The National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) welcomes this opportunity to submit evidence on the implications for schools, teachers and pupils of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce. We would welcome the opportunity to facilitate the inclusion of deaf young people in any further discussions the Committee would like to have.

1. Background

1.1. The National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) is the leading charity in Scotland dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. In Scotland, we have a dedicated team based in Glasgow led by Heather Gray, Director. The team has a strong focus on addressing the attainment gap that exists for deaf learners. This includes the work we do with our Young Campaigners who are a group of deaf young people aged 14-20 years old. They call for better services and campaign on issues affecting deaf children in Scotland.

1.2. As well as this work, NDCS provides a dedicated Family Support Service across the country. Our current service, Your Child, Your Choices (YCYC) delivers family sign across specific geographical locations. NDCS also commissions research to inform the sector and provides training for professionals as well as running a programme of events and activities for deaf children and their families aimed at building skills and confidence.

1.3. NDCS is funded entirely from voluntary income and trusts and foundations in its delivery of services in Scotland.

1.4. We know that with the right support, deaf children can achieve equally well to their hearing peers, however we know that a significant gap in educational attainment and life chances exists for deaf children in Scotland. NDCS are working with partners across sectors to address the issues which we know contributes to gaps in life chances and employability outcomes.

1.5. Our recent research report, Close the Gap highlighted significant gaps in outcomes for deaf young people across education, training and employment and has also raised concerns about the employability of deaf young people in Scotland, highlighting that the group is under-represented in Higher Education, training and employment. In addition, the research has indicated issues in access to support, information and guidance for deaf young people across the range of post-school settings including college, apprenticeships and the workplace.
1.6. NDCS has welcomed the commitment made by the Scottish Government to acknowledge the attainment gap that exists for deaf learners and commit to closing it.

2. Context

2.1. Deafness is not in itself a learning disability. However, Scottish Government figures show that there is a significant attainment gap for deaf learners. Last year (2012/13), there was an increase in the overall tariff score of deaf pupils from 274 to 289. This is good news. This might be explained by the slight increase in hearing impaired pupils who obtained Advanced Highers (up from 10.3% to 12.7%). Despite the increase, hearing impaired pupils are still significantly trailing behind non-additional support needs peers whose average score was 439 last year.

2.2. On a number of important indicators such as numbers leaving school with no qualifications, and those qualifying to enter Higher Education, this group have a worsening attainment profile.

Qualifications

2.3. School leavers with no qualifications (Scottish Government Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4. School leavers qualifying for Higher Education (Scottish Government Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>60.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HE Access

2.5. The number of deaf school leavers entering Higher Education decreased last year, while access for those with no additional support needs improved.

School leavers entering Higher Education (Scottish Government Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE Access

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1 Scottish Government, 2014, *Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data*
2 Scottish Government, 2014, *Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data*
3 Scottish Government, 2014, *Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data*
4 Scottish Government, 2014, *Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data*
2.6. The number of deaf school leavers entering Further Education increased last year and college is clearly a popular destination for deaf school leavers, which is very positive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School leavers entering Further Education (Scottish Government Data)</th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7. However the National Deaf Children’s Society does have some concerns about the consistency of support in college settings, and how deaf young people are succeeding in their transition out of college into sustainable employment. During the Close the Gap research, interviews with 30 deaf young people aged 18 to 24 years old in 2013 revealed that support was inconsistent for deaf students at college, and a number had dropped out of their programmes due to this.

2.8. NDCS recently commissioned research from the University of Manchester which looked in detail at the experiences of deaf students at college. While this was based on experiences at English colleges, there are likely to be many similarities for the experiences of deaf students in Scotland.

2.9. The research project found that although the vast majority of deaf young people complete their FE course, nearly one quarter do not achieve any qualification at any level. The drop out rate for deaf students in Further Education is twice that of the general population of students in FE.

2.10. Around one third of deaf students in FE will follow a course at Level 3. Of those who follow an AS level course fewer than 4% will actually achieve the qualification when they have completed the course. Deaf young people generally enter Further Education with fewer qualifications and lower levels of academic achievement in comparison with the general population of 16 year olds. But the research project also showed that the majority of deaf young people in FE do not make up the qualification gap they have on leaving school in comparison with other young people of their age.

2.11. The Report has recommended there is an urgent need to establish best practice standards in Further Education for deaf students and a means of demonstrating that provision is effective and meeting their needs. In Scotland there is clearly a need to understand the experiences of college students in Scotland in order to improve the support they receive and ensure they are reaching their full potential and moving into sustainable employment.

2.12. UK wide employment estimates have shown that approximately 58% of working age deaf people are employed compared to 80% of the non-disabled working age population. In Scotland, this gap is evident among school leavers, with 19.1% moving into employment after school compared with 25.5% of school leavers.

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5 NDCS, 2014, [Close the Gap](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1)
6 University of Manchester, 2015, [http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1)
7 University of Manchester, 2015, [http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1)
leavers with additional support needs. It is positive that over the past 2 years employment rates among deaf school leavers have improved, however there is still some way to go to close the gap that exists.

2.13. Similarly, the number of unemployed hearing impaired school leavers decreased to 10.6%, however deaf school leavers are still more likely to be unemployed than hearing leavers – 8.1% of whom were unemployed on leaving school last year.

3. **If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most;**

3.1. An increased focus on improving the vocational content of the curriculum and on improving relationships between schools and post school destinations would be likely to improve all young people’s post school outcomes.

3.2. However there are particular issues facing groups of students, such as those who are deaf, which creates gaps in attainment and achievement of post school outcomes. The report does not contain a strong focus on addressing these issues and so may be unlikely to contribute to closing the attainment gap for all learners.

3.3. For deaf learners, there are underlying issues that may mitigate the impact of the implementation of the Report’s recommendations. These issues have the capacity to reduce the likelihood of deaf students benefitting from its implementation.

3.4. In particular, the persisting attainment gap which deaf learners experience means there are a number of deaf students that are not achieving minimum qualifications that may be required to gain employment. Even with the additional supports that implementing the Report’s recommendations would put in place, these students may still struggle to benefit from improved prospects after school.

3.5. According the Close the Gap research, a key contributing factor to this gap in attainment is inconsistencies in the support available for deaf learners across local authorities. There is wide disparity in the support available in different local authorities, with some deaf learners experiencing effective support and others being dissatisfied by what is available locally. In addition, there are problematic issues within the work force of specialist Teachers of the Deaf which may result in support becoming increasingly inconsistent and the attainment gap for this group widening. For example, a third of Teachers of the Deaf do not hold the mandatory qualification which is a statutory requirement. In addition, over half of the Teacher of the Deaf workforce is due to retire within the next ten years. These factors mean there is likely to be a shortage of qualified and skilled workforce to meet the needs of deaf learners. This may well put deaf learners at risk of not benefitting from efforts to improve the employability of school leavers.

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8 Scottish Government, 2014, *Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data*


3.6. Another factor which may mitigate the benefits of implementing the Wood Report recommendations is the deaf awareness that exists among employers. Our research shows that deaf young people perceive a number of barriers preventing them from gaining employment. Some young people felt that their hearing loss was met with negative views from employers and some felt that disclosing their deafness on job applications limited the likelihood of them being invited to interview. While some employers are well informed about deafness and how to support deaf colleagues there is much work to be done in sharing this good practice and dispelling negative attitudes about deafness among employers.

3.7. While deaf young people would greatly benefit from increased opportunities for work experience placements, there is a need to raise awareness among employers about how to support deaf young people on those placements, and a need to support employers in order to be able to do so. NDCS has delivered bespoke deaf awareness training for organisations taking deaf young people on for work experiences and would welcome the opportunity to roll this out more consistently. In addition, NDCS has a number of video resources with tips on how to support deaf young people on work placement which we would welcome the opportunity to share.

3.8. In addition, NDCS also considers the experience of the college sector with regards to the formation of regional colleges with more focus on regional labour markets and a greater emphasis on employment outcomes. There is evidence to suggest that this process has disproportionately disadvantaged disabled students. The Educational Institute of Scotland surveyed colleges in 2014 with results showing a significant decline, nationally, in the level of support available to students with ASN in Scotland’s FE colleges – with significant regional differences in provision. At the time of the survey only 46 staff held a Diploma in Special Educational Needs (or equivalent), this is a drop of 30%. Six colleges stated that they had no Diploma in SEN qualified staff.

3.9. In addition, the EIS’ data shows a year-on-year reduction every year from 2009-10 to 2012-13 in additional support needs student numbers. The number of DPG18 students in the colleges sharing data has dropped from 19,622 to 14,887 between 2009-10 and 2012-13. This is a reduction of 24%.

3.10. There is a need to learn from this experience, in terms of ensuring that the approach to focusing on vocational content within the curriculum and the employability of young people is fully inclusive of the needs of all learners and does not have the unintended consequence of widening attainment gaps that already exist for some groups of learners such as those who are deaf.

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11 For an example of NDCS resources see: [http://www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=9325](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=9325)


4. The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided;

4.1. A streamed approach to education could be detrimental for deaf young people as many may lack the age-appropriate language and numeracy skills that may be required in order to effectively assess young people to determine the appropriate stream for them. As such this may result in schools being reluctant to enrol deaf students into academic streams – limiting their right to reach their full academic potential.

4.2. There would be real benefit to ensuring that all young people are supported to explore their full academic potential and that within the core curriculum there are opportunities for all young people to enhance their vocational knowledge and experience as well.

5. Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”;

5.1. To ensure all of the recommendations are met for all young people there needs to be a strong focus in schools on achieving inclusion. Meeting the aspirations of the Report will require schools to remove barriers to learning and participation and work to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. There are positive examples of where schools are achieving this successfully, such as the roll out of the Dyslexia-friendly schools programme where schools have made efforts to raise awareness and understanding of the needs of learners with dyslexia, as well as challenging the stigma and negative attitudes that may surround it.

5.2. NDCS would welcome this approach being taken consistently in schools across a range of additional support needs, including deafness. Feedback from our Deaf Learners Conference which was held in partnership with Education Scotland illustrated that young people felt that their school should be more deaf aware and there was a need to challenge the negative attitudes towards deafness which often left young people feeling isolated and lacking in confidence.

5.3. In addition, while considering how to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”, we must consider the young people who are currently furthest from achieving these. As mentioned earlier, around 10% of deaf young people leave school with no qualifications at all. For many students we need to make sure they are achieving basic qualifications that they will need for their future and there should be the acknowledgement that getting the basics right for some young people is the most urgent issue to address at the moment.

6. Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome;

6.1. With regards to the section on Equalities contained within the report, NDCS agrees that there should be a strong focus on fostering aspiration among
learners with disabilities. Linked to this is the issue of promoting positive emotional health and wellbeing so that young people can achieve confidently throughout school and beyond. The social isolation and barriers deaf young people face put them at particular risk of experiencing poorer emotional health and wellbeing, and national statistics show that 40% of deaf young people are likely to experience mental ill health compared with 25% of other young people. 14

6.2. NDCS has a number of resources and tools which can support schools to promote positive emotional health and wellbeing, including a Healthy Minds training programme for practitioners who are working with deaf young people. We would welcome the opportunity to present further information regarding the positive impact these kinds of resources have in enhancing the wellbeing of young people, and case studies of where we have worked with schools to deliver this training for professionals.

6.3. There is scope to place more emphasis on the specific challenges faced by young people from deprived socio-economic backgrounds and the impact this may have on them developing employability skills. It is also important to consider that socio-economic deprivation does not exist in isolation from other factors which disadvantage young people. Our research has strongly indicated the “double disadvantage” which exists for deaf young people from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. Young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds experienced far less parental support and advocacy which was required throughout school and beyond to ensure that the additional support needs of the young person were being effectively addressed. This had clear implications for the young person’s education and post school outcomes. 15

7. Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements);

7.1. The changes proposed by the Report’s recommendations will involve a level of staff training and reorganisation in schools particularly around the issue of transitional planning. There will be a need to ensure transitional planning is happening consistently for all young people, and it is working in a way that enables links with colleges and other post school destinations. Our research has indicated that currently, deaf young people do not consistently experience transitional planning, despite this being a statutory duty on local authorities under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004). Of the 30 young deaf people who took part in our research project who were aged between 18 and 24, only 4 said they had had a transitional plan. 16

7.2. NDCS has been working closely with the pan-Ayrshire authorities to deliver a Statement of Intent for promoting positive post school transitions for deaf young people. The Statement consists of three strands and includes:

- **Promoting positive emotional health and wellbeing:** through this strand deaf young people are able to access a structured programme to enhance their ability...
to develop improved confidence and a positive sense of self. This involves the roll out of the NDCS Healthy Minds training programme and improved opportunities for deaf young people to explore peer support;

- **Improving post-school transitional planning**: by embedding the NDCS, Skills Development Scotland and Donaldson’s resource, A Template for Success. This is a toolkit resource for all professionals working with deaf young people at a time when they are moving on from school and is appropriate for teachers, Skills Development Scotland Staff, Careers Advisers, College or University Staff as well as employers. It clearly sets out some of the issues to consider when supporting a deaf young person. We have had very positive feedback from those who have used the resource so far;

- **Facilitating effective partnership working**: NDCS has endorsed the Scottish Transition Forum’s recommendation regarding the benefits of establishing local forums of professionals involved in supporting positive transitions. This forum has been successfully set up in Ayrshire where its members includes local colleges, universities, employers, teachers, Skills Development Scotland staff as well as third sector organisations. This has been a valuable forum for professionals to share information and build relationships.

7.3. NDCS recommends that this structured approach would be beneficial to schools in improving transitional practices in their local areas and would improve post school outcomes of young people. NDCS would welcome the opportunity to share more information about the Statement of Intent approach and the positive impact it has had so far in Ayrshire. We will be working to roll out the Statement of Intent to a number of further local authorities this year.

8. **What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:**

- teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”);
- closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

No comments.

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