

The Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland

NCSE POLICY ADVICE PAPER



Goal

- Deaf and hard of hearing children should graduate from school with levels of educational attainment that are on a par with their hearing peers of similar ability
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A New Way Forward

Presentation will cover:

- What are the current challenges?
 - What does the research say?
 - What does NCSE policy advice recommend?
 - Principles
 - Key recommendations and practical implications
 - What are the indicative costs?
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Current Challenges

- How best to support Deaf and hard of hearing children to learn language at an early age?
 - How best to inform parents about communication and education options?
 - What professional development should be provided for teachers?
 - What supports should be in place in schools?
 - What health and education services are needed for Deaf and hard of hearing children?
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Prevalence

Over 3,000 preschool and school age children in Ireland have a permanent hearing loss (includes unilateral and bilateral, mild to profound) with potential consequences for communication, literacy, social and emotional development and later employability

(Report of the National Audiology Review, HSE, 2011)

Key Research Findings

1. Impact of early permanent hearing loss is significant
 2. Effective early intervention can overcome barriers to learning
 3. Academic achievement levels of Deaf and hard of hearing children remain significantly delayed
 4. In order to acquire any language fluently, children require meaningful exposure to language - be that signed or spoken
 5. A range of educational settings should be available
 6. Bilingual education
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Research Findings contd

- Academic achievement is higher when teachers are knowledgeable about the special learning needs of Deaf and hard of hearing pupils, as well as their own subject area
 - Significant number of Deaf children have one or more additional disabilities
 - Physical environment of classroom is important in facilitating access to learning
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NCSE: Evidence-based Policy Advice

- Evidence from national and international research
 - NCSE commissioned international review of best practice models and outcomes
 - NCSE consultative forum
 - Consultation process with stakeholders
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Principles Underpinning Policy Advice

1. Inclusive Education – EPSEN Act 2004
 2. Recognition of the distinctive needs of Deaf and hard of hearing children in relation to language acquisition and communication
 3. Greater focus on early identification and intervention so that the necessary supports can be put in place
 4. Teachers must have appropriate skill sets
 5. Access to education should be available on an appropriate basis throughout the country.
 6. Deaf and hard of hearing children should have access to the appropriate health and education funded supports
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Key Recommendations

- Early Identification and intervention
 - Acquisition of language
 - Visiting teacher service
 - School age years
 - Bilingual education
 - *Placement of pupils
 - *Acquisition of literacy and numeracy
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Key Recommendations contd

- *Focus on outcomes and monitoring of progress
 - Professional development for teachers
 - National Educational Psychological Service
 - Special needs assistants
 - Development of co-operative structures
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Early Intervention

- Further roll-out of a universal national programme of newborn hearing screening
 - Audiological services should be provided on a consistent, efficient and equitable basis throughout the country
 - Speech and language therapy
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Early Intervention

- Objective and comprehensive information for parents from the point of diagnosis
 - Counselling service
 - Pre-school centres should be equipped to support meaningful inclusion and learning for Deaf and hard of hearing children
 - Professionals should be equipped with the skills necessary to assist parents with communication options
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Acquisition of Language

- Children require opportunities to acquire fluent language skills, whether signed or spoken, at an early age
 - Streamlined approach to determining and providing necessary supports by relevant departments of Government
 - Irish Sign Language
 - Ongoing provision of ISL scheme, with review by DES
 - Minimum qualification for ISL tutors to be set by DES
 - Grant available to schools for hearing children to learn ISL
 - Development and refinement of competence in ISL in school system to be addressed by NCCA
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Visiting Teacher Service

- Review of role of the visiting teacher by DES
 - Caseloads should reflect need in the early years
 - Standardised practices established in relation to assessment, teaching, advice
 - Substantial role in assisting the development of individual education plans
 - Minimum standards to be set by the DES in relation to proficiency in ISL
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School Age Years

- Range of school placements should be available to meet diverse needs
 - Mainstream enrolment to the greatest extent possible, with supports as necessary
 - Special classes for Deaf and hard of hearing children should be organised on a clustered/regional basis
 - Special schools should serve pupils, with complex needs, within the local community who require special school placement
 - Temporary specialist provision should be available
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School Age Years

- All settings should be resourced with the necessary technology
 - DES to develop guidelines on the acoustic treatment of classrooms
 - Identification of children with mild hearing loss who require supports within current school allocations
 - Additional teaching supports for Deafness as a low incidence disability should be allocated in accordance with the level of pupil's learning need and reviewed annually
 - Teachers need to understand the needs of children with cochlear implants
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Bilingual Education

- Should be available in special classes for Deaf and hard of hearing children and in special schools with Deaf children enrolled
 - Resourcing of mainstream schools to facilitate the education of pupils who use ISL as their primary language.
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Professional Qualifications

The DES should:

- prescribe a minimum range of qualifications for teachers in mainstream and special settings
 - specify the additional qualifications for teachers following entry into the Visiting Teacher Service, to include minimum standards of competence in the use and teaching of ISL
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All Teachers Working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Pupils should have:

- **High expectations for their achievement**
 - Access to initial (ITE) and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes, including programmes provided by the SESS
 - Appropriate knowledge about the ways in which Deaf students think and learn
 - An appropriate level of awareness of issues relating to Deaf and hard of hearing people that have an impact on teaching and learning
 - Teachers who work with children who use sign language as their first language should be required to have adequate competency in the use of ISL
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Teachers in Specialist Settings (including VTS) should:

- have additional post-graduate qualifications in special education (to include a module on Deaf education).
 - access CPD programmes provided by the SESS
 - have adequate competency in the use of ISL

 - Over time there should be a requirement in place that teachers in specialist settings have a recognised qualification in the education of Deaf and hard of hearing children.
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Teacher Education

- ITE: compulsory module on the education of children with special educational needs, which should address the particular needs of children who are Deaf and hard of hearing.
 - PGSEN: compulsory element on the education of children across disability categories, including Deaf and hard of hearing children.
 - A postgraduate programme leading to recognised qualifications in the education of Deaf and hard of hearing children should be available in Ireland
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ISL Qualifications

- All teachers in schools currently designated for Deaf and hard of hearing children
- One teacher in every other special school
- Teachers in special classes for Deaf and hard of hearing children
- Teachers employed in the VTS

Signature level 2 and be actively working towards level 3.

Special Needs Assistants

Council welcomes DES VFM and Policy review and in addition recommends:

- In cases where an SNA with ISL expertise, who is working with a Deaf and hard of hearing child is made redundant, the Deaf and hard of hearing child must continue to have ISL support made available
 - Schools should ensure that SNAs working with Deaf and hard of hearing children are equipped with the skills necessary to support their particular needs.
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Development of Co-operative Structures

- A nominated person should be given the responsibility of liaising between and across locally delivered health and education funded services.
 - The DES should clearly define linkages between the Visiting Teacher Service, the NCSE, SESS, and NEPS, in order to ensure the provision of a streamlined service and to avoid the possibility of role overlap.
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Indicative additional costs: health funded supports

Recommendation	Est. Cost
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistive technology• ISL	€1.85m
Speech and language therapy	€2.15m
Total	€4m

Estimated additional costs: education funded

Recommendation	Est. Cost
Irish Sign Language	€1.8m
Clustered special classes for Deaf and hard of hearing children	€2.1m
Temporary education intervention in specialist settings	€ .25m
Initial and continuing professional development for teachers	€2.6m
Total	€6.75m

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Thank you for your attention
