EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into attainment of school pupils with a sensory impairment – Call for views

The Committee is holding a short inquiry to consider how the attainment levels of school pupils with a hearing and/or a visual impairment can be improved. We invite you to give us concise and specific suggestions about what could be done to improve the attainment of children with a sensory impairment.

Response on behalf of The Moray Council.

Improving attainment for children with Hearing Impairment

Qualified Teachers of the Deaf are required to undertake a mandatory diploma or MA in Deaf Education to acquire knowledge and understanding of deafness and its implications for children and young people in their acquisition of language and also their social and emotional wellbeing. Teachers of the Deaf provide essential early intervention and support, following hearing loss diagnosis at birth, and then through all stages of education, supporting both children and families in developing communication skills and management of equipment.

There is an anticipated significant reduction in the number of qualified Teachers of the Deaf, nationally, over the next few years, due to their retirement from teaching.

It is important that barriers to accessing the curriculum for deaf children and young people continue to be addressed and support from the government can be offered in the suggestions below.

- Ensure numbers of Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs), qualified with the mandatory qualification, are maintained in all authorities and monitored by registration of ToD (and subject specialism) with the GTCS.
- Provide ring-fenced funding for training Teachers of the Deaf.
Encourage both primary teachers and secondary teachers from a variety of disciplines to train as Teachers of the Deaf.

Ensure all children and young people, regardless of level of hearing loss (mild → profound), have access to a Teacher of the Deaf with the mandatory qualification, at all stages in their education.

Provide funding for training ToDs and support staff in BSL to a high level.

Promote Early Intervention, following diagnosis at birth, by ensuring enough Teachers of the Deaf are in post and also appropriately qualified support staff input for children aged 0-3 years.

Introduce input from ToDs for deaf young people 16-18 years old in college since many leave without completing courses, due to lack of support and therefore employment prospects are reduced.

Raise the profile of Communication Support Workers for (classroom support) by regulating qualifications and pay scales.

Ensure all higher education students have access to Disabled Student Allowance.

Support flexibility in deaf students’ school timetables to allow tutorial time with a Teacher of the Deaf to consolidate and support curriculum learning through a focus on BSL skills and/or subject specific vocabulary required to access the curriculum and achieve higher qualifications.

Provide funding to purchase appropriate technology.

Continue to support funding of the Scottish Sensory Centre in providing necessary specialist CPD for Teachers of the Deaf and professionals working with deaf children

Ensure increased and improved liaison between Health and Education regarding sharing information.

Advise that all those managing a service should have appropriate training to understand the issues affecting deaf CYP.

Ensure all new build schools comply with current acoustic guidelines. (Not open plan.)

Advise that HMIE Inspection of services are carried out by inspectors who have a knowledge of and background in deaf education

Support mandatory Deaf Awareness training on a regular basis to all sectors of education.

Support for deaf children and their families in rural areas to have opportunities to meet with others with similar needs, since these children are isolated if they have no local peer group and no resourced provision in schools.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Improving attainment for children with Visual Impairment.**

Like hearing impairment, visual impairment is a low incidence condition and children with significant visual impairment need high input from a Teacher of Visual Impairment to offer support to the child and their family regarding specialist educational advice and teaching support, as well as emotional and well being support to promote their independence.

Achievement for Visually Impaired CYP can be enhanced through support from the government in the following ways.

- Ensure numbers of fully qualified Teachers of Visually Impaired Children (QTVI) are maintained in all authorities and numbers monitored by registration of TVI (and subject specialism) with the GTCS.
- Provide ring-fenced funding for training Teachers of Visually Impaired Children. (TVIs)
- Encourage both primary teachers and secondary teachers from a variety of disciplines to train as Teachers of Visually Impaired Children.
- Ensure all children and young people, regardless of level of visual impairment have access to a QTVI at all stages in their education.
- Provide funding for training TVIs and support staff in accessing training in Braille.
- Introduce input from TVIs for visually impaired young people 16-18 years old in college since many leave without completing courses due to lack of support and therefore employment prospects are reduced.
- Ensure all higher education VI students have access to Disabled Student Allowance.
- Support flexibility in the curriculum for VI students to allow tutorial time with a TVI, to consolidate and support curriculum learning or to have for example, college day release in senior years.
- Continue to support funding of the Scottish Sensory Centre in providing CPD for TVIs and professionals working with visually impaired children since there is an ongoing need for TVIs to develop
Professional competency eg. Braille courses, technology training, courses at the Scottish Sensory Centre, as VI is a low incidence disability.

- Ensure the ICT needs of VI children are met, this often needs to be bespoke to the individual child.
- Advise that all those managing a service should have appropriate training to understand the issues affecting visually impaired CYP.
- Advise that HMIE Inspection of services are carried out by inspectors who have a knowledge of and background in visual education/sensory impairment.
- Support mandatory Vision Awareness training on a regular basis to all sectors of education.
- Ensure more effective inter agency working (GIRFEC)
- Support for VI children and their families in rural areas to have opportunities to meet with others with similar needs, since these children are isolated if they have no local peer group and no resourced provision in schools.

27/04/15