Action on Hearing Loss Scotland’s response to the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee’s call for evidence on the attainment of school pupils with a sensory impairment

About Action on Hearing Loss Scotland’s ‘On the Move’ transitions service

Securing employment, training or education opportunities can be extremely challenging for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss as many continue to be disadvantaged and not supported to reach their full potential – for example, the average deaf child leaves high school with a reading attainment age of nine.

Action on Hearing Loss Scotland’s ‘On the Move’ transitions service, funded by The Big Lottery Fund Scotland between 2009-2014, provided specialist support for 16-25 year olds who are deaf or have a hearing loss in central Scotland to take up work experience or move in to full-time education, training or employment.

‘On the Move’ also helped to build the confidence of young people and provided one-to-one or group support to gain life skills and achieve their personal goals, which was very impactful for many clients who had low self-esteem, ambitions and needed to develop their social and team skills.

Every young person is different and ‘On the Move’ provides a personalised service to meet the individual needs of each client. An independent evaluation of the project showed that more than 60% of clients have progressed to a positive education, training or employment destination.

Action on Hearing Loss Scotland has secured funding from The Big Lottery Fund Scotland to continue running the transitions project for another three years and will re-launch the service as ‘Moving On’ in June 2015.
Academic attainment of pupils who are deaf or have hearing loss

Research shows that, between 2005 and 2011, S4 deaf pupils attained an average tariff score of 137, which is 38 points lower than the average for all S4 pupils, and the gap widens at the general and credit stages (University of Edinburgh, *Deaf Achievement Scotland*, 2012).

According to Scottish Government figures (*Summary statistics for attainment, leaver destinations and healthy living, No. 4: 2014 Edition*) published on 17 June 2014:

- 42.8 per cent of school leavers (2012/13) left with one or more passes at SCQF levels 3 to 5 as their highest qualification.
- 1.5 per cent of school leavers (2012/13) attained no passes at Access 3 / Standard Grade Foundation (SCQF level 3) or better.
- 55.7 per cent left (2012/13) with one or more passes at Higher or Advanced Higher (SCQF levels 6 and 7).

NDCS Scotland’s *Close the Gap* report published in April 2014 said Scottish Government figures from 2011/12 show that, compared with school leavers with no additional support needs, deaf school leavers who received support for learning:

- were more likely to leave school with no qualifications in (8.9% versus 1%)
- were more likely to leave school with Standard Grades at 3-4 (14.4% versus 7.5%)
- were less likely to qualify for entry into higher education (36.4% had Highers and Advanced Highers, compared to 60.2% of school leavers with no additional support needs).

Our ‘On the Move’ service has been supporting young deaf or hard of hearing people who have experienced difficulties – often through the lack of adequate communication support during primary and secondary school education – in being able to achieve the same attainment levels as their hearing peers.

Literacy levels are often significantly low amongst ‘On the Move’ clients and they are supported towards attending college classes to improve their literacy and understanding of English – a requirement for entry into many further and higher education courses.
Academic attainment of Action on Hearing Loss Scotland’s ‘On the Move’ clients who are deaf or have hearing loss

The table, below, shows the qualifications achieved by ‘On the Move’ clients for whom we have education records (the project has supported 206 young people in total).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Qualification</th>
<th>Number of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Higher / AS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher / A Level</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Grade (credit level) / National 5</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Grade (general level) / National 4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Grade (foundation level) / National 3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access 1 and 2 / National 1 and 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 70.5 per cent of ‘On the Move’ clients left school with one or more passes at SCQF levels 3 to 5 as their highest qualification.
- 4.2 per cent of ‘On the Move’ clients attained no passes at Access 3 / Standard Grade Foundation (SCQF level 3) or better.
- 25.2 per cent of ‘On the Move’ clients left school with one or more passes at Higher or Advanced Higher (SCQF levels 6 and 7).
Case study

Abi, 24 from Lanarkshire, is profoundly deaf and uses British Sign Language (BSL). She has been supported by the Action on Hearing Loss Scotland’s Employment Advisers since 2008.

Abi left school with a Higher, two Standard Grade credit level passes as well as BSL level 1 and 2 certificates but her applications for a college place weren’t successful. ‘On the Move’ supported Abi to find volunteering opportunities with a youth club and a charity shop, which gave her experience to aid her college applications. She then gained a place at Motherwell College in 2009 and worked her way up from an Intermediate 1 in Health and Social Care.

During her time at college, Abi was supported by ‘On the Move’ to find a work experience placement to supplement her learning. Abi’s Employment Adviser successfully found a placement for her with a support service for deaf people with additional needs. When Abi finished her college course in 2013, she was supported by the ‘On the Move’ Employment Advisers in her search for a full-time care sector job, which included translating job adverts from English into BSL, completing application forms and mock interviews. Abi secured an one day a week work with Enable Scotland and started volunteering with Action on Hearing Loss Scotland as a peer mentor for younger deaf people as well as an Advocacy Worker at another organisation. In September 2014, Abi secured a full time job as a Support Worker at Deaf Action and they are supporting her to achieve a SVQ Level 3.

Recommendations

Action on Hearing Loss Scotland wants all teaching staff to receive mandatory deaf / sensory loss awareness training as part of their undergraduate training.

It is also vital that teachers of the deaf are qualified to level six in British Sign Language if they are supporting students whose first language is BSL.

Pupils who are deaf or have hearing loss should have access to communication support (e.g. BSL interpreters, Electronic Note-Takers, deafblind interpreters or speech to text reporters) which meets their individual needs.

Education materials, class resources and other school information (including extra-curricular activities) should be available in accessible formats in order that children who are deaf or have hearing loss have the opportunity to be included and participate in both learning and social activities.

Action on Hearing Loss Scotland’s ‘Moving On’ service supports 16-25 year olds who are deaf or have a hearing loss in central Scotland, but it is vital that similar projects based on its model are extended to support people living in other parts of Scotland.
For further information:

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