



Deffo!
57a Neath Road,
Hafod
Swansea
Wales
SA1 2HW

The voice for Youth Deaf youth in Wales

William Powell AM
Chair – Petitions Committee

29th July 2015

Dear Mr Powell

Deffo! Petition – Access to BSL for All

Many thanks for your letter dated 3rd July 2015 and we are pleased to hear the outcome from the action plans after your recent petition committee meeting.

With regards to the Donaldson's review of the curriculum and assessment in Wales, I would like to confirm that we have been looking for a key contact person who is leading the consultation. We made contact on the 19th May 2015 via email to the published email address on the Welsh Government website as per to the following link:-

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/reform/successful-futures/?lang=en>

Please find enclosed a copy of our email to the team as I am disappointed to say that we have not had a response from anyone, or been approached for our views on the consultation, as we feel that our input would be of value to the items considered in the consultation as this impacts on the delivery of Education for Deaf Children and Young People in Wales.

Yours sincerely

Cathie Robins Talbot

Deffo! Principal Petitioner



Cathie Robins-Talbot <crtconsultant@gmail.com>

Cathie Robins-Talbot <crtconsultant@gmail.com>

Tue, May 19, 2015 at 6:52 PM

To: CurriculumReview@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Cc: Deffo Cymru deffocymru@gmail.com

Curriculum and assessment

To whom this may concern,

May I introduce myself as a consultant, working with Deffo! Wales Deaf Youth Forum who are undertaking a campaign to make changes for Deaf/ Hard of Hearing Children and Young People in Wales. We are working with stakeholders to improve access for Deaf users using Signed or spoken Languages.

In a recent meeting that the Leader of Deffo! and I attended, we spoke about the consultation of the curriculum and the assessments made by Professor Donaldson. We believe that our views would be vital for consideration within this review and so we would like to request to meet with Professor Donaldson please, hoping that it is not too late to take part in the review and give our views.

Deffo! is a group of Deaf young adults who give their time volunteering to campaign for the rights of Deaf Children and Young People in Wales. There is no funding to run the group, and they solely rely on fundraising and working within services to raise awareness of the issues that Deaf people face daily. Deffo! would like to see changes within society to improve access, and want to ensure their views are listened to, as they are supported by an array of families who also struggle to get access for their Deaf children in Education. This is the reason for submitting the recent petition, to urge the Welsh Government to consider adding British Sign Language onto the National Curriculum of Wales and making provision accessible to Deaf Children and their families to learn sign language from an early age, which currently does not happen at a local level.

We look forward hearing from you,

Regards

Cathie

On behalf of Deffo!

Cathie Robins- Talbot

Consultant | MA, PGCE, BA Hons Youth & Community Practitioner

Mobile: 07863174260 |

Email: cathie@crtconsultanttraining.co.uk | **Linkin:** uk.linkedin.com/in/cathierobinstalbot



Deffo!
57a Neath Road,
Hafod
Swansea
Wales
SA1 2HW

The voice for Youth Deaf youth in Wales

William Powell AM
Chair – Petitions Committee

14th September 2015

Dear Mr Powell

Deffo! Petition – Access to BSL for All

Deffo welcomes the recent response from the Minister seeking to re-assure us of the fact that the education of Deaf young people, and the associated issue of BSL provision is high on the agenda. Whilst we welcome these re-assurances it feels pertinent to raise at this point evidence and observations of recent events which sadly do not re-enforce the assurances provided by the Minister.

It is at best frustrating that Deffo did not receive a reply to the request to be involved in the Donaldson Review. Deffo represents young people who have direct experience of the strengths and weaknesses of the education service in Wales from a Deaf users perspective. These young people have a right to be heard and to have their views taken seriously. This should have included participation within the Donaldson Review.

The Minister once again refers to the measures available in school to support Deaf children. Whilst we welcome in-school provision this sadly, in many areas falls short of expectations and fails to deliver equality of opportunity when compared to opportunities available for non-disabled peers. This week alone Deffo have provided support to three sets of parents who have been struggling to secure appropriate educational support for their children.

The Minister once again deflects responsibility for the education of Deaf young people to local authorities. This results in the present situation, which simply doesn't work. Just this week we have witnessed a parent querying the level of hours of support that was available to a Deaf family member, simply to be met with the response that 'support hours are allocated by a school'. With no national benchmarks, standards or framework the level of support provided is often dependent upon the understanding of those in the school on Deaf issues, and the other challenges being placed on support funds. Parents of Deaf children face barriers, and our experience tells us that they often feel drained and isolated in this process. They are confused by the system, the technical jargon and the legal process – and often have finite time and energy available to address these issues.

Equally many parents have limited availability for continued meetings at school due to their own work commitments. Sadly many of these parents are as such forced into accepting a second best arrangement for the education of their child.

Provision of support for learning activities to support Deaf people in the community is sadly no better. If Deaf people are to fully succeed in work, life and play it is critical that they can communicate, and as such that BSL is widely available. This is not the case. Deaf people cannot learn ESOL or similar, as such it is important that provision is made for their peer-groups (including family and friends) to be able to learn BSL to enable proper communication to take place.

We presently offer BSL courses, but we cannot afford to subsidise them for families on low income/ benefits etc. This includes the families of Deaf young people who are being forced to pay (often when they can't afford to) to learn how to communicate with their own child. We are advised that responsibility for funding community BSL provision is usually allocated to life-long learning. Our experience is that this creates further challenges –

- i. The BSL learning offered through this sources is at best limited, and is not reflective of the true need of the community – or often delivered in situations that meet the needs/ requirements of those wishing to learn.
- ii. Adult education / lifelong learning provision often prohibits the learning of other children / young people. This learning is essential if siblings and peers are going to learn BSL and be able to communicate with Deaf peers.

Deffo would welcome the opportunity to explore with the Minister how this may be redressed to ensure appropriate and accessible provision for all. As this is learning directly linked to equality of those with a protected characteristic we would argue that this provision should be ring-fenced to ensure effective provision, perhaps linked to individual budgets?

The membership of Deffo continually seeks to engage with the Minister and Welsh Government; through Tweets, other social media and submissions to the petitions committee. We hope that these are considered in totality, and whilst we appreciate that individual officers may not have the time to read each Tweet, the volume of this communication – often eloquently and passionately offered by our members – is reflective of the feeling amongst the Deaf community that something is not working in relation to present provision.

The way that Deaf young people learn both in school, and in the community; and the support (including ability to communicate) that is available from their peers and family networks to support them is vital to the social and emotional well-being of Deaf young people; and directly affects their potential to access their life chances in relation to education and employment.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Cathie Robins Talbot
Deffo! Principal Petitioner