

# British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

13 August 2004

## Response of the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf to the Disability Strategy document entitled “Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People”

This Interim Analytical Report draws together the evidence of the disadvantages that disabled people experience, and provides an analysis of the key barriers, an assessment of the current policy map, and outlines some alternative approaches. For the final phase of the project we will be recommending a few key policy options. To help us in that phase we are interested in your response to our Report. Below are a set of questions that may be useful in guiding your response to our Report:

1. Do you broadly agree with the analysis of the issues in the report? (Please make it clear if you are referring to the report as a whole or to a specific section). **Yes**
2. Are there any parts of the report that you disagree with? **No**
  - 2.1 Why? **N/A**
3. Are there any serious omissions in the report's analysis? **No**
4. There are a number of examples in the analysis report of good practice and a number of issues and gaps are highlighted. Which of these do you think, if addressed, would result in the greatest improvement in disabled people's life chances?
  - 4.1. Why?
  - 4.2. How would you implement it?

**It is important to increase and improve multi-agency working as emphasised in “Every Child Matters” and “Removing Barriers to Achievement”. In particular this is essential to consolidate the advantages of early intervention which is now possible following the introduction of neonatal hearing screening. Multi-agency working already happens in**

**many areas where deaf children are concerned. In these areas there is a long history of cooperation between health authorities, social services departments and education. This prevents duplication, the difficulties of multiple sources of advice mentioned in the report and uncertainty among parents. In many areas the keyworker has been the Teacher of the Deaf who is likely to see the family most regularly of all the professionals and this has worked well.**

**An important gap, which this Association has been trying to plug, is the lack of clear outcome data relating to the education of deaf children. For many years we have carried out a survey into many aspects of deaf education and are now looking in cooperation with Achievements of Deaf Pupils in Scotland to develop a robust UK-wide analysis and survey of deaf children's achievements and attainments. This has the aim of determining best practice with deaf children which should help to remedy some of the**



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issues raised in the report such as the postcode lottery and the lack of clear information about the progress of children with special educational needs.

5. In the next phase of the project we will be looking at a few key policy options. Which policy options are taken forward will depend on a number of factors, including what impact would it have, how practical it is, evidence of need, and fit with other activities. We would like your views on what key policy option(s) should be taken forward

**Qualified specialist Teachers of the Deaf throughout the UK support deaf children from the age of diagnosis (soon after birth in many cases) in their homes - often on a weekly basis - and then provide support through their school years and beyond. This is an excellent model for support for children with other types of SEN. Services comprising qualified specialist Teachers of the Deaf work together as a coherent team providing advice, teaching and support as necessary throughout the age range with the aim of improving and consolidating access to education.**

**This support is provided according to need not according to decisions made by schools without specialist knowledge and dependent on funding priorities elsewhere within the school. It is essential that this be maintained.**

**The Government recently reaffirmed the requirement for all Teachers of the Deaf to gain an additional post-graduate qualification - this mandatory qualification recognises the complexity of this field and underlines the inappropriateness of decisions about deaf children and their support being made by head teachers and others without such qualifications and experience.**

**Excessive delegation of funding away from the LEA to individual schools puts this support in danger as has been seen in the very few areas where this has happened. Deafness and other low incidence disabilities are rare (approximately 1 in a 1000) but expensive to support – equal distribution of funds to schools which may have more than one such child or none at all is illogical and unfair and does not represent good husbandry of public funds. LEA teams can provide the support to those pupils and schools which need it. I attach a paper submitted by this association to the DfES underlining the issues behind delegation.**

**LEA advisory and support services continue to maintain strong teams of Teachers of the Deaf by not unnecessarily delegating the funding for such support to individual.**

**This option is practical in that it strengthens a currently widely regarded practice – it would continue to ensure that deaf children are included fully in mainstream education (8% of deaf children are in special schools for the deaf and 11% in other special schools – the rest are in mainstream schools).**

5.1. Why is this option(s) important?

5.2. How would you like to see it implemented?

**Services which are highly valued, well-established and much appreciated by schools, parents and young people could fragment or disappear if the coherence of these teams is not maintained with worrying consequences for deaf children. LEAs are keen to delegate more and more funding to schools and are encouraged to do**



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so by Government and elected members. This is short-sighted and dangerous where the support of children with low incidence special needs is concerned and could lead to many of the disadvantages highlighted in this report. Our recommendation to prevent this happening and to strengthen and build on the current level of support is to make expenditure on LEA sensory support services a mandatory exception. This would mean that LEAs would not be penalised for maintaining this essential service as it would not reflect badly on their percentage of funds delegated. The educational and other support of deaf children would be secured. Some of these teams continue to support young people in Further Education. Access to such coherent services would greatly enhance the transition experience of young people and would help to alleviate some of the difficulties highlighted in this report.

Paul Simpson, Secretary

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