

## RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual  
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Children in Scotland

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name  
 Publish response only (without name)  
 Do not publish response

### Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes  
 No

## Consultation on BSL Draft Guidance 2017-2021

Children in Scotland is the collective voice for children, young people and families in Scotland as well as the organisations and businesses that have a significant impact on children's lives throughout the country. It is a membership organisation, comprised of 500 representatives from the voluntary, public and private sectors.

We aim to identify and promote the interests of children and their families, influencing the development of policy and services in order to ensure that they are of the best possible quality, capable of meeting the needs of children and young people living in Scotland.

Children in Scotland hosts Enquire, the national advice and information service for additional support for learning and our work with them has helped inform our response.

### **Q4. Do you think these are the right steps under the Early Years?**

Yes, to an extent (see questions 5 and 6)

### **Q5. Please tell us why you think this:**

There are measures that we see as valuable, however there are certain key steps that we feel are missing. (See Q6)

We are highly supportive of the measure to develop resources for parents who use BSL on the benefit and value of play. Play is vitally important for early child development and supports emotional wellbeing and social development<sup>1</sup>. This is particularly important for young deaf children who use BSL as they may find themselves isolated. Play is vital for forming friendships from an early age and for developing skills that will help them prepare for school.

We are also supportive of measures to improve access to early years services, as long as services are of high quality so that they are able to meet every individual child's development, care and learning needs. Evidence shows that high quality early learning and childcare is good for children but it

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<sup>1</sup> Play Scotland, Getting it Right for Play

also identifies that poor quality early learning and childcare can have a negative impact.

To ensure that early learning and childcare is of a high quality and encourages positive early development for young deaf children, services should have dedicated staff, where necessary, to support those children who use BSL and ensure the provision is person-centred and able to meet individual needs. This must be complemented by better support for families to develop their BSL skills such as the model delivered by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) in Scotland Your Child, Your Choices project.<sup>2</sup>

**Q6. If there are any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think should be added to the Early Years section, please tell us?**

The Early Years section rightly aims to ensure that families have access to information to support BSL use for their child from the earliest stage possible.

However to ensure that young deaf children are supported to learn BSL in the early years, the commitment within the strategy to resourcing dedicated/specialist early years staff for young deaf children needs to be far more explicit. This is vital for supporting the other measures noted in the guidance and for supporting young deaf children from the early years. This should involve the proper resourcing of the Teachers of the Deaf model within the early years so that young deaf children can have access to specialist support in the early years setting.

Dedicated support from this stage will support the early development of young deaf children and can work to limit the impact of an attainment gap between young deaf children and hearing children so that they enter primary school education on an even footing. It will also support them to be fully included in early years settings and promote their interaction with other children in the setting.

Given Teachers of the Deaf are expert in the field this would also bolster the measures to improve information for families of deaf children as they will know where to find appropriate advice and support.

There must also be greater commitment to funding support for families to strengthen their BSL skills, such as occurs in Norway where families receive 1000 hours of free tuition.<sup>3</sup> This is essential for the development of linguistic skills, early childhood development, and supporting attainment among young

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<sup>2</sup>[http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family\\_support/support\\_in\\_your\\_area/scotland/your\\_child\\_your.html](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/support_in_your_area/scotland/your_child_your.html)

<sup>3</sup> Ohna S, E., Hjulstad O., Vonen A. M., Grønlie S. M., Hjelmervik E., Høie G. (2003) ***På vei mot en ny grunnskoleopplæring for døve elever. Evaluering etter Reform 97.*** Oslo. Skådalen publications.

deaf children. It will contribute to reducing the inequality in early communication and language that research shows young deaf children face across the UK <sup>45</sup>. Again, we advise that the NDCS Your Child, Your Choices project should be used as a model here.

We are not convinced by point 13 in the Early Years section, which aims to bring children who use BSL together in the early years. We support the opportunity for socialising and play but we believe this should be more inclusive. This commitment appears to go against the commitment to mainstream education in Scotland and could potentially increase stigma for young deaf children if they are isolated from their peers who do not use BSL.

### **Q7. Do you think these are the right steps under Education?**

Yes, to an extent (see questions 8 and 9)

### **Q8. Please tell us why you think this:**

We support the aims to include BSL in 1+2 language learning policies to encourage and support all children to learn the language. Including BSL in 1+2 is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly it will give the language parity with spoken language. It can also open opportunities for conversation and interaction with other pupils and potentially reduce the stigma and isolation that BSL users face (evidenced through academic research and the primary evidence that NDCS identified from a Deaf Learners Conference<sup>67</sup>).

It would also support the increase of BSL throughout other areas of society as young people would be able to learn the language and utilise the skill later in life. This would further support the integration of BSL users in work, and other environments, as they are more likely to have colleagues/peers who they can converse with.

Including BSL in 1+2 language learning policies must be adequately resourced. Unless the resource is provided to schools to support the language then the opportunity will not be realised. This may require certain creative measures to bring pupils together to ensure that they have access to the teaching resources required to learn the language, including teaching across schools or bringing pupils from different schools together.

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4.Data on all children and children with no identified SEN:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eyfsp-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-2013>

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/pdfs/JR1059\\_Early\\_Years\\_Scotland\\_Report\\_AW\\_WEB\\_\(2\).pdf](http://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/pdfs/JR1059_Early_Years_Scotland_Report_AW_WEB_(2).pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.bslzone.co.uk/files/9114/5320/1729/Exec\\_Summary\\_-\\_Research\\_into\\_the\\_Deaf\\_Audience\\_Jan\\_2016.pdf](https://www.bslzone.co.uk/files/9114/5320/1729/Exec_Summary_-_Research_into_the_Deaf_Audience_Jan_2016.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.deafstudiestrust.org/files/pdf/reports/0012107.pdf>

We also support steps to increase parental engagement of parents who use BSL. Evidence suggests that when done properly this is important for improving attainment and ensures BSL using parents are considered in one of the Scottish Government's key drivers in the National Improvement Framework for Raising Attainment<sup>8910</sup>.

Parents whose preferred communication method is BSL may struggle to be involved in their children's education and as such creative methods to involve them should be sought.

This should involve measures to involve parents in their child's homework but also in other facets of the school environment such as Parent Councils, parents' evenings and school events.

Additionally, we support measures to investigate the qualification level of BSL teachers. This must be backed up with rigorous training for BSL specific teachers and also base level training for all teachers to ensure they can communicate with BSL pupils in the classroom. To ensure that children and young people who use BSL in our schools are presented with the same opportunities and environment as other children and young people, we must present them with the same standard of teaching and ensure they feel included.

**Q9. If there are any additional steps, or potential solutions that you think could be added to the Education section, please tell us.**

As noted in Q6, there must be a far greater commitment to resources to support children and young people who communicate through BSL, most deaf children and young people are educated in a mainstream setting and so these settings must provide the appropriate support<sup>11</sup>. There has to be a commitment to high quality specialist teaching for deaf children such as the Teachers of the Deaf model. The age profile of Teachers of the Deaf suggests that we are likely to be met with a crisis in this area going forward<sup>12</sup>. In 2012 more than half of local authorities said they had difficulties recruiting teachers with the appropriate qualifications<sup>13</sup>.

Teachers of the Deaf are specialists in providing mainstream education for deaf children and young people as part of a class setting. This gives them a huge advantage in supporting the learning of deaf children and young people.

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<sup>8</sup><https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ce58/0efeeab26dc5bbbe0f0994e86fec3c94eebe.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511513.pdf>

<sup>10</sup>[http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Do\\_parental\\_involvement\\_interventions\\_increase\\_attainment1.pdf](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/Do_parental_involvement_interventions_increase_attainment1.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/library/publications/report12.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/library/publications/report12.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/library/publications/report12.pdf>

The fact that they can support them within the class setting also supports the integration of deaf children and young people into mainstream education, something we see as vital, where appropriate, to improving their outcomes, health and wellbeing. Teachers of the Deaf also able to provide support and advice to parents of deaf children and young people.

A concerted and properly resourced effort to the recruitment and training of Teachers of the Deaf is something we feel is vital as part of any guidance on BSL.

This could clearly be linked to the involvement of BSL in the 1+2 language opportunity, learning BSL in school could be overtly linked to the Teachers of the Deaf model and would support young people to gain the skills and knowledge to enter the profession.

There should also be greater commitment to bringing forward SQA awards in BSL, while we appreciate the commitment to this in the guidance, we feel that this is not strong enough. Stronger commitment to ensuring this would support BSL to be part of the 1+2 language opportunity as young people could enter at entry-level BSL courses and take these onto higher levels of study. As mentioned above this could be made part of a clear strategy to promote the Teachers of the Deaf model. We understand NDCS is exploring this possibility with the SQA.

**Q28. Do you think these are the right steps under Democracy?**

No

**Q29. Please tell us why you think this?**

We feel that the guidance is far too focused on how adult BSL users can engage with the electoral democratic process. We support increased engagement with the democratic process for all BSL users but there are other key measures not mentioned, which are of vital importance.

The guidance has no mention of the ways that young BSL users can become involved in participatory forms of democracy. Under article 12 of the UNCRC children and young people have the right to be heard about decisions that affect them. There is however no mention of how deaf children and young people will be involved in the decisions that affect them and in holding Scottish Government to account and this needs to be fully supported to embed the involvement of BSL children and young people in the democratic process.

The guidance should place far more emphasis on such forms of democratic engagement for deaf children and young people and should take steps to resource and promote these. We are pleased to see the development of The Deaf Sector Partnership Youth National Advisory Group to support the development of the National Plan and would task this advisory group with

actions around access to young BSL users in relation to the electoral democratic process.