



Response to the Scottish Government

A Governance Review

Empowering Teachers and Communities to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education

This paper responds to the Scottish Government: A Governance Review – Empowering Teachers and Communities to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education.

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Background

It is over 125 years since the BDA was founded in 1890 and its primary purpose has always been the status and recognition of the Deaf Community and British Sign Language (BSL) in the United Kingdom. The cornerstones of the BDA are: valuing and promoting our language, BSL, and asserting our linguistic rights; working with and supporting the UK-wide community of BSL users; fostering a strong and positive Deaf identity, especially amongst young people; preserving our Deaf heritage and representing the needs, aspirations, rights and responsibilities of Deaf people.

The BDA has always had a strong interest in educational issues; in the 1980s we pioneered the use of BSL/English interpreters in youth and community education courses run for our members. Our education policies have consistently supported a bilingual educational approach.

We produced a Supplementary Report to the UK Shadow report to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (BDA, 2014). In this we outline our views on issues affecting BSL users in the education system and point out ways in which the UK State report to the UN glosses over serious issues which affect Deaf children and impact on their achievement at school.

The BDA is the UK's Ordinary Member of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), which recently produced a very important Position Paper on the Language Rights of Deaf Children (WFD, 2016). The report recognised that sign languages are equal in status to spoken languages and should be respected and promoted thus in educational settings, helping Deaf children to exercise their right to fully develop their cultural and linguistic identity in accordance with Article 30 of the CRPD, which is essential for the development of the personality, self-esteem and resilience of Deaf children.

We discuss here those Deaf children who might learn through BSL, many of whom currently don't. We believe that this proportion is decided by the attitudes of the health service, audiology services, speech and language therapy services, educational services, the government, the media, parents and voluntary organisations.

We believe the environment will change with the new BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and the support of the Scottish Government enabling parents of Deaf children to have more opportunities to learn BSL intensively while their Deaf child is young, and continuously as their child grows up. This Act will create a cultural shift in attitudes about Deaf people which we hope will influence the education system too, so that BSL is accepted and valued in families across Scotland.

However, the policy background in Scotland is still not favourable to the maintenance of BSL for Deaf children. The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000) made it clear that the local school was presumed to be the best place for all children. While BDA Scotland supports the principles behind inclusive education, in the sense that it means justice for all children to achieve their full potential, we don't support isolation of Deaf BSL users in their local schools. Physically being in the local school is often not conducive to linguistic inclusion at all. Where parents choose this option, we always press on schools to ensure that Deaf children should be allowed properly qualified educational BSL/English interpreters (minimum BSL Level 6) and highly skilled Deaf specialist staff supporting Deaf students.

Everyone should be able to develop a first language. This principle was agreed internationally by the UN in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education emphasises the significance of sign language as a medium of communication in article 21:

“Educational policies should take full account of individual differences and situations. The importance of sign language as the medium of communication among the deaf, for example, should be recognized and provision made to ensure that all deaf persons have access to education in their national sign language. Owing to the particular communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or special classes and units in mainstream schools” (Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO 1994)

In Scotland the 'presumption of mainstreaming' (Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000) should not override children's rights to a fluent language. This may involve additional costs, such as transport, but children's linguistic rights to a fluent first language must be prioritised.

However, we believe more important are the following priorities in Scotland:

- Development and implementation of a new Early Years Language Programme (language planning and learning development) to support every Deaf child and his/her family at home from the birth to the beginning of primary education;
- Provision of regional centres of Deaf Education excellence (the school within a school model) – larger resource based nurseries and schools with large numbers of Deaf young people to allow BSL communities to flourish;
- Maintenance of existing Deaf schools with more emphasis on an academic education through a bi-lingual BSL and English approach.

Currently we believe the rhetoric around informed choice is not always reflected in reality – largely because the funding tied up in Deaf Education is currently too weighted in favour of teachers of deaf children who can't sign fluently, and not enough towards Deaf or fluent BSL using teachers and qualified educational BSL/English interpreters.

The next section in this paper will respond to the Scottish Government Consultation. We hope the Scottish Government will recognise the importance of listening to the experiences of our Deaf members and supporters, who share their successes, failures and frustrations in the provision of primary, secondary and further education and training. Their experiences must outweigh those of non-Deaf professionals and teachers who are prone to make biased or unbalanced decisions and impose controls over Deaf Education provision.

Best governance in the provision of Deaf Education must bring together both Deaf BSL experts and non-Deaf professionals to make the huge changes necessary for the futures of Deaf children and young people.

This is a summary of recommendations made by the BDA Scotland in response to the Scottish Government’s 2016 Report “Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve Excellence and Equity in Education – A Governance Review”

The following are key points which are expanded on in the full paper:

- The BDA Scotland is keen to see the development and implementation of a new Early Years Language Programme (language planning and learning development) to support every Deaf child and their family at home from birth to the beginning of primary education
- National Deaf Education commissioning should be mandated to commission these Early Years Language programmes as well as regional centres of excellence and specialist training and high quality support provisions for Deaf children in rural or remote areas.
- We call for a new sub-committee made up of key experts to focus on the provision of Deaf Education Resourced Bases, ensuring that their delivery and funding are effective and well planned to meet current and future needs.
- We call for the funding of highly experienced Deaf BSL workers to visit and support Deaf children and their families to develop a bi-cultural environment at home.
- We call for a provision of regional centres of Deaf Education excellence (the “school within a school” model) plus larger resource based nurseries and schools with large numbers of signing Deaf young people to allow signing communities to flourish.
- Decisions on recruitment of teachers and support staff to work directly with Deaf children should not be made without consulting with a qualified Deaf BSL expert.
- Deaf Education policy should be consistent across Scotland. National Deaf Education commissioning would ensure fair and equal treatment for all Deaf children across the country.
- The government should encourage teachers and schools (where there are Deaf Education Resourced Bases or similar) to develop an Authority BSL plan under the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.
- We call for School Councils in mainstream schools with Deaf children to develop more knowledge and understanding of the support needed by Deaf children and young people.
- We call for School Council representatives and management to be properly trained and also be more aware of different levels of BSL skill: BSL Level 1, 2, 3, 4 and BSL/English interpreting (Level 6).

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Responding to the Consultation Questions

4.1 What are the strengths of the current governance arrangements of Scottish education?

We recognise that there has been no research into the current governance decision making relating to Deaf Education, but we believe a very high percentage of boards of governors in mainstream schools (which at least 80% of Deaf children and young people currently attend) may not have direct knowledge and/or understanding of the right level of support Deaf children and young people need at school and so rely on management to make recommendations that may not always be in the best interests of Deaf children and young people.

4.2 What are the barriers within the current governance arrangements to achieving the vision of excellence and equity for all?

As above, we believe there are very few School Council representatives who have shown a real interest or understanding about the provision of Deaf Education Resourced Bases within mainstream schools. We also believe it to be a very low number of mainstream schools with Deaf Education Resourced Bases that have Deaf people on their School Councils. We are not aware that any actively advertise for Deaf people to join their School Councils.

In addition, we don't know how well informed Schools' Councils and management are about the provision and resources that Deaf Education Units need; specifically, to maximise Deaf children's potential and make sure they function at a level equal to hearing children. Both School Councils and Management should be properly trained to understand more about Deaf Education and Deaf & BSL issues.

The current governance arrangements are through local authorities. We have had concerns raised by members about the quality of provision within small local authorities in particular, and also some rural ones. Some authorities do not provide any Deaf students with BSL at all, and often don't provide curriculum support of any sort at secondary level.

One of the main concerns often raised is schools continually employing poorly skilled Communication Support Workers (CSWs) and Learning Support or Teaching Assistants with only BSL Level 1 or 2 (SCQF Level 4 and 5). We believe School Council representatives and management are generally unaware of the large difference between BSL Level 2 and BSL Level 6 (SCQF Level 10). We also believe a very high percentage of these staff are not actively involved in the Deaf / BSL community, and so have no personal empathy (limited understanding and knowledge) of Deaf culture, language, identity and community.

There is very little information available about the qualification levels in BSL of non-teaching staff working with Deaf children in Scottish schools. The CRIDE survey (2014) states that

there are 10.4 full time equivalent posts working as 'communication support workers / interpreters / communicators' for the whole of Scotland (NDCS, 2014: 15). This figure is shockingly low given that 15% of all Deaf children in Scotland use some sort of BSL, suggesting that Teachers of the Deaf are taking on an 'interpreting' role more than support staff. There are 364.6 FTE in this role in England, which has ten times the population. If the same proportion of staff were employed in Scotland we would see at least 36.

Neither is there any official Government guidance on the skill levels needed by these members of staff. BDA Scotland insists that these support staff are all qualified to interpreter level, i.e. hold a Level 6 BSL / English interpreting qualification or university degree in BSL/ English interpreting and be registered with Scottish Association of Sign Language (SASLI) or National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) so that their regular updating and professional development is logged. Evidence from Deaf and hearing participants was mentioned in BDA Scotland's official response to the Scottish Parliament Education Committee last year (see Appendix) and shows the many ways in which poor interpreting skill and lack of understanding of the professional role of the interpreter impacts on Deaf children's school achievement and confidence.

It is unknown whether School Councils and management or Local Authority services for D/deaf children are committed to provide an advanced BSL training budget so that support staff can obtain qualifications up to BSL Level 6. But there is very little evidence that schools or authorities are making this commitment. This also raises the question of why schools are not prepared to employ skilled, fluent Deaf BSL staff, especially in primary schools, which would make a huge difference and provide better outcomes for Deaf children than employing hearing staff with only BSL Level 1, 2 or 3.

The BDA is very clear that any staff with a qualification below BSL Level 6 are not properly trained or equipped to support Deaf children using fluent BSL. This will simply set Deaf children to fail, resulting in a waste of state funding.

One of solutions would be a sub-committee focusing on the provision of Deaf Education Resourced Bases, ensuring that their delivery and funding are effective and well planned to meet current and future needs. The sub-committee should invite key experts including Deaf BSL using professionals to join them. Resources for Deaf children's education should be allocated based on the right of Deaf children to linguistic and educational equality with hearing children. Resources should not be allocated on the basis of a fixed LEA "Additional Support" budget, or on the basis that some parents know more about the Individual Education Plan (IEP) procedure than others. This will ensure a fairer Deaf Education system which is well resourced and can deliver better results for all Deaf children along with an advanced BSL training programme for support staff, teachers and parents. There should also be regular "BSL Clubs" for hearing children and families of Deaf children to learn and make friends with Deaf children in a bi-lingual environment.

Our Deaf members and supporters have told us that in Deaf or specialist schools there are low expectations of Deaf children so their own perceptions should be challenged and changed by bringing in Deaf adult role models and more qualified Teachers of the Deaf who will get them more involved in the Deaf community.

Should the above key principles underpin our approach to reform? Are there other principles which should be applied?

Whilst we support the government's key principles, we believe there is a great need to reform and improve the Deaf Education system across Scotland.

We have found two sources of statistical information about the signing skills of teachers of deaf children in Scotland: a survey carried out by Marian Grimes for the BSL and Linguistic Access Working Group (Scottish Government, 2009), and the CRIDE survey 2014 (NDCS, 2014). Both conclude with very similar results: around 8% to 10% of teachers of deaf children in Scotland have signing skills at level 3 or above. This level is not an SCQF level but an SVQ equivalent, so it represents a Higher in a language or SCQF level 6. We do not think this is a high level of fluency in a language; most people with a Higher in Spanish or French would not be able to teach or interpret in that language. We also gathered further qualitative data from Deaf young people and parents about the BSL skills of teachers of deaf children as part of our response paper to the Scottish Parliament Education Committee last year (BDA Scotland, 2015) and the evidence shows the effect on Deaf children of Teachers of the Deaf having such weak BSL skills.

We strongly believe that the most important and valuable step forward would be the setting up of an Early Years Language Programme for Deaf Children and Families. This would benefit both the Deaf child and their family with the acquisition of fluent BSL and English before a child starts primary school.

In conclusion, we propose the following Deaf Education principles which we believe will produce the best results:

- The Deaf child has a right to be taught by Deaf and hearing teachers who use BSL fluently and hold the equivalent of BSL Level 6.
- Deaf teachers should take a leadership role in bilingual BSL / English schools and in services for Deaf children
- Deaf children and young people have the right to excellent language and communication support from qualified educational BSL/English interpreters. Standards must be monitored by Education Scotland inspection teams which should include native BSL users and qualified registered BSL/English interpreters. *(Note that this should be part of BSL National Plan lead to authorities plans which should promote BSL (Scotland) Act – this is where Education Scotland and Local Authorities comes in this)*
- Deaf adults and other people who use BSL fluently should be encouraged to train to work in education in roles such as support worker, educational instructor, teaching assistant, and as teachers.
- Reform of the Teacher of the Deaf training course is essential and fluency in BSL should be a prerequisite for teaching children whose preferred language is BSL. Teachers who are not bi-lingual in BSL should work with qualified educational BSL/English interpreters in the classroom.
- Existing Teachers of the Deaf (ToD) should be asked by the Education Departments to improve their BSL skills and undergo training in bi-lingual methods or lose their ToD status within 5 years. They could continue to work only with deaf students who prefer speech as their medium of instruction.

- Education Scotland should recruit and set up a pool of HMI Inspectors of BSL expertise in order to monitor the effectiveness of the bi-lingual development of Deaf BSL users.

4.4

What changes to governance arrangements are required to support decisions about children's learning and school life being taken at school level?

We recognise that the number of Deaf children using BSL varies in every local authority from very low (especially in rural and remote areas) to high (cities & towns). But for rural or remote areas, Deaf Education support comprises of only a few hours a week direct support to the Deaf child, while those in large towns and cities get more hours of support. This is unfair.

As we mentioned earlier it would be beneficial to have a sub-committee on Deaf Education provision. We strongly believe it would be cost efficient for Scottish Government to set up a new national commissioning team responsible for the whole of Scotland which would manage and support the Deaf Education programme, such as Early Years Language programme, regional centres of excellence for Deaf children and young people (school within school model). This should be directly funded by the Scottish Government, rather than local authorities to ensure consistency. We want Scottish Deaf Education to have the same principles, policy and statements across the country. Currently, schools have different views on Deaf children, some promote oralism only, some total communication, some a BSL / English bi-lingual approach. Yet they are all funded by the state and the state should be more consistent. The current situation is not helpful to the future of Deaf children. It should be one policy for all with no more conflicts, so we advocate the setting up of a national commissioning team.

We believe the new BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 will influence the Scottish Government to review the guidance which states that all teachers of deaf children should have level 3 BSL as a minimum with a commitment to upgrade within 2 years to a level 6 interpreting qualification if they are taking on that role in class. Furthermore we believe that all teachers of deaf children working with the under 5s and parents of this age group should have this minimum level of fluency in BSL so that they are able to work with parents to properly advise them about the options available. If the parents choose to use BSL, the teachers will then be ready to start introducing the language in the early years. BDA Scotland would like to see many more Deaf people and fluent BSL users in these early years' roles, as further discussed below.

The recent primary 1 + 2 Languages strategy (Scottish Government, 2012) is a very welcome move, which could see hearing and Deaf children learning BSL as a modern language throughout primary school. Teaching BSL to children, however, is a specific skill, not one mentioned in the Scottish Government competences for Teachers of the Deaf (Scottish Government, 2007) and as far as we know modern language teaching approaches are not part of the course to train Teachers of the Deaf. In one particular location, Dingwall Academy, a successful project at secondary level has seen a teacher of the deaf who is also a qualified BSL / English interpreter working with a Deaf teacher qualified to teach BSL to advanced levels (Kinsman, 2014). Another one is Windsor Park School (Falkirk) has BSL programme for hearing children, parents and other schools involved, its Head of Windsor Park School and Sensory Service can use BSL.

Deaf Studies resources and activities are used with Deaf and hearing pupils in this mainstream school. BDA Scotland endorses such an approach because it uses staff who are truly fluent in BSL, but also points out that at present this situation is only available in very few locations in Scotland.

4.5 What services and support should be delivered by schools? What responsibilities should be devolved to teachers and headteachers to enable this? You may wish to provide examples of decisions currently taken by teachers or headteachers and decisions which cannot currently be made at school level.

When recruiting teachers and support staff to work directly with Deaf children, schools should not make any decisions without consulting with a qualified Deaf BSL expert. Schools with Deaf Education Resourced Bases should produce an Authority BSL plan as required by BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

No schools should make their own Deaf Education policy different to others. It is not helpful for parents when they must send a Deaf child far away to a school that provides BSL, because their local school does not. That is why we are pressing for national Deaf Education commissioning which would ensure fair and equal treatment for all Deaf children across Scotland. For example, all Deaf Education Resourced Bases and deaf/specialist schools should have the same bilingual policy to illustrate a sign bilingual approach which Deaf Education professionals can learn from. The schools will be staffed by Deaf professionals and native BSL users.

4.6 How can children, parents, communities, employers, colleges, universities and others play a stronger role in school life? What actions should be taken to support this?

Deaf or specialist schools, Deaf Education Resourced Bases (part of the mainstream schools) and regional centres for Deaf Education (schools within schools) should develop:

- National Deaf Studies Curriculum (www.fbarnes.camden.sch.uk/useful-info/resources/national-deaf-studies-curriculum) this will help every Deaf child to learn about Deaf Identity, Community, Language and History. It should include inviting Deaf Adult role models or professionals to give talks.
- Engaging more with the local Deaf Community – meeting Deaf adults at clubs and events.
- Early Years Language Programme, involving parents of a newly diagnosed Deaf child meeting other parents of older Deaf children.

4.7 How can the governance arrangements support more community-led early learning and childcare provision particularly in remote and rural areas?

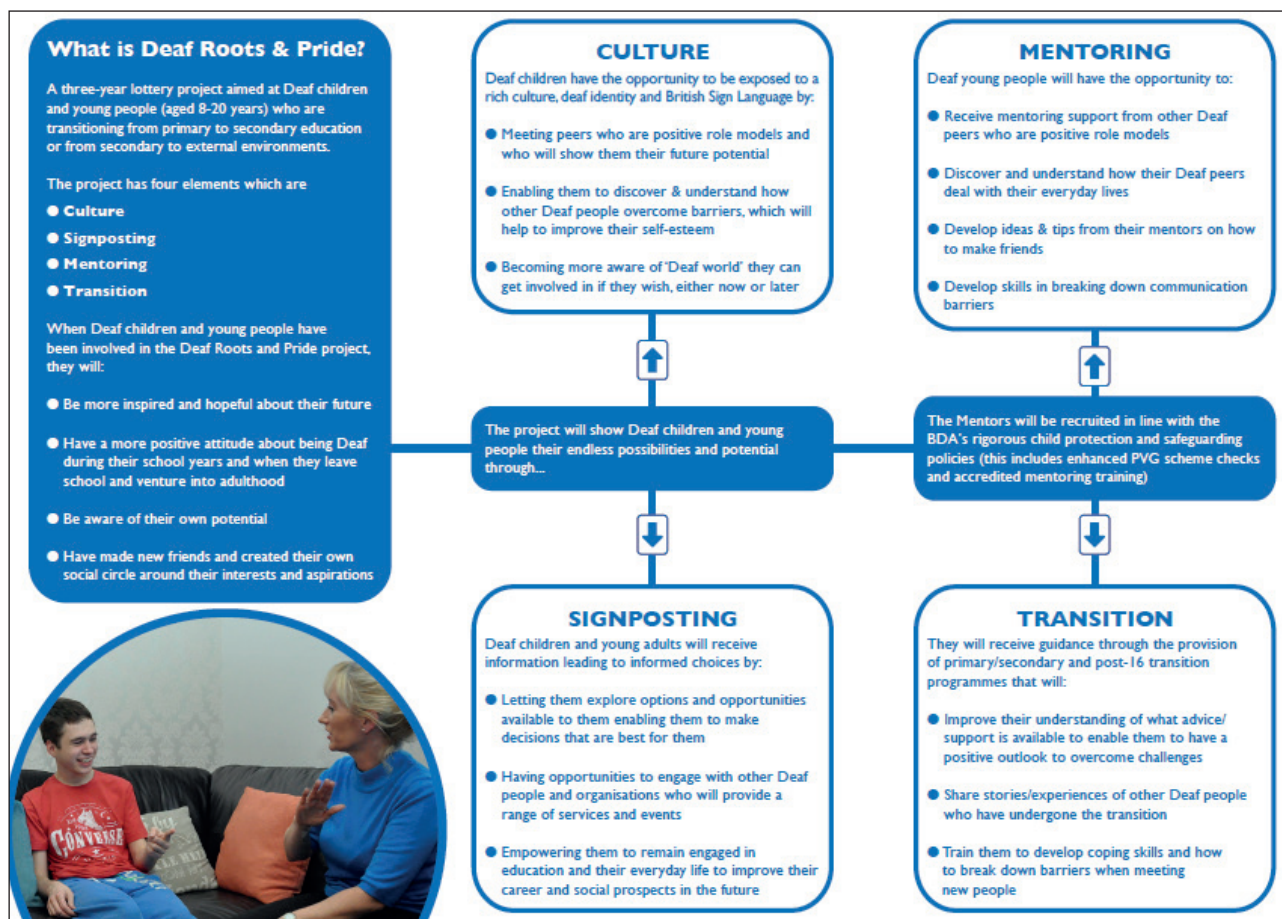
From the CRIDE 2014 survey (NDCS, 2014) we can see that only 8 local authority services in Scotland have staff with level 3 BSL or above. This means that in the 24 other local authorities there is no specialist teacher with this level of BSL available. This problem is most likely to affect rural areas and those local authorities which don't have a resource base school or Deaf school available.

Recent University of Edinburgh research (O'Neill et al, 2014: 66) notes that 20 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland do not have a resource base school. Young people in their study who had been to a Deaf school or resource base school were much more likely to use BSL or speech with sign than children who attended their local school.

The Equality Act (2010) expects schools to be ready to support Deaf children in an anticipatory way, i.e. local authorities should have staff ready to work with Deaf children who sign fluently who may move into the area. This would mean every local authority in Scotland should have staff available who can sign fluently in BSL. In rural and small local authorities we know at present that local authorities are not fulfilling this anticipatory duty. In part this is due to the extremely vague guidance from the Scottish Government about the level of skill needed by Teachers of the Deaf. *Note that the Equality Act does not mention BSL so that is why BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 was introduced.*

'a minimum level of competence in BSL, at least to BSL Stage 1, and a requirement to upgrade skills to meet pupil support needs.' (Scottish Government, 2007, p.3)

Recognising there are very few Deaf children and young people in remote and rural areas, we call upon the Scottish Government to set up Early Years Language Programme to fund highly experienced Deaf BSL workers to visit and support Deaf child and his/her family to develop bi-cultural environment at home, reducing social and communication isolation. BDA Scotland has implemented a new Deaf Roots and Pride project (see below) and we believe this will make a real difference in remote and rural areas.



4.8 How can effective collaboration amongst teachers and practitioners be further encouraged and incentivised?

We believe the government should encourage teachers and schools (where there are Deaf Education Resourced Bases or similar) should make an Authority BSL plan under the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, working more closely with local Deaf community and Deaf BSL experts.

Regional centres of Deaf Education excellence should be encouraged to share ideas, training and resources. They should also recruit Deaf BSL experts to monitor and support schools.

This will help everyone know who is doing what, and make sure everyone can be involved in improving Deaf Education for the benefit of the future of Deaf children and young people.

4.9 What services and support functions could be provided more effectively through clusters of schools working together with partners?

As above.

4.10 What services or functions are best delivered at a regional level? This may include functions or services currently delivered at a local or a national level.

As above. We strongly believe a national Deaf Education commissioning team would bring real value for money with consistency across all regional centres. *It is suggested that the commissioning team brings in specialist strategic commissioning director, Teachers of the Deaf and Deaf BSL experts. The team must have good working knowledge and experience in the Deaf Education provision. The team is part of the Scottish Government Commissioning, providing reports to the National Advisory BSL Group (part of BSL (Scotland) Act requirements).*

It will not work if local authorities continue to make their own decisions about Deaf Education, putting more pressure on parents to move to an area that provides better quality Deaf Education quality. One Deaf Education team for the whole of Scotland.

4.11 What factors should be considered when establishing new educational regions?

As above.

4.12 What services or support functions should be delivered at a national level?

As above.

4.13 How should governance support teacher education and professional learning in order to build the professional capacity we need?

We believe an Early Years Language programme focusing on the language plan and learning development should be the top priority, providing support within every Deaf child's home environment from birth to the beginning of primary school education.

A language plan and learning development programme for the family are essential as between 90% and 95% of parents of D/deaf children are hearing, with no real previous knowledge or understanding of bi-lingual BSL / English.

The Early Years Language programme would employ Deaf BSL specialists to support families at home, organise BSL family gatherings and BSL activities. This will help develop the cultural and linguistic identity that is essential for the development of the personality and self-esteem of Deaf children. Research clearly shows that Deaf children given quality education multi-lingually (BSL and written/spoken language) are most likely to succeed academically and become active citizens and full members of wider society. Additionally, research also shows exposure to BSL does not stop speech acquisition or language learning.

We insist that there should be more Deaf role models in schools in Scotland, in every relevant role. This will increase the possibility of a sign intensive environment being available in every area of Scotland so that the Deaf child and their family who choose BSL have a real possibility of using it to support their learning (BDA, 2014). There is currently very little data available about the proportion of qualified teachers, teachers of Deaf children or other support staff who are Deaf. We propose a step programme to ensure that Deaf children in all areas and types of provision can have regular contact with Deaf qualified adults. This includes Deaf children in urban and rural authorities, and those in mainstream, resource based and Deaf schools. To achieve this in Scotland we need a positive recruitment strategy, based on the model of recruiting teachers who can work in Gaelic Medium Education settings (HMIE, 2011).

There are very few Deaf teachers in the UK. Figures indicate approximately 10% of all ToDs have declared a hearing loss (Batterbury 2012:256). However not all of these are Deaf teachers with BSL skills. We need more qualified teachers who are Deaf and use BSL. The UN CRPD (article 24.4) specifies the need for more Deaf and disabled teachers. It requires the UK to “take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in BSL and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education”. To facilitate this, Deaf trainee teachers should be offered the possibility of obtaining their qualifications with their placement and teaching practice in a Deaf school or accessible BSL setting with children. This would cost the government nothing and would enable more Deaf trainee teachers to gain qualified teacher status.

4.14

Should the funding formula for schools be guided by the principles that it should support excellence and equity, be fair, simple, transparent, predictable and deliver value for money? Should other principles be used to inform the design of the formula?

We don't believe that the current funding formula works fairly for individual Deaf children. The cost for a Deaf BSL using child in a mainstream class is much greater than for a group of Deaf BSL using children together in a class. For one Deaf child needing full time support, the estimated cost of employing a qualified education interpreter would be between £35,000 and £40,000 a year, including registration fee, on-going BSL/English interpreting training, plus available budget to cover absences and BSL awareness/learning for a child's classroom mates.

For a group of Deaf children in the same year class, let's say four, the cost would be £80,000 to employ at least two qualified educational BSL/English interpreters, more cost effective than one Deaf individual in a class. Added value is that they would also have Deaf peers who can then support each other.

This needs further research to establish the true cost comparison before the Scottish Government could give the green light to BDA Scotland's suggestion of a national Deaf Education commissioning team.

BDA Scotland proposes that national Deaf Education commissioning should be mandated to commission Early Years Language programmes, regional centres of excellence, specialist training and specialist high quality support provisions for Deaf children in rural or remote areas. The long-term effects of the right education for Deaf children would be reduced costs in unemployment benefits, mental health support and other associated support such as advocacy and community support in later life.

4.15 What further controls over funding should be devolved to school level?

N/A

4.16 How could the accountability arrangements for education be improved?

A national Deaf Education commissioning team will be able to set measurable outcomes and outputs for each commissioned project. For example, monitoring why some regions are improving while others are not. Setting key performance targets is essential to help them deliver and maintain good Deaf Education services, including a BSL plan as required by BSL (Scotland) Act 2015.

4.17 Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the governance of education in Scotland?

Research from the UK and other countries where there has been a similar degree of mainstreaming, for example Cyprus, has shown that Deaf children often feel very isolated in mainstream settings and unclear about how they can fit in with hearing classmates and the adult Deaf community (O'Brien, 2011; Angelides & Aravi, 2006).

From BDA Scotland's official response to the Scottish Parliament Education Committee (see Appendix), we found a major theme was the boredom and social isolation of Deaf children, even when they were in resource bases because of a very small BSL peer group. On the other hand we also found an example of two schools (Dingwall Academy and Windsor Park School) in Scotland where all the hearing children were taught BSL and communicating effectively in work and social situations with Deaf children. It is possible for schools to encourage resilience and a healthy respect for difference and diversity; to do so, Deaf children must have contact with each other and with Deaf role models fluent in BSL.

We believe this will lead to much better educational outcomes for Deaf children:

- Setting up a network of Sign Intensive Early Years bilingual language environments so that all Deaf children can have access to a fluent first language before they start school
- Monitoring the low achievers in much more detail so that it is clear which Deaf pupils are disproportionately being failed by the education system
- Establishing strong sign bilingual practice in Scottish schools with higher expectations for BSL pupils and minimum BSL levels for staff supporting them

We believe that a much greater proportion of Deaf children would benefit from a sign bilingual education, whether that is in a mainstream or a Deaf school. Certainly this should be larger than the 15% of Deaf children who currently have some sign while they are at school. Too often this is only a smattering of Sign Supported English because of the almost non-existent interpreting skills of Teachers of the Deaf.

We don't think that academic achievement is the only measure of a successful schooling; just as important is self-confidence, resilience, friendships with a wide range of people, and having the personal resources to solve problems and make decisions about moving to work and adult relationships.

Our vision for Deaf Education in Scotland is that the Scottish Government is able to build on the support it has already shown towards BSL, to at last provide high quality sign bilingual educational settings where Deaf children can flourish learning both languages (BSL and written/read English). As an organisation, our members would be very willing to advise and work with the Scottish Government to make these plans become a reality.

In conclusion, we would like the Scottish Government to set up an internal working group to explore the future of Deaf Education, using this paper and inviting key organisations and schools such as BDA Scotland, British Association of Teachers for the Deaf (BATOD), National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS), Scottish Association of Sign Language (SASLI), National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD), University of Edinburgh's Scottish Sensory Centre, Heriot Watt University (Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies), Dingwall Academy, Windsor Park School, representatives from Youth BSL National Advisory Group (YNAG), Deaf Teachers representatives to further discussions.

BDA Scotland's Official Response Paper to the Scottish Parliament Education Committee (Attainment of School Pupils with a sensory impairment), April 2015

This Appendix selectively picks up from the response paper to help the Scottish Government seriously consider our call for a national Deaf Education commissioning team to facilitate efficient project delivery and implementation:

'I have seen very poor signing from 'experienced ToDs'. My son was really frustrated in school. It's disgusting and it needs to change now. He is fluent in BSL and was studying National 5 level qualifications with support from a ToD at level 1. In the end he told her to go away as he was better writing notes to the class teacher without her. I'd also like to say he had another ToD who had BSL 4, and the difference was huge.' **Hearing parent**

'My son said "I feel as if I'm an interpreter because they are always asking me, 'What's the sign for this?'" [Then] he's interpreting for the other pupils. It's just not appropriate for a child to do that in school.' **Deaf parent**

'When I'm in class the teacher won't tell me what the other children are saying, like a joke or in groups. She says 'I can't' or 'no', or 'I don't know what they're saying.' She just tells me to get on with my work. That's what it's like and I'm not happy about it. I have to repeat myself all the time because they don't understand me when I sign. I try to get the teacher of the deaf to ask the teacher for help, but they won't.' **Deaf pupil**

Eight participants also commented on the skill levels of support staff, who go by various names such as CSW (Communication Support Worker), support worker, BSL/English interpreter. Here the positions were more mixed but again there was serious concern about the weak signing and interpreting skills of this group. It was pointed out that support staff having poor interpreting skills affected the speed of learning for Deaf children; that full time support was essential; with poor interpreting skills from this group of staff there was the serious effect on confidence of not being understood in class, waiting for staff to arrive and unethical behaviour such as doing the work instead of encouraging pupil independence. More positive comments raised the issue that some Deaf pupils did not need a teacher of the deaf if the interpreting skills of other staff were good; and that staff with level 6 BSL skills and an interpreting qualification, gave pupils confidence in learning. Six of the participants commenting on these issues were children currently at school, i.e. they have recent first-hand experience of the issue.

'The level 2s in primary didn't really help me, like I wasn't as confident in making an effort to give a response in class as I am now. I was constantly worried that they wouldn't understand me as they had poor receptive skills. Now I don't have that problem any more and I'm much more confident. I have three level 6 CSWs.' **Deaf pupil**

'I only had signed support 1-2 times a month at primary school. I have achieved a lot more at secondary school. I am top of my English class and have a certificate in science after passing exams.' **Deaf pupil**

'I got to a mainstream primary school and I'm in P6. The best support worker has level 6 and signs well. The next is level 4 who is not so good, like a bumpy engine. The level 1 person is just no good at all.' **Deaf pupil**

'I would get to class and found myself waiting ages for the interpreter to arrive. The others would be getting on with the work and I would still be waiting. When the interpreter arrived they always had an excuse like they were in a meeting. My education was affected every time they were late.' **Deaf young adult**

Equally important as this last theme were many comments about the provision available to Deaf children or more often the lack of a real choice. Contributors discussed both the advantages and disadvantages of Deaf schools in terms of learning and social confidence. From adults looking back on their time at school (even though most were young adults) there was concern at the way speech was often compulsory and not a choice. Mainstream schools were also viewed in both positive and negative terms. When there was full interpreting support and a reasonable sized peer group there was support for the better academic standards available in mainstream. But there were also deep concerns about the variability of support, with managers deciding not to cover certain classes, or suddenly reducing the amount of support. The amount of time Teachers of the Deaf can give was also often very limited in mainstream settings. This led to unfair decisions, from the pupils' perspective, such as being moved back to base, constantly waiting for interpreting support to arrive, catching up and a lack of confidence in being an ordinary school pupil. The signing skills of staff in these different settings were commented on, including the fact that in some mainstream settings there is no BSL available, just gesture and a bit of sign with speech; that children who have cochlear implants often do not benefit from them and would do better with BSL, and that, in contrast, in one setting hearing children were learning BSL so well that Deaf children really benefitted socially and academically. One Deaf young person discussed his workplace where, unlike at school, he was able to take the initiative and teach his workmates BSL to improve his social experience at work, and his participation in a work team.

'The teacher of the deaf was trying to teach Primary 1, P4 and P7 one after another, dividing out her time. My children were waiting around again all the time. The teacher was trying to do all different levels of work with a really wide range of ages' **Deaf parent**

'In the past some Scottish pupils have been allowed to go to England but now there are cuts in the budget and they have to stay in Scotland. There should be more flexible choices for them. Children moving away from their family could be an issue but they also have a stronger education, and improve their own Deaf identity and become more independent' **Worker in Deaf organisation**

'We would learn so much more if their signing skills were better, like maths and science. And also, where is BSL on the curriculum? It isn't there. So that means Deaf children are really struggling. They have had to wait a long time.' **Deaf young adult**

Twelve participants made points related to this theme which included the right of the Deaf child to have a say in their communication support; the way Deaf parents' views are often ignored by education officials; issues about the law and lack of real choices; and how management of Deaf Education often leads to unfair decisions or delays which risk the Deaf child's education and future prospects. One serious issue reported on was a family being told they had to pay for interpreter support in school or it would not be provided. There were a number of constructive suggestions given by these contributors such as realigning the Deaf Education budget in favour of qualified BSL/English interpreters and reducing the need for so many Teachers of the Deaf; and listening more to the voice of experience from Deaf parents and Deaf professionals.

'In Wales I was provided with a free interpreter. They were brilliant. They would use speech and sign. I am a really good lipreader and this type of support was really good for me. I then moved back to Scotland and was told I would have to pay for an interpreter. I was very angry with this and told my mum it wasn't fair.' **Deaf pupil**

'Some get cochlear implants and go on to use good speech but some have cochlear implants which fail. They often go on to sign – that's who they are. Deaf children should have that option, and I repeat, teachers should be able to work out which child is likely to benefit from signing.' **Deaf parent**

'We need to improve schools – both mainstream and Deaf schools. Because parents can then decide which matches their children's needs.' **Deaf parent**

'In primary school I felt they were forcing me to be oral. In High School you have the option of using speech or sign language.... Now I'm improving. I'm top of the class in five subjects.' **Deaf pupil**

'I asked the school if all the children in this mainstream primary could learn BSL and they accepted it. I also work for the High School, where I asked the headteacher and my arguments were also accepted there. So in S5 and S6 they do BSL level 1 and 2. It's wonderful for me to see BSL on the school curriculum.' **Deaf BSL teacher**

Seven participants discussed the social and emotional effects of attending a Deaf school, a mainstream school or having hearing parents, so less contact with the Deaf community. Young adults and parents reflected on their own attendance at a school for the Deaf positively in terms of having a large peer group and the opportunity to communicate in depth with friends, fall out, make new friends and exist in a complete social context. In contrast younger contributors explained about their social isolation and boredom in school, the lack of a signing peer group and in one case bullying. There was a link back to the first theme where Teachers of the Deaf unable to interpret would exclude Deaf children from the social life of the classroom.

'So my children won't grow up with that experience of friendship which I had at Deaf school – the opportunity to fall out with other children, change best friends, make new ones etc. That's how children develop, but they won't have that experience.' **Deaf parent**

'Sometimes there are people who bully me or I get into trouble with other boys. The teachers always say they will deal with it but they don't. I am stressed out by it. They say things like you're Deaf and you're stupid. So I fight back.' **Deaf pupil**

'I don't have any friends. A year ago when I started at this new school things went on and really nobody made friends. All the hearing children were friends with each other. It's boring just being with the support worker... when I go home I feel bored too because nobody invites me to their house.' **Deaf pupil**

'At break time and lunch-time I found I couldn't speak to the hearing children because my speech was poor. I had been in a signing environment for a long time. I would hang around with 4 Deaf pals... but it was boring. It was the same thing every day, Monday to Friday, month by month, year by year. If I wanted to meet my friends... they often weren't allowed out on a school night or they lived too far away to meet up.' **Deaf young adult**

These case studies are taken from our members who have knowledge of them from across Scotland. The information has been anonymised. These are examples of good practice and also of grave concern to the BDA Scotland as an organisation.

Child A

is a profoundly Deaf girl aged 10 who has an additional disability, cerebral palsy, although this is not severe. She has hearing aids and attends her local primary school which is in a rural area. In the past a child like her would have been offered a place at a nearby Deaf school, with the local authority paying for the transport. Because of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000) her local school is now regarded as her first and best choice. Child A has not developed fluent spoken English, although she can hold a very simple conversation one to one. She has very delayed English vocabulary and grammar and she can only read simple words. She receives a visit from a teacher of the deaf twice a week. She has a sign language lesson once a week from a Deaf tutor. There is no other contact with signing children or adults. Her parents do not sign at home. Her signing is extremely delayed, almost non-existent. This child, in the BDA Scotland's view, is experiencing linguistic exclusion which will of course impact on her educational achievement at school.

Young Person B

has recently left school having been through a Deaf school for most of his school career. He started at the Deaf school at the age of 3 and became fluent in BSL because there were a large number of fluent BSL users in the school, including some Deaf members of staff. This pupil had a Deaf teacher at school for science and maths, and these were areas of academic strength for him. He made good use of the Scottish Sensory Centre's BSL Glossary in his time at secondary school. Because SQA allows Deaf candidates in Scotland to take exams using BSL, he was able to do this and achieved Highers in Maths and a science subject. He left school recently and gained an apprenticeship. He is hoping to work using BSL in the future. Academically and socially he is a confident young person, although his English skills are unfortunately far below the level of his other subjects.

Child C

is 3 and was born without a cochlea, which means hearing aids or a cochlear implant would not work. He was identified at birth through new born screening. Unusually, his family was offered BSL classes paid for by the NHS. These were held in a local community centre, taught by a Deaf tutor, and were open to Child C's extended family and neighbours. This meant that Child C was surrounded by children who could sign, at least at a basic level. His family also has access to a drop-in club for parents and sensory impaired toddlers run by the local authority service for Deaf children. At these sessions his mother can meet other parents with Deaf children and also meet the BSL tutor who will teach her son more BSL when he starts school. The child is developing BSL fairly well. We think it is positive that the NHS has taken responsibility to provide BSL as a language, but they have only done this when there is physically no cochlea.

These case studies have also contributed towards Section 7 where we propose improvements in the Deaf Education system.

Good Practice Models: Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools

These examples of good practice have been reported to us by our members and supporters from across Scotland. We would like to see many more such examples when the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 can be implemented so that Deaf children can receive a full and ambitious bilingual education in BSL and English, and that parents are offered real choices and support.

Early Years

One local authority service employs a qualified BSL / English interpreter to visit families of newly diagnosed Deaf children with the teacher of the deaf. This interpreter takes on a role of giving advice to parents about BSL and providing introductory tuition to the family in the language. Also when interacting with Deaf parents, the same worker interprets for the teacher of the deaf. Parents therefore receive advice and information about a range of real options and communication choices available in the local authority.

The BDA Scotland would also like to see this teacher of the deaf having Level 6 BSL skills as a minimum, and to see Deaf teachers of Deaf children in this role to visit families. Also BDA Scotland has new Deaf Roots and Pride project to provide Deaf mentors.

Primary

One Deaf school for primary age children works very closely with a mainstream primary school on the same site. There is a resource base secondary school, and the primary is one of eight feeder schools. The authority employs a Deaf BSL teacher who teaches parents and Deaf children at the Deaf school. The teacher works across all primary schools in the cluster teaching a taster course in BSL to the Primary 7 hearing children who are going to move to the resourced secondary school. This means that all the children at the secondary resource base have had an introduction to BSL. The local authority is now investigating how the same teacher can introduce BSL from lower down in the primary schools in the cluster as part of the Authority's 1 + 2 languages strategy, i.e. as the third language introduced in upper primary.

The BDA Scotland would also like to see plans where BSL can be language 1 for Deaf children and language 2 for other primary age children where there is a resource base in that school.

Secondary

A mainstream secondary school in one local authority happens to have several families with Deaf children living in the catchment area. The authority has employed Communication Support Workers who have BSL Level 6 language units to act as BSL/English interpreters for a group of Deaf pupils who have good BSL skills, although the authority has not yet agreed to fund the Level 6 interpreting units. One of the CSWs has paid for this course herself and is nearly a qualified educational BSL / English interpreter. The Deaf pupils are making good academic progress, and in some cases have better English skills than their hearing peers. The local authority employs a teacher of the deaf who has fluent BSL skills and she maintains close relationships with the Deaf families of this group of Deaf children, including regular home visits.

The BDA Scotland would like to see this authority pay to train the CSWs to become fully qualified BSL/English interpreters. Otherwise the approach is working well.

Setting up a network of Sign Intensive Early Years bilingual language environments

The BDA Scotland believes that an improvement in Early Years settings will lead to gains in attainment for Deaf children later in the education system. A sign intensive environment would ensure a strong foundation in both BSL and spoken / written English in the Early Years (BDA, 2014). To achieve this is quite a complex activity, and local authorities may have to share resources across boundaries. Some practical ideas about what would be involved are set out in Appendix 1.

Although it is easier to set up an intensive sign environment in a Deaf school, we suggest they could also be successful in a resource base primary school. The model for this approach comes from Early Years environments in Gaelic schools, which has led to good educational results later on in primary school. In comparing the achievements of primary age children in Gaelic medium and English medium schools O'Hanlon, Paterson and McLeod (2013), controlling for social deprivation, found that most children in Gaelic medium education were achieving at the level expected in Gaelic, but a larger proportion were achieving in English. So the Gaelic immersion setting has led to successful bilingualism.

Gaelic is an interesting comparison to make with BSL users in Scotland because most Gaelic medium education takes place alongside English medium classes in the same school, just as most Deaf children are educated currently in mainstream schools or resource bases. In addition, most parents who send their children to Gaelic medium schools don't use Gaelic in the home, and hearing parents of Deaf children also often don't use BSL in the home as they have usually had no contact with the language before their child is born Deaf. The BDA Scotland believe that the experience of successful Gaelic medium education in Scotland could be usefully considered by local authorities in planning Deaf Education.

If Sign Intensive Early Years provision is successful, a next step could be the establishment of a BSL-medium school which is not connected with Additional Support for Learning, open to both Deaf and hearing children. This initiative could draw from the many worldwide examples of co-enrolment schools where equal numbers of Deaf and hearing children work together using both languages to learn and two teachers in each class (e.g. Madrid & Hong Kong in Marshark, Knoors & Tang, 2014; Albuquerque Sign Language Academy, 2012).

It is particularly challenging to establish a Sign Intensive Early Years setting in remote rural areas. Currently many parents of Deaf children may not value this sort of environment; but its advantage is that it will enable Deaf children to acquire at least one fluent language in the early years. We believe parents will understand the value of bilingualism when they can see the results of what their child can actually do with more than one language: the wide range of social interactions their Deaf child can achieve using both BSL and English.

Establishing strong sign bilingual practice in Scottish schools with higher expectations for signing pupils

The BDA Scotland proposes that a language plan should be in place in each local authority area of Scotland so that children who use any form of BSL can have access to a high quality sign bilingual education. This might involve collaboration between local authorities. In some cases these collaborative arrangements are already in place, but the quality of the sign bilingual education on offer is not at all strong. Inspectors need to recognise the features of a successful sign bilingual education by learning from and drawing on the expertise of Deaf teachers of deaf children. This would mean for:

BSL Pupils

- Time on the school timetable to learn BSL as a language in its own right, and to study the cultural as well as linguistic aspects of the language, for example BSL poetry. The chance to study the language and Deaf culture at N4, N5 and Higher levels.
- In mainstream settings, qualified educational BSL/English interpreters to allow Deaf pupils to have full involvement in the life of the class and school
- Teachers of deaf children with fluency in BSL (level 3 as a minimum) who can use bilingual resources as they teach, for example to give detailed and accurate explanations about subjects, know how to build meta-language so Deaf pupils can think about language and the subjects they are learning in both of their languages
- Pupils should not have a teacher of the deaf 'interpreting' for them. They should have qualified educational BSL / English interpreter and/or Deaf BSL support worker.
- Work experience placements, clubs and school trips supported by bilingual staff
- Clear planning meetings involving the Deaf young people to improve knowledge about possible career pathways and give guidance about the best qualifications and levels to aim for to maximise achievement (Young et al., 2015).

And for Teachers of the Deaf:

- High expectations from teachers for Deaf children's progress at school
- Entry for the same number of exams as hearing children
- Access to high quality bilingual resources to help develop concepts in school subjects, such as a much-expanded Scottish Sensory Centre glossary (SSC, 2015).
- Access to centrally translated BSL exam papers from SQA so that pupils could be guaranteed a standard high quality of question paper (Cameron et al, 2011)
- Arranging subtitles to be provided for all videos shown to Deaf children in school.
- Using Deaf community resources and pacing presentation better in class to include Deaf learners (Marschark, Knoors & Tang, 2014).
- Collaborating across Scotland to produce a Deaf Studies curriculum led by Deaf teachers
- Better understanding during the training course for Teachers of the Deaf of Deaf and hearing parents' experiences and the rights of Deaf children to high quality bilingual provision.

Local authorities may need to collaborate across boundaries in order to be able to provide this high quality service. If Deaf children have access to fluent BSL from a young age, and exposure to English being mapped onto sign through fingerspelling and fluent BSL discussion, then their English skills should develop well at the same time.

This high quality sign bilingual infrastructure is possible because of the support of the Scottish Government for BSL over the past decade. Deaf BSL teachers from the Government sponsored Training of the Trainers (TOTs) course are now teaching BSL at levels 3 and 6 in Scotland, so provision of advanced BSL courses in the central belt is improving. Some Deaf people have trained to teach and are becoming qualified to teach Deaf children. The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 would lead to much greater support for BSL as a language so it could

become a language taught in schools using modern language teaching methods. These positive developments could lead to a much better quality sign bilingual educational environments becoming within travel distance for any Deaf child in Scotland.

The serious concerns of the Deaf parents, pupils and young people who responded to the BDA Scotland's call for evidence would be alleviated if this type of high quality sign bilingual provision were put in place. The setting may be a Deaf school or a resource base – the key components of a high quality sign bilingual education are similar. We hope this section of the report will assist HMIE in noticing and recording examples of good practice. Currently school services receive excellent inspection reports on provision for Deaf pupils when they have no or only one teacher with advanced level signing skills working with a large group of Deaf pupils (Education Scotland, 2013).

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The British Deaf Association – BDA

The BDA stands for **D**eaf **E**quality, **A**ccess and **F**reedom of choice

Vision

Our vision is Deaf people fully participating and contributing as equal and valued citizens in wider society.

Mission

Our Mission is to ensure a world in which the language, culture, community, diversity and heritage of Deaf people in the UK is respected and fully protected, ensuring that Deaf people can participate and contribute as equal and valued citizens in the wider society. This will be achieved through:

- Improving the quality of life by empowering Deaf individuals and groups;
- Enhancing freedom, equality and diversity;
- Protecting and promoting BSL.

Values

The BDA is a Deaf people's organisation representing a diverse, vibrant and ever-changing community of Deaf people. Our activities, promotions, and partnerships with other organisations aim to empower our community towards full participation and contribution as equal and valued citizens in the wider society. We also aim to act as guardians of BSL.

- 1. Protecting our Deaf culture and Identity** – we value Deaf peoples' sense of Deaf culture and identity derived from belonging to a cultural and linguistic group, sharing similar beliefs and experiences with a sense of belonging.
- 2. Asserting our linguistic rights** – we value the use of BSL as a human right. As such, BSL must be preserved, protected and promoted because we also value the right of Deaf people to use their first or preferred language.
- 3. Fostering our community** – we value Deaf people with diverse perspectives, experiences and abilities. We are committed to equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination with a special focus on those affecting Deaf people and their language.
- 4. Achieving equality in legal, civil and human rights** – we value universal human rights such as the right to receive education and access to information in sign language, and freedom from political restrictions on our opportunities to become full citizens.
- 5. Developing our alliance** – we value those who support us and are our allies because they share our vision and mission, and support our BSL community.



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The BDA stands for **D**eaf **E**quality, **A**ccess and **F**reedom of Choice

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