

Written evidence submitted by British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)

Summary of submission to the Education Select Committee by the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

BATOD (British Association of Teachers of the Deaf) is the sole professional association for Teachers of the Deaf in the UK. It represents the great majority of the Teachers of the Deaf in the country (CRIDE, 2018). We also have Associate members who are not Teachers of the Deaf but allied professionals. Members work in all settings from the homes of deaf babies to Universities, and mainstream schools with and without special provision, schools for the deaf and other special schools, hospital implant centres and charities.

We contacted all members by newsletter, our website and by posting on our social media accounts. We surveyed the views of members on how COVID-19 is affecting education and children's services with respect to deaf children and young people, through a range of questions including the specific questions raised by the Education Select Committee Inquiry.

The majority of respondents work in Sensory Support Services, followed by mainstream schools, special schools, resourced provision, independent schools and auditory implant services.

Of the 438 members who responded to our survey 85 chose to answer the specific 'Call for evidence' questions set out by the Education Select Committee to assess the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services. We have collated the two sets of responses using the Inquiry questions as the basis of this submission.

In addition to the range of Select Committee questions there were several key areas of concern raised by the respondents.

Many if not most of the issues raised throughout the responses apply equally to all children and young people including those with SEND. However, there are certain areas which cause particular challenges for deaf children and young people (DCYP) and the teachers and others who work with them, and their families. These include suitable access to remote learning which is an issue which arose many times – ensuring that online lessons and materials are suitably differentiated and captioned and that BSL support is available where necessary. Lack of technology in the home and concerns about DCYP with EAL were often raised.

Time lost due to school closures can lead to regression for DCYP as they are not getting the specialist support they require to progress in terms of their general linguistic and educational development and to access the curriculum. This may result in a widening of the attainment gap with their hearing peers. Not all schools have been making use of the expertise of the specialist teacher when sending work home and the support which children had before the outbreak is not always available.

Many responses suggested that a strong element of catch up will be required on return to school. There was concern also that on return to school specialist teachers from outside the school eg LA support services might not be welcome in school because their job necessarily involves visiting multiple locations.

In addition to this, concern is expressed throughout about suitable support for assistive listening devices such as hearing aids, radio aids and cochlear and other implants when the Teacher of the Deaf and/or hospital clinic are not able to provide regular support. This is likely to have a material and negative impact on all aspects of the deaf child's development and this is a high priority.

It is important also to note that on detection of deafness, deaf babies and their families are supported in the home. Clearly this is not currently happening and remote contact is no substitute for the ongoing relationship between a Teacher of the Deaf and the family. There are inevitable concerns about the early development of deaf babies and children as a result and indeed for those children where detection occurs during school years.

A frequent concern raised was the implication of transition on deaf children – especially from Year 6 to Year 7. Pupils moving from school to further education where the support mechanisms are not necessarily well established was also an issue.

The responses also provided a very helpful perspective from our members who are themselves deaf, who not only have their own challenges with access but are able to understand in depth the concerns of parents and young people especially in relation to remote learning which still continues for many.

This, and aspects of our submission, highlights the need also to consider the effects on teachers and other professionals which are often overlooked.

Issues for children with additional needs such as deafblindness having potentially greater difficulties also need thoughtful consideration.

The need for close collaborative working with Health and Social Care professionals is also crucial for deaf CYP and may be under strain at the current time.

The mental health implications of periods without school or support are a high priority with many deaf children showing anxiety.

Our submission does not however just highlight the negatives - it also describes what Teachers of the Deaf have been doing to support deaf children in these difficult times as well as suggesting other support remedies for the present and also for the future return to school.

The report of course covers all these aspects in detail and ends with five key recommendations which are both pertinent but also realistic. They are drawn from the key threads within the report. Because deafness is a low incidence SEND it is easy for it to be overlooked and a key purpose of our submission is to make sure that does not happen. The understanding of the needs of deaf children and young

people needs to be embedded in all levels of education from schools, to Local Authorities to the Department of Education and we hope that our submission contributes to that.

Our five recommendations are:

- BATOD recommends that the Department for Education draws up clear guidance on the use of remote learning with pupils unable to attend schools at this time with specific reference to issues of accessibility for deaf pupils and adults eg Deaf Teachers of the Deaf and deaf parents.
- BATOD recommends that the Department of Education should ensure that there is effective support to deaf children and young people at times of transition, especially when leaving school and moving to Further Education where the support mechanisms are far more disparate than for school-aged pupils.
- BATOD recommends that national guidance and support for schools and support services related to all aspects of working with pupils with SEND in the light of the impact of the coronavirus and the effect on schools and other settings is drawn up by the Department of Education. At present too much decision-making is expected at a local/school level leading to inconsistent practice nationally.
- BATOD recommends that the Departments of Health and Social Care and Education should ensure that there is immediate support for children and young people who have been identified as being deaf during the period of the lockdown. They and their families need immediate educational and audiological support.
- BATOD recommends that the Department for Education should raise the profile and role of specialist support services, specifically for children with sensory impairment, as they are crucial to ensuring the appropriate inclusion of deaf children in mainstream and special schools (in addition to providing support in homes from initial identification) as their role is currently not well understood.

Paul Simpson and Teresa Quail, National Executive Officers on behalf of the BATOD Steering Group and wider membership.

June 2020

**Submission to the Education Select Committee by
the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf**

The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services

1. Introduction

BATOD (British Association of Teachers of the Deaf) is the sole professional association for Teachers of the Deaf in the UK. It represents the great majority of the over 1484+ Teachers of the Deaf in the country (CRIDE, 2018). We also have associate members who are not Teachers of the Deaf but allied professionals. Members work in all settings from the homes of deaf babies to Universities, and in mainstream schools with and without special provision, schools for the deaf and other special schools, hospital implant centres and charities.

We contacted all members by newsletter, our website and by posting on our social media accounts. We surveyed the views of members on how COVID-19 is affecting education and children's services with respect to deaf children and young people through a range of questions. We asked about the impact on children and young people, their families, educational staff and wider society. We also gathered views on the specific questions raised by the Education Select Committee Inquiry.

438 members responded to our survey of whom only two did not consent to the anonymous survey. Members who answered the survey described themselves as:

Qualified Teacher of the Deaf 79%
 Trainee Teacher of the Deaf 7%
 Educational Audiologist 7%
 Educational Audiology Technician 1%
 Allied Health Professional 2%
 Other practitioner 4%

The majority of respondents work in Sensory Support Services, followed by mainstream schools, special schools, resourced provision, independent schools and auditory implant services.

85 respondents to the BATOD survey chose to answer the specific 'Call for evidence' questions set out by the Education Select Committee to assess the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services. We have collated the two sets of responses using the Inquiry questions as the basis of this submission.

2. How consistently is the definition of 'critical' work/worker being applied in your field?

Summary

- 53% said the application of the definition of 'critical' work/worker was not consistent.
- 8% said that the application of the definition was fairly consistent.
- 25% of responses stated that the application of the definition was consistent.
- 14% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Many respondents said they were described as 'essential but not critical' and described frustrations or felt undervalued as QToDs (Qualified Teachers of the Deaf).

Quotations from members' responses:

- I feel utterly marginalised, undervalued at a time when I really needed my employer to recognise what I do, allow my team to adapt practice to suit, allow us to support schools more directly and listen to our views. Being redeployed on top of all the other concerns has really demoralised me.
- I do not know of any occasions when there has been any consideration of the needs of deaf children themselves. The government do talk about the importance of re-opening schools particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged children who are more affected by the closures. Deaf children are not specifically mentioned but this is a reflection of the general lack of awareness of the needs of deaf people in general in England. For example, lack of BSL interpreters for daily briefings at all times and the issue with the use of masks for deaf people, children and young people. Their needs do not seem to occur to the hearing population.

3. How well are schools supported to remain open for children of critical workers?

Summary

- 29% commented that schools were not well supported.
- 22% commented that schools were fairly well supported.
- 28% commented that schools were well supported.
- 21% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotations from members' responses

- All schools are doing what they think it best. The government has given no direct guidance and procedures.
- I feel this has been down to individual Headteachers to manage. Guidance from Government, Local Authority was unwieldy, backtracking and changing.

BATOD members were asked for their views about the impact on the education settings themselves:

Key points from their responses:

Schools have had to respond quickly; the challenges this has caused included:

- lack of resources and technology
- providing online teaching with little or no training
- lack of appropriate curriculum and resources
- lack of access to signing
- many mainstream schools have a 'one size fits all' approach to providing remote learning
- a lack of differentiated materials and deaf awareness
- schools are finding it hard to meet all SEN Needs.

- concern about the impact of social distancing measures on deaf CYP (children and young people) - listening at a distance, use of facemasks, use of radio aids, not being able to learn incidentally and from peers.
- specific impact on deaf children with EAL and those without adequate technology at home
- schools may not be able to have visitors e.g. QToDs
- very few children, e.g. those with EHCPs, attending school
- concerns about CYPs' well-being
- concerns about the wellbeing of staff

However, Teachers of the Deaf have found creative ways of working

What Teachers of the Deaf have done or will do:

- Provide specialist advice. ToDs are supporting schools and families, acting as a bridge between them and also providing personalised advice about the needs of individual deaf children.

Quotations from members' responses

As ToDs we have provided a link between school and home as we have often been involved with families for a long time.

The needs of deaf children overlooked in the middle of challenges all schools and settings are facing.

4. The impact the closure will have on children's early development

Summary

- 69% commented that the impact would be significant.
- 4% commented that the impact would be minimal
- 27% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Members were concerned about those in early years especially the newly detected:

- Loss of support from specialist services
- Impact of delay on language development with late fitting of aids/loss of support for BSL
- Families struggling to understand needs of children without established support groups etc

Quotations from members' responses:

- The gap for vulnerable and disadvantaged children will increase.
- It will have devastating long term impact on most deaf children as they are missing out on the structured language work and an environment where they wear their hearing aids every day. This forms the foundation of the language and

social skills they will need as they progress through their education. Children with poorer language levels have huge gaps in the vocabulary and concepts needed to understand the work as they progress through school and fall further and further behind even at secondary level. They are more likely to truant and end up in trouble as well and are more vulnerable to abuse. Exposure to books, learning shared attention, learning to share etc also are needed for them to hit the ground running at school. They will, with a hearing loss, always have more challenges than a hearing child, but without those foundational concepts, skills and language development they are in danger of never catching up.

- For EY children and babies the impact may be seen longer term as a result of delayed referrals, difficulties in having conversations with families about their child's hearing and impact on building relationships. Can make it harder to engage families with the support service.
- Staff have so much pressure on them in so many ways that low incidence needs like deafness can be overlooked.

5. The effect of closures on the childcare market

Summary

- 71% commented that the effect would be significantly negative.
- 2% commented that the effect would be minimal
- 27% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotations from members' responses:

- The childcare market will be reduced and it will have an impact on wages.
- The childcare market will be impacted for some time as a consequence of this. Social distancing is the antithesis of early years experiences. The market is going to hit as providers will not be able to balance the books with large spaces only occupied by smaller numbers of children. Staff will also need additional training to manage the new restrictions and guidelines.
- Undoubtedly the larger chains will remain and sadly some smaller independent settings will close which will lead to less choice for parents and it may become more expensive.

6. The impact of cancelling formal exams

Summary

- 64% commented that the impact would be significantly negative.
- 8% commented that the impact would be minimal
- 28% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotation from members' responses:

Massive lifelong impact - the experience of preparing for, going through and completing formal exams is character building and an experience everyone you know has gone through. For this cohort of CYP they will miss out on the experience and what can be learned from it and miss out on sharing it with others, casting their mind back to the emotions that can only be felt by the experience - doing better or worse than expected, feeling proud of yourself, wanting to do better. It may also be a label they carry for life - the corona kids who had exams handed to them on a plate.

BATOD members were asked to comment more widely on the implications of the cancelling of examinations:

Their responses reflect the views of those working with all ages - primary, secondary – SATs, GCSEs, A levels...

There was a mixed response – some pupils are relieved, others are disappointed that they can't show what they know and can do.

Exams although challenging are a key rite of passage which is lost for current Year 11s

7. The fairness of the way qualifications will be awarded under the new assessment arrangements.

Summary

- 30% commented that the awards would be fair.
- 18% commented that the awards would be less fair.
- 7% commented that the awards would be unfair.
- 45% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotation from members' responses:

- We have sent a letter from the support service reminding (schools) that as professionals our assessments and views should be considered as supportive evidence as well as the access arrangements that would have been in place.

BATOD members were asked to comment more widely on the implications of the fairness of assessment.

It is vital that access arrangements are taken into account when determining grades for Years 11 and 13; there is concern about low expectations in schools – the role of the QToD in determining grades is crucial. BATOD was pleased that Ofqual recognised this and included it in the guidance to centres. It is helpful that a resit possibility in the Autumn is available.

Quotations from members' responses:

Grade awarded on the evidence presented by coursework will remove stress and anxiety for the majority. However, the absence of special accessibility arrangements will deny many the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and ability.

I am concerned that dispensations for some pupils will not have been considered fully and that students will receive inappropriate grades.

What BATOD did:

Worked with Ofqual and other organisations supporting candidates with sensory impairment to ensure that centres are strongly encouraged to involve specialist teachers in the determination of grades and rankings.

8. The impact exam cancellation will have on pupils' progression to the next stage of education or employment

Summary

- 31% commented that progression would be challenging.
- 24% commented that the pupils would not be disadvantaged.
- 11% commented that pupils would have reduced opportunities.
- 34% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotation from members' responses:

- *As long as teacher assessments are fair and equitable then it shouldn't impact as they should reflect student ability/competence. Entering the workplace from school/college though will be much harder.*

BATOD members were asked to comment more widely on the impact on progression.

Many pupils are experiencing anxiety and reduced motivation for the future; there will be a general negative effect on mental health and well being from the cancellation of exams.

There are concerns that the learning gap may increase due to lost time; there will be a need for additional time for support; there is fear of regression

Quotation from members' responses:

- *Missing out on weeks of teaching and specialist support will have huge impact on learning.*

9. The consistency of messaging on remote learning

Summary

- 51% commented that messaging was inconsistent.
- 20% commented that messaging was consistent.

- 11% commented that messaging was fairly consistent.
- 9% were unsure or unable to answer the question.
- 9% described access issues, reasonable adjustments which need to be considered.

Quotations from members' responses:

- Remote learning - need to consider accessibility and how deaf children can access peer support and teachers and learn how to 'pin' their communication support worker/interpreter on screen. Also, to factor in regular breaks from computer screen time as it is time-consuming trying to learn from a computer screen!"
- Schools have tried very hard to support online learning at very short notice and with little time to prepare. Where this has been an issue in terms of access for families to ICT or additional needs teachers have made alternative provision.

BATOD members were asked to comment more widely on issues related to remote learning.

- Technology issues – poor captions, lack of face to face contact, exhaustion of coping with screens – often multiple ones to allow signed versions of classes that are being broadcast.

Deaf Teacher of the Deaf (DToD) members raised some specific issues:

Some DToDs report a range of challenges with online platforms, which would also reflect the experiences of some deaf children, young people and deaf parents.

Signing related	Audio related
Sharing information at the same time as signing to students	Delay between sound and image meaning the lips do not match
Microsoft Teams makes it impossible for interpreters to be seen on the video call	Sound quality varies
	Time lag/speed of reception varies
	Has captions but these don't always go with what is being said all the time 'Google hangout better than Microsoft Teams'.
Communication overload with larger numbers on Zoom etc	Listening fatigue, communication overload with larger numbers on Zoom etc
	Expense upgrading web cam, speakers, need to buy high quality ear phones that fit over postaurals, upgrade Office software (to get Teams with captions), required ComPilot 2 to access phone and computer
	Lack of provision of a transcript of a recorded video. When it has been

	provided in advance by a webinar provider it has been valued
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Some DToDs are limited by their Authority's regulations relating to Skype and Zoom, ie it is not permitted in some areas, or limited by employer's current provision of suitable technology (one reported that they only use FaceTime through personal phones as work phones don't support it).

For one DToD virtual meetings may be "actually more accessible than physically attending meetings for me. I hear each speaker clearly streaming from my Mini Mic and Roger systems. Distance across meeting rooms and locating speakers are no longer barriers.". Others are using a mixture of British Sign Language and assistive technology depending on the nature of the call and the video platform being used. Others highlight the problem of "reading body language in ... meetings".

What Teachers of the Deaf have done:

- *One Headteacher shared their example of how they have pooled and shared their resources within their schools' network to support parents and the children. "The 'drive by' concept we began early has been very useful, so deaf children can actually get to see their teacher/TA and have a face-to-face conversation albeit at a distance. The families have gained a lot of comfort from these and very much enjoyed them. We also offer a little walk or sit in the garden for our students with additional needs who are not able to engage so much with the other things we offer. It offers a bit of respite time for the parents too. We have taken the opportunity at 'drive by's to carefully clean and check hearing aids and moulds. It has also allowed us to share the tech resources in school and lend laptops and iPads to families in need. We are planning on extending the offer within school to families who would like some respite and we are doing this in Bubbles i.e. small family teams with staff and small numbers of children ... in a rota and part time ... Allowing teachers to continue their virtual work with other pupils and to give time to do thorough cleaning between Bubbles teams coming in to school.*

10. The impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Summary

- 62% commented that the impact is challenging or significant.
- 12% commented that it is more significant for deaf CYP.
- 19% commented that initiatives to provide support are emerging.
- 7% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotations from members' responses:

- *We know that deaf children and young people are already susceptible to mental health issues in a higher proportion than their hearing counterparts. We can be sure that, at this time of stress and uncertainty, deaf children and young people will be affected even more than their hearing peers.*

- This is really hard for key workers as their work lives are like a war zone as even if their children are in school they come back to depressed partners and a mess. I am seeing much more depression in teenagers and a feeling of 'what's the point?' I myself feel my work life and home life are blurred into one. I wake up with anxiety at 4.00. I am not a depressed person normally and really love my job normally. It just feels like everything is botched and inadequate.
- Deafblind people are suffering as they need to use physical tactile communication and are unable to see two metres ahead for social distancing purposes. Some are even getting abused at supermarkets etc and are afraid to leave home. Social distancing doesn't allow for guiding also for people and guides are reluctant to get close also.

BATOD members were asked to comment more widely on issues related to mental health.

Quotation from members' responses:

- Isolation is always a problem for deaf CYP and school is often the place where they feel connected, particularly for those who sign and their families do not have sign proficiency. Lack of technology is a challenge.

We asked about transitions and the effects on mental health and wellbeing. They are not covered in government guidance.

Issues raised by members included pupil and teacher anxiety, lack of closure at the end of years at primary school for Year 6 pupils (P7 in Scotland) ; not saying goodbye to key personnel (having had the same TA throughout their school career for example) and peers.

What ToDs did or will do at the appropriate time:

- arrange some virtual goodbyes if possible
- liaise with families, pupils and schools – both the old and new schools
- arrange induction days where possible before the end of the Summer term - may need to be virtual
- use forum/photos/video tours to ease transition (forum for questions for the older pupils and a photo book for the younger ones eg of new teacher etc.)
- joint visits – teachers and pupils
- phased transitions and return to school should be considered; Year 6 – 7 pupils (P7-S1) need to be prioritised
- perhaps undertake visits to empty school with deaf pupil
- maintain consistent ToD support (ie same ToD) where possible

Quotations from members' responses:

- transition – it's difficult to say as children can be quite resilient and with the right support should be okay.
- I feel that all transitioning children should be provided with opportunities to express their emotions regarding the change as well as to be able to spend time with "their" LSA before the end of the year, in whatever capacity is practicable.
- Support from services offering advice and contacting families to remind them of support networks is crucial.

11. The impact on wellbeing and personal safety**Summary**

- 41% raised concerns about the vulnerability of deaf CYP
- 33% commented that the impact is significant.
- 17% commented that innovation will be important.
- 9% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotation from members' responses

- Personal safety is going to be a huge issue for CYP with sensory impairments when returning to "socially distanced" settings. Schools will need to understand and make arrangements for CYP who may not be able to hear/see at a distance, may struggle to socially distance for a number of reasons, and whose usual support staff may be unavailable.

Section 17 below contains many more observations from members about these issues.

12. The effect on apprenticeships and other workplace-based education courses.**Summary**

- 40% commented that the impact is significant and detrimental.
- 7% commented that innovation will be important.
- 53% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotation from members' responses:

- I would expect the number of apprenticeships to plummet. In Scotland the BDA and Skills Development Scotland have done some good work over the last year in raising awareness of what apprentices are. In times of economic

recession, apprenticeships are taken by able-bodied white young men who have good school results. English and Maths qualifications are usually used to block deaf young people from the highest quality apprenticeships. Colleges are usually poorly equipped to increase levels of literacy and numeracy to this group of students. They rarely hire a QToD or qualified interpreters.

- Already there have been a number of companies who have cancelled work placements and I suspect apprenticeships as well. This is going to have a dramatic consequence on Deaf CYP as they rely on concrete experiences to learn.

13. Financial implications of closures for pupils, families, educational settings and training providers.

Summary

- 53% commented that the impact is significant and detrimental.
- 13% commented that situation is devastating.
- 12% commented on the significant impact on wellbeing.
- 4% described limited impact.
- 18% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotations from members' responses:

- “Financial implications on parents not working could lead to children not eating enough and maybe safeguarding issues may arise.”
- “Fewer opportunities for parents to access support; very difficult for vulnerable families. Devastating, especially impact re overseas students.”

14. The DfE's approach to free school meals.

Summary

- 33% commented that the system requires improvement.
- 15% commented that the approach was good.
- 22% commented that the system was working fairly well.
- 20% described the approach as poor.
- 10% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotations from members' responses:

- Inadequate. Many families have, and still are, unable to access FSM. Many schools have had to pay from their own budgets or from staff's own pockets to support those who need it.
- Our school chose not to use the voucher scheme so that we could keep an eye on the vulnerable families that came to collect their lunches daily or to whom we delivered.

15. The impact on vulnerable children.

Summary

- 68% commented that the impact is significant, and risks have increased.
- 18% commented that the impact is challenging.
- 4% described the approach as confusing.
- 20% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotation from members' responses:

- Covid-19 and the measures adopted have had a hugely disproportionate effect on disadvantaged families. They are much more likely to have been in low paid jobs that were axed or will be soon. They are less likely to have been wearing hearing aids and so will have brains getting less used to listening. They are more likely to be suffering abuse. We try to check but when I ring up a family they will tell me what I want to hear. Poor behaviour modelled by parents or other family members will become the norm and not balanced by the behaviour seen and the more positive communication demonstrated by adults at school or college. The reliance on social media as the only form of social contact also provides an unhealthy echo effect and unhealthy responses will be amplified and not counterbalanced by witnessing healthier more normal responses by peers at school or college. There has also been a strong message to those families that going to school or college doesn't matter. I don't know how we are going to get some of them back in education at all. Anyone whose parents haven't encouraged a child to use their time at least some of the time in a positive way are likely to suffer from mental health consequences in this time and going forward. Some people will be fearful about getting back into crowded places and will need a lot of encouragement going forward to get back into education. Mental health services were laughably poor before (children couldn't get help if they were threatening suicide; they had to make an attempt in order to get help!). In the coming recession the services will be stretched further when a massive mental health crisis is looming. It will be really difficult to do the really hands on support we usually do with hearing aid care etc and also services in hospital. We will work it out, how to do it safely, but it's going to take some working out and the vulnerable children are the ones that need the most physical help with hearing aids.

BATOD members were asked to comment more widely on issues related to vulnerable children and safeguarding:

- "Social and emotional issues surrounding fear and lack of understanding of the virus, missing school and their friends and extended family. Inadequate technology - poor quality of phone signals; sound in place of video calls. Missing routine audiology and ENT appointments."

There were concerns expressed about meeting health and safety needs/social distancing and the negative impact for deaf CYP. Many of these are discussed further in section 17 below.

16. Contingency planning for the future

Summary

- 61% described the need to analyse and innovate.
- 27% described the need to invest in technology and infrastructure.
- 5% commented that reviewing building design will be important.
- 7% were unsure or unable to answer the question.

Quotations from members' responses:

- Ensure deaf needs are not overlooked and accessibility must be the forefront including national news, emergency and how the information be communicated. Often deaf people are the last to know! So it is crucial to ensure a text message alert system in place to be sent all people including those who are deaf to alert of national emergency.
- Technology and access to home learning for all pupils at home. PPE as appropriate ready for use and strong links between schools, LA and other Service providers.
- Better collaboration between government, medical advisors, unions and school leaders. School leaders provide a wealth of knowledge and experience about the ways they have managed this crisis in their own schools; I don't feel they have been consulted thoroughly and their practical understanding has been overlooked. Effective IT systems/work stations/equipment to promote good posture. Work laptop/mobile phone.

17. BATOD members were asked to summarise the overall impact on deaf children and young people:

They highlighted issues raised in the responses above including isolation, emotional wellbeing, access to resources and gaps in learning

They identified some positives which had emerged:

- g interaction between deaf child and their family members
- Deaf CYP experiencing less fatigue as not having the whole school day
- personalised approach through more 1:1 support
- parents learn to better meet their child's needs

Challenges included:

- Accessibility to online learning – some parents report having to sit with their child during zoom lessons
- Little or no differentiation of tasks set by mainstream teachers
- Accessibility – lipreading via video lessons
- Increased educational/health needs of some deaf CYP makes them more vulnerable

- Limited access to specialist support, CSWs, etc
- CYP whose first language is not that of their home are more at risk of isolation, e.g. those with BSL, EAL
- Cease use of amplification equipment – poor fitting moulds, not valued,
- Screen fatigue
- Lack of peer support, QToD input to help understand social situations
- Understanding of what Covid-19 is and access to news (BSL)
- Impact on key processes – implantation, hearing aid fitting, EHCP process
- FSM replacement system is not working
- Not all children have same access to IT
- Lack of signed information and accessible info about Covid 19 on the news
- Lack of coordination – needed a coordinated approach from leaders, accepting not one size fits all

What are Teachers of the Deaf doing to mitigate some of these challenges?

- Providing differentiated materials
- Loaning equipment to families – audiology, technology
- Regular support being offered through
 - calls
 - emails
 - Virtual platforms
 - garden gate drop offs
 - groups
 - providing IT (laptops) and audio equipment, leads for connectivity, etc
 - BSL classes
 - BSL support
 - video sessions to model techniques for parents 1:1
 - support for CYP – learning and emotional wellbeing support
 - setting up social networks
 - signposting Weekly bulletins
- Sharing of resources between services and signposting

Opportunities

- Review of online platforms for on-going future use – from perspectives of CYP, parents, and specialist staff
- Guidelines for QToDs when returning to work in schools/homes – safe working practices

18. BATOD members were also asked about the impact on Teacher of the Deaf

We asked specific questions of our Deaf Teacher of the Deaf members about their particular experiences. Their responses highlighted a range of issues:

- Getting to grips with various video platforms and figuring out how to use them with BSL interpreters/palantypists/Roger pen etc, compounded by some video platforms not being allowed by employers (i.e. Zoom) despite being preferred over another for access reasons, internet connection at home, video platform issues (sound quality/captions not accurate, picture freezing etc).
- Limitations with carrying out role in comparison to hearing ToDs; 2 metre social distancing reduces quality of speech over distance for hearing aid users, concern re masks for lip-reading when used for d/Deaf people. Upgrade in some technology needed to assist with hearing aid users working from home
- ToDs report they are delivering learning physically via safe social distancing door step engagement ('drive-by'), posting materials, pre-recorded videos, live teaching using remote platforms or through school platforms such as Purple Mash, Seesaw, Google Classroom. Other resources and methods include the use of Twitter and virtual pre-school groups. Many Deaf schools have pooled their BSL resources to be shared nationwide.

Quotation from members' responses:

- We have had to maximise the use of our SeeSaw online learning app which has been really positive in sharing resource and activities for home learning. Classes have been using Zoom for meet ups with their teachers. Staff have been using Zoom effectively to communicate with each other and hold weekly meetings. I have continued to book and use interpreters remotely claiming ATW (Access to Work) as usual. So far, as a DToD, it's been overall positive, but has proven challenging for some hard to reach families which are not engaging as much as we would like.

Audiological issues

- In relation to hearing aids and implant, DToDs noted some parents reporting improved usage as they are at home with their child whereas in other cases there were significant concerns about consistency of hearing aid usage, especially within the early years cohort.
- For parents that do engage, it was noted by one individual that "more regular support to families during initial tuning has been necessary but very useful to inform remote tuning". As it is more difficult to check equipment appropriately, some services have provided CYP and families with hand outs and video links to listening checks, fixing equipment e.g. re-tubing, radio aids, etc. The replacement of ear moulds and ability to conduct assessments eg listening assessments is a growing concern.

Working as a home-based ToD

- The Access to Work (AtW) provision has been variable for DToDs. New staff members or those new to the job role reported no AtW; others are experiencing problems with AtW not understanding the change in their needs and experiencing problems with claims.
- The unreliable aspect of technology and internet access has left some individuals feeling frustrated trying to carry out the role on a par with hearing colleagues.
- Many DToDs favour the accessibility of Zoom and parental preference for that platform but it is not always permitted by employers. The limitations of platforms have been captured above (in section but their usage is not negative for all individuals.
- The isolated aspect of home-based working has led to the recognition of the need for peer to peer support. Alongside regular staff meetings and 1:1 meetings with the line manager, some individuals **have Zoom Team Meetings and have a Team Work WhatsApp group and a social one. Both have been very successful and helped us to support each other work wise and personally. Regular keeping in touch with each other has helped. Video calling has really helped to stay connected with the team during these times.**

The following issues were raised in relation to the effect of the virus and the school closures on all Teachers of the Deaf:

- QToDs working flexibly, creatively and resourcefully
- Increased use of video calls and 'telepractice' which have helped to support CYP and their families
- Varied experience in being able to work effectively remotely – see section on remote learning
- The impact has been varied - 'massive', 'huge', 'no impact', 'demoralising', 'isolating', many positives' 'feeling overlooked' 'vulnerability'
- QToDs are needed more than ever in these circumstances
- Role become more varied and more challenging
- Increased workload - things are taking longer
- Miss working directly with deaf CYP
- Miss working with colleagues; feelings of isolation
- Concerns about the long term impact
- Increased development of technological and other skills
- Lack of access to appropriate technology
- Challenging balancing home life (e.g. caring for own children) and work commitments
- Concerns about the future of the profession and if QToDs will continue to be seen as
- essential
- Strengthen partnerships e.g. with mainstream schools
- Remote working cannot replace direct contact
- Need for wider general awareness of the role of QToD

- Need for increased professional development especially around video interaction
- Particularly challenging working with pre-school children
- Development of new resources for remote working
- Good inter-professional collaboration

Other points made in members' responses:

- ToD redeployed as LA said the Service is "valuable but not essential."
- May be a surge in new diagnosis post lockdown. After lockdown additional support might be needed to support children especially with their SEMH
- Families value having contact with people who know their child well
- Impact on trainee ToDs and some unable to complete placements
- Take the positive and perhaps after lockdown there can be a new balance of remote working and face to face work
- Some colleagues with little support e.g. from managers, others keeping in close contact and using new technology
- Different approaches in LAs (e.g. some using video conferencing and some not) can make it difficult for ToDs to explain to parents the disparity
- Lack of interpreting service e.g. BSL
- Helpful organisations (e.g. NDCS, BATOD, NatSIP) signposting resources and support

Quotations from members' responses:

We are still contributing to annual reviews, EHCPs, recruiting support staff and transition arrangements. No face to face time with our students is hard.

Positive is that schools and families have seen that we are contributing to work remotely and to support our children and families, producing work and videos alongside online learning platforms for schools.

Staying at home to work can be lonely and frustrating especially when technology doesn't always work well or there is limited access to resources.

It has shown how adaptable and creative we are; finding new ways of working and supporting. Families have really appreciated the email/phone/text support and resources we are making and sending out. Continued flexibility from employers as many ToDs are carers/home schooling children at the same time as continuing to work.

I have formed much closer relationships with families over this period which has been positive. Mainstream settings have appreciated input and support from us as they seek to support the families for deaf CYP. Joint working with other professionals has been strengthened as we all work together for positive outcomes.

Personally I think it has made me a better practitioner by adapting and adjusting to the challenges I've learnt a lot about myself and built up a stronger relationship with parents and professionals.

19. Issue raised relevant to post-16 phases including Further and higher education

- Transfer to University/college will be a concern; advantage of 1:1 video calls
- Flexibility about changing courses will be needed as usual preparation will not have been made
- Year 11s can make contact with tutors etc in the next phase

Quotations from members' responses:

This has actually improved, as rather than set work for Year 11 students we have put them in contact with their Post-16 education placements, which are providing pre-entry work.

20. We asked BATOD members about the impact of the closures on families of deaf children and young people.

The impact in some cases had been exacerbated by the suddenness of closure – no preparation for the children

Some responses to the fact that parents are forced into the role of teachers

- It has helped some understand needs better
- Others are anxious at the loss of learning and impact for future
- Others struggling to engage their children - increased pressure for those who cannot understand impact of virus, including those with additional needs
- Not all families have sufficient communication skills eg BSL/SSE to support curriculum delivery
- The coronavirus situation has seen some families flourish, but for many, issues with communication, educating their deaf children, and the mental health and well-being of deaf children isolated within hearing families particularly with EAL has exacerbated their problems

Isolation – leading to increase in mental health issues as mentioned above

- For children: Exacerbated for those who have no access to deaf peers, perhaps restricted access to effective communication skills, BSL etc
- For families - loss of contact with families in similar situations, support groups
- Reduced access to professional support

Access

- Families may not have sufficient access to/knowledge of technology which can meet access needs of their children
- Not all work provided sufficiently differentiated – particularly if additional needs/EAL
- CYP with BSL as first language are particularly disadvantaged

Audiological equipment/medical support

- Additional pressure of ensuring hearing aids/specialist equipment well maintained
- Lack of access to medical services for assessment
- Lack of routine appointments
- Delay in medical interventions/fitting of technology

What ToDs have done and will do to address these issues:

- Regular specialist contact with families
- Remote support for all families when support required – statutory services/voluntary sector/social media groups
- Development of specialist resources and guidance online – education and voluntary services
- Advice and support to schools and families re access to education resources
- Improved understanding and guidance re how IT can support and promote access to learning
- Future training to support families - families now have better understanding of needs
- Further development of use of IT, building on learning through this period

21. BATOD members were asked about the effect of the closures and the virus on the access of deaf children and young people to health and social care services:

There have been delays with

- Assessments
- Ear moulds
- Cochlear implant surgery and tuning
- Fine tuning of hearing aids

What ToDs have been doing and will do

- Strong communication, good coordination and effective multi-agency working

Other issues

- Parental anxiety around attending appointments at the hospital
- Culture can impact on level of engagement with services
- Even greater strain on social care means even fewer will be able to access services
- Most needy still having access but those in need are being discharged from social care
- PPE is having will have an impact on deaf CYP and their access in medical

- appointments eg opaque masks
- Reduced service from CAMHS
- Anxiety for parents especially following new confirmation of hearing loss – It has been difficult supporting new baby referrals and establishing that relationship from a distance
- Deaf CYP may be less able to access support, e.g. Childline, NSPCC, etc – due to language and communication needs

Quotations from members' responses:

Funding and austerity have not been useful in terms of social care provision – there is lack of understanding of the needs of deaf CYP, higher thresholds for intervention and removal of support for families have unknown negative impact especially for those with complex needs.

Access to services reduced ... all understandable when services are having to be prioritised and staff and patient safety considered. Good communication remains, enabling confidence in services to continue.

The impact will only be clearly visible when the children return to school. Some will have longer lasting scars while others will fall back into school happily without any obvious issues.

22. Recommendations

- BATOD recommends that the Department for Education draws up clear guidance on the use of remote learning with pupils unable to attend schools at this time with specific reference to issues of accessibility for deaf pupils and adults eg Deaf Teachers of the Deaf and deaf parents.
- BATOD recommends that the Department of Education should ensure that there is effective support to deaf children and young people at times of transition, especially when leaving school and moving to Further Education where the support mechanisms are far more disparate than for school-aged pupils.
- BATOD recommends that national guidance and support for schools and support services related to all aspects of working with pupils with SEND in the light of the impact of the coronavirus and the effect on schools and other settings is drawn up by the Department of Education. At present too much decision-making is expected at a local/school level leading to inconsistent practice nationally.
- BATOD recommends that the Departments of Health and Social Care and Education should ensure that there is immediate support for children and young people who have been identified as being deaf during the period of the lockdown. They and their families need immediate educational and audiological support.

- BATOD recommends that the Department for Education should raise the profile and role of specialist support services, specifically for children with sensory impairment, as they are crucial to ensuring the appropriate inclusion of deaf children in mainstream and special schools (in addition to providing support in homes from initial identification) as their role is currently not well understood.

23. Conclusion

This document itemises a number of complex issues and recommendations arising from the closure of schools and the impact of the coronavirus on the education of deaf children and young people. BATOD is very happy to clarify any of the points raised either through oral submission or in writing.

Paul Simpson and Teresa Quail, National Executive Officers on behalf of the BATOD Steering Group and wider membership.

June 2020