsted themed inspection on deaf children³ it was identified that *“educational attainment of deaf children has improved year on year it continues to lag well behind that of their hearing peers”*, and that *“there was limited strategic overview and no systematic approach across all services to evaluate the quality of services and their impact on improving the lives of deaf children”*. They cited a good practice example for Child G who attended a resource base, where it highlighted that mainstream and Teachers of the Deaf could work together more intensively to ensure that:

- Advice was given to teachers about acoustics in each classroom and how best to enable good two-way communication with Child G.
- There was access to a specialist speech and language therapist.
- There was support in the classroom from a learning support assistant and from a teacher of the deaf.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/communication-is-the-key>

- There was attendance at a homework club and a social club at the specialist resource unit for deaf children and clubs in music and dancing in mainstream school.
- Anxieties about possible bullying were addressed early.
- In classrooms, electronic aids were used along with a radio aid were used.
- Staff have received deaf awareness training and have been trained to repeat what other pupils say to ensure that Child G could hear all.

“Cases showed that when diagnosed early, placed in the right school, with parent or carer involvement and with the right support, deaf children can match their hearing peers in their educational achievement, demonstrating that deafness in itself should not be a barrier to achieving well”.

While it is accepted that some of this support can be provided in a mainstream school, much of it will need more intensity and different specialist skills e.g. high levels of BSL, than can probably be provided in a mainstream setting with visiting Teachers of the Deaf. It is likely therefore, that placing many of these children in mainstream schools may not achieve the good outcomes necessary for them to succeed in their adult life and it may also be more costly to do so.

In addition, to provide effective support, deaf children need to be assessed in the round, their social and emotional needs have to be taken into account as well as their educational needs and it is likely that parents will need higher levels of support particularly if they have never experienced deafness in the family previously.

If this proposal goes ahead then it is likely that the social and emotional needs of severe and profoundly deaf children could be neglected in mainstream settings, often not through the fault of the school, but through the lack of understanding of the needs of this group of children. As you will know, the development of language and the ability to communicate lies at the heart of a child’s development. Deafness and often society’s lack of understanding of the needs of deaf children and young people can present a barrier to their social, emotional and

intellectual development preventing them from achieving their full potential. These barriers faced by deaf children can manifest themselves in increased risk and may ultimately result in a higher cost to public services when many of these children could develop mental health and/or social problems, which already have a higher prevalence in deaf children.

4. Recommendations

Barnsley MB Council should:

- 4.1** Consider the future needs of the total population of deaf children.
- 4.2** Consider the options for out of authority placements and ensure these are placed on the Local Offer.
- 4.3** Protect the funding of the Sensory Support Service. This should be provided via a planned budget which supports identified key trends and patterns across the borough together with the necessary and appropriate specialist staff and technology.
- 4.4** Ensure that any proposed changes will lead to improved outcomes for deaf children as required by the SEND Code of Practice (Paragraph 4.19).
- 4.5** Consider how you will discharge your duties under sections 22 and 24 of the Children and Families Act 2014, which makes your local authority responsible for all children with SEND. Specifically related to these sections we would ask:
 - a) How will the local authority monitor the progress of deaf children in mainstream, in Resource Provisions and in special schools?
 - b) What will the local authority do if it is clear that a deaf child is not making expected progress?
 - c) How will the local authority advocate for children who are not making good progress and challenge schools where support is not being provided appropriately and at the right level?
- 4.6** Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice legislative framework and guidance which relates to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, and its associated regulations, when making any changes to provision. This includes co-producing services with parents and deaf children to ensure that they

meet the needs of all children with SEND. This is something that Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission are now looking closely at with their inspections of local area SEND provision.

7. For further information please contact:

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