



Response to the Education and Culture Committee  
Inquiry:  
attainment of pupils with sensory impairment

SCoD Response  
09<sup>th</sup> Oct 2015

Janis McDonald/Mandy Reid



“A society where deaf people have equal access, rights and citizenship.”

## Response to the Education and Culture Committee Inquiry:

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The Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) is the umbrella, membership body for deafness in Scotland. Established in 1927, it has grown considerable knowledge and expertise across “deafness” (defined across four “pillars” – deaf (including BSL Users), deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing).

The membership of SCoD is growing across the public, third and private sectors. Aiming for a society where deaf people have equal access, rights and citizenship, SCoD works to influence public policy, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the deaf sector and promote and support good practice. It currently promotes a “Connect and Thrive” programme of work which includes key strands: Connect and Communicate, Connect and Collaborate and Connect and Capitalise. Key themes are partnership, effectiveness and quality.

### Our Context Comments

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Committee’s Report.

We fully support the comments submitted by member organisation, National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS), including the congratulations for the approach and thorough consideration of sensory impairment.

We also commend the positive contributions of the Scottish Government, local and national agencies and other participants and thoroughly endorse the focus on solutions and the shared aspiration to close the attainment gap.

We will not repeat the comments from NDCS.

Our Specific Comments.....

#### **1. Overarching View**

SCoD would be keen to see a continued, specific focus on deaf children and is unconvinced of the evidence to support a general joint sensory approach. We do however, support the current Joint Sensory/See Hear Strategy and will continue to work with Partners in government to explore the research and evidence required for decision making in the future.

Deafness, across the four pillars of Deaf, Deafened, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing, is sufficiently complex to warrant major focus and attention.

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In light of the success of the BSL (Scotland) Bill we see some elements of the improvement challenge falling within the remit of the National Advisory Group and National Plan.

We would like to see careful consideration of how the various elements of deafness are approached strategically, in conjunction with that significant change. As the Committee will now be aware, Bilingualism is an option for deaf children, as well as their hearing peers. The language issue has been addressed through the success of the Bill.

There will still be practical barriers for children, particularly those with a hearing loss, where forms of communication support are required (note takers, communication support workers, hearing loops, etc).

We do need to consider the overall strategic approach and linkage with the BSL National Advisory Group work, the UNCRPD Disability Delivery Plan and further development around Inclusive Communication.

## **2. Points related to recommendations in addition to those made by NDCS**

3.1 Limitations of attainment data – we would like to see better strategic planning between early years transitions: play group and nursery to school and from school to further and higher education and/or employment.

We would like to see improved consideration across play strategy and playgroup support.

3.2 Models of Education Provision – we feel there should be more and better information available about the impact of models and what actual clarity of choice the models provide for parents.

We would like to see a considered programme of research that supported clear outcome focussed information.

## 3.4 Qualifications of teachers

We feel further emphasis is needed to ensure that concepts are interpreted, not just information. Our work indicates that many Deaf people struggle to make connections and understand concepts most of us take for granted.

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### 3.5 Adaptions

Whilst we agree with the need for pilots to look at the benefits of “distance learning” and support for young deaf people we would want to ensure it is with appropriate checks and balances on interpretation of information **and concepts** as per our previous point.

We also think there is a need to work with the RIBA Edinburgh to ensure there is innovation, development and best use of current knowledge on architecture and design. If architects were generally more “acoustics aware” then in the longer term we can recalibrate the need for adaption. We also need to look at advice, guidance and required minimum standards for building regulations.

### 3.6 Leaver Destinations

In addition to confidence building we would like to see greater emphasis on citizenship, including volunteering and social economy/enterprise to ensure young D/deaf people stand for the Scottish Youth Parliament, National Advisory Group BSL and are better equipped through experiences too.

### 4.1 Early Years Provision

We would repeat our view that in addition to NDCS’ remarks that emphasis and transition at this stage is critical. Based on improved **diagnosis**, we support the need for improved support for families, and a **stronger emphasis on language acquisition** /development is considered through improved support for play and playgroups and nurseries too. We feel everyone involved needs to understand and appreciate the benefits of bilingualism.

**For further information please contact Mandy Reid, Policy Officer**

[mandy@scod.org.uk](mailto:mandy@scod.org.uk)



## Contact SCoD

Scottish Council on Deafness  
Central Chambers, Suite 62  
93 Hope Street  
Glasgow  
G2 6LD

Telephone: 0141 your number here  
Textphone: 0141 248 2477  
Fax: 0141 248 2479

Email: [youremailhere@scod.org.uk](mailto:youremailhere@scod.org.uk)  
Website: [www.scod.org.uk](http://www.scod.org.uk)

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