

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 12 December 2018

Note of meeting with representatives of the Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRiDE)

Introduction

1. The Committee agreed to meet with representatives of CRiDE to:
 - assess progress against recommendations made by the former Education and Culture Committee on attainment of pupils with a sensory impairment; and
 - explore the issues raised in this Committee's report on Additional Support for Learning.

Attendees

2. CRiDE was represented by a selection of members from:
 - The University of Edinburgh
 - Highland Deaf Education Service
 - The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)
 - National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

The delegation also included:

- Depute Head Teacher and specialist educational audiologist.
3. The Committee was represented by Liz Smith MSP, Iain Gray MSP, Rona Mackay MSP and Ross Greer MSP.

Format

4. Each of the organisations/individuals present made some introductory comments setting out their perspective on issues affecting the education of deaf children and then responded to questions. This is an anonymised note of key issues raised in the meeting produced by the committee clerks. A [submission](#) from NDCS was published in advance of the meeting and a [briefing](#) was received from NDCS following the meeting to provide follow-up information.

Key issues

Data collection

5. Participants reported that data on additional support needs had improved, in large part due to the [CRiDE survey](#) on educational provision for deaf children in Scotland which was separate from the official SEEMiS

management information system. One issue with official statistics is that the annual pupil census figures do not capture pupils with multiple needs e.g. deafness and another disability.

6. Data on attainment highlighted that there is still a significant and persistent gap between the attainment of deaf school leavers and their hearing peer group.¹
7. There was general agreement that data on numbers of Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) was accurate. More details are included later in this note.

Acoustic design of schools

8. All participants were concerned about the acoustic dynamics of schools and the impact on young people with hearing difficulties (whether mild or severe, temporary or permanent). Many new schools are open plan and may have large atria or common spaces which can be very noisy.
9. As many as 1 in 5 children can suffer from glue ear during childhood. Although usually temporary, long-term glue ear can affect children's hearing, speech development, and cause them to fall behind at school. It is more prevalent among children from low-income families.
10. With reference to the Committee's recommendation around appropriate acoustic standards being provided in all schools, in England and Wales, [Building Bulletin 93 \(BB93\)](#) sets out minimum performance standards for the acoustics of school buildings. Standards are not similarly defined in Scotland although BB93 is able to be used as guidance. Poor acoustic design negatively affects all building users. Compulsory pre-completion testing of new schools would be desirable in order to prevent the need for (and cost of) retrospective modifications to reduce noise.

Initial Teacher Education for deaf people

11. The group expressed concern about barriers for deaf people entering Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses at university. A lack of BSL interpreters can create barriers for deaf students to access ITE and successfully complete their probationary year.

Workforce planning and recruitment of Teachers of the Deaf

12. The group was concerned about a perceived lack of workforce planning and regular recruitment difficulties in many areas, given that nearly a quarter (24%) of specialist ToDs in Scotland had been lost over the last seven years. In the same period there has been a 26% increase in numbers of deaf children across Scotland. Nearly half of current ToDs are due to retire in the next 10 to 15 years. The group was therefore keen to see a national workforce planning exercise as soon as possible.

¹ <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/leavedestla/follleavedestat>

13. The group considered that it was extremely desirable to recruit ToDs at a younger age and earlier in their teaching career as that would enable them to develop proficiency in BSL and other specialisms.

CPD, BSL qualifications and availability of training

14. The group supported enhanced opportunities for BSL training for existing ToDs in order to enhance their skill levels. However, it was vital that education authorities fund the costs of the course and training time (including supply cover) or teachers could be deterred from training to become a ToD.

Inspection of peripatetic hearing services

15. The group reported that inspection of these services by Education Scotland can occur, but is not routine. The lack of inspection was said to have undermined their quality and value. The group was very keen that peripatetic hearing impairment education services should be subject to regular inspection by Education Scotland.

1 + 2 approach to modern languages

16. The Scottish Government's policy is aimed at ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn a modern language from P1 until the end of the broad general education (S3) and to learn a second modern language from P5 onwards.
17. Members of the group would like to see BSL included in the 1+2 approach. In at least 13 local authorities there is no commitment to do so. In the Highland Council area, however, 27 primary schools are committed to this approach with Dingwall Academy supporting it from S1 upwards. Highland Council has developed a full package of materials to support teachers including video clips.