



[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)

Ground Floor South  
Castle House  
37-45 Paul Street  
London EC2A 4LS

Tel 020 7490 8656 (v/t)  
Fax 020 7251 5020  
Email [ndcs@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:ndcs@ndcs.org.uk)  
Freephone Helpline  
0800 800 8880 (v/t)

Chief Executive  
Susan Daniels OBE

President  
Sir Christopher Benson  
FRICS DL

Mr M Reaney  
Operational Director Legal and Democratic Services  
Municipal Building  
Kingsway  
Widnes  
WA8 7QF

13 October 2016

RECEIVED  
17 OCT 2016  
LEGAL SERVICES

Dear Mr Reaney,

Please find enclosed a response from the National Deaf Children's Society to the consultation to close the resource base for pupils with hearing impairment and specific learning difficulties at Westfield Primary School.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could please confirm receipt by emailing [campaigns@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@ndcs.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Hazel Badjie'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Hazel Badjie  
Regional Director, North West England  
National Deaf Children's Society  
Email: [hazel.badjie@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:hazel.badjie@ndcs.org.uk)  
Mobile: 07890318724 (voice)  
Direct line: 01706 82 5022

**Consultation to close the resource  
base for pupils with hearing  
impairment and specific learning  
difficulties at Westfield Primary  
School**

**A response by the National Deaf  
Children's Society**

**October 2016**

**The National Deaf Children's Society**

Ground Floor South, Castle House

37- 45 Paul Street,

London EC2A 4LS

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7490 8656 (voice and text)

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7251 5020

Email: [campaigns@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@ndcs.org.uk)

[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)



## **1. Introduction**

NDCS welcomes the opportunity to respond to this statutory consultation on the proposals to close the resource base for pupils with hearing impairment and specific learning difficulties at Westfield Primary School. This submission highlights key concerns and makes recommendations, in order to ensure that deaf children in the local area continue to receive high quality education support.

NDCS is the national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. We represent the interests and campaign for the rights of all deaf children and young people from birth until they reach independence. There are over 45,000 deaf children in the UK and three more are born every day.

## **2. Key concerns**

We are seeking reassurance from Halton Borough Council around various key areas of concern, in order to ensure that deaf children in the area are able to access the best possible support in order for them to thrive.

### **Concern 1: Monitoring attainment and outcomes**

It is possible that the attainment and progress of the pupils transitioning from the resource base to full time mainstream school could be affected. It will be important to closely track the progress of these pupils and offer additional support or alternative education provision if this is needed.

### **Concern 2: Reinvestment of funding**

NDCS has been assured that the funding that Westfield Primary School currently receives to support pupils in the resource base will be reinvested into the peripatetic specialist teaching support service. It is vital that the full amount of funding, or an increased amount, is invested in the peripatetic service in order for deaf children to be sufficiently supported. We would like to see formal written confirmation of the amount of budget to be reinvested in the peripatetic service.

### **Concern 3: Retention of qualified staff**

Halton Borough Council has committed to recruiting specialist staff in order to provide educational support to deaf children. As part of the teaching assistant team, Halton Borough Council employs a communication support worker with a Level 6 qualification in British Sign Language (BSL). NDCS recognises this as a particularly valuable post and an asset that Halton Borough Council should strive to retain. We would hope that Halton Borough Council makes a commitment to retain this post.

#### **Concern 4: Future commissioning of resource base placements**

The closure of the resource base at Westfield Primary School would mean that there would no longer be a primary resource base in the borough of Halton. This removes the option of local resource base provision for deaf children in Halton. There may well be deaf children in Halton, now and in the future, who would like to access a resource base and who may benefit educationally and socially from doing so. Therefore, it is imperative that Halton Borough Council has a Service Level Agreement in place with Liverpool City Council to commission places at Knotty Ash resource base on an as-and-when basis. For children who attend an out-of-borough resource base, transport arrangements which are acceptable for the families would need to be put in place.

Furthermore, the availability of resource base provision at Knotty Ash Primary School in Liverpool should be fully communicated to parents of deaf children in Halton. When making decisions about their child's education, parents should be made aware of the full spectrum of support which Halton Borough Council can offer and then be in a position to be able to choose what is most appropriate for their child.

#### **Concern 5: Monitoring the need for a reestablishment of a resource base**

It is entirely possible that the demand for local resource base provision may increase again in the future. Halton Borough Council has predicted, through results of the new-born hearing screening programme, that there are no deaf infants in Halton who will require a resource base. NDCS disagrees with this statement. This is because we are concerned that this approach does not allow for children moving in to the borough or children developing deafness in their early years, for instance as a result of meningitis.

The future demand for a resource base in Halton should be continuously monitored and re-establishing the provision should be a real consideration if there is sufficient demand.

#### **Concern 6: Transition from the resource base into mainstream**

It has been proposed that the three pupils who currently spend time at the resource base will be supported in full time mainstream school. These pupils may feel more familiar with certain styles and levels of support and this may need to be replicated in the mainstream classrooms. For instance, when undertaking group work or discussions deaf children may find it beneficial for their group to move to a quieter place. It is also a concern that deaf pupils may feel less of a sense of a deaf peer group when they no longer attend the resource base. The emotional and social wellbeing of deaf pupils should be monitored.

#### **Concern 7: Making reasonable adjustments to mainstream setting**

Halton Borough Council has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment to outline how the closure of the base may impact on deaf children. NDCS feels that this Assessment should have mentioned the need for possible reasonable

adjustments to be made to the mainstream school to make conditions optimum for deaf pupils. Good acoustics are incredibly important in ensuring that the learning environment is appropriate for deaf children. Furthermore, the technology and specialist equipment for deaf children should be retained and managed by the central peripatetic team.

### **3. Summary of recommendations:**

#### **Recommendation 1: To focus on outcomes for deaf children and monitor progress**

Halton Borough Council's primary focus when making alterations to education provision for deaf children should be on outcomes. The progress and attainment of the pupils transitioning from the resource base into full time mainstream school should be tracked closely to ensure that mainstream provision is productive for these children. If progress is negatively impacted, alternative provision should be offered and explored.

#### **Recommendation 2: To reinvest funding into peripatetic service**

The entire budget, or more, that is currently funding the resource base, should be reinvested in the specialist teaching support service for hearing impaired pupils in mainstream school. Funding should also be allocated to recruiting and training specialist staff.

#### **Recommendation 3: To recruit and retain specialist staff**

Halton Borough Council has indicated an intention to recruit an additional Teacher of the Deaf. A commitment should be made to recruit this additional staff resource. A commitment should also be made to retain current posts, particularly a communication support worker who is highly qualified in BSL.

#### **Recommendation 4: To commission resource base placements out-of-borough**

A Service Level Agreement should be put in place with Liverpool City Council to enable deaf children in Halton who require resource base provision to access this out-of-borough. The full continuum of available support, including the availability of resource base provision, should be fully communicated to parents when making decisions and drawing up Education Health and Care plans.

#### **Recommendation 5: To monitor future need for resource base provision**

The future demand for a resource base in Halton should be closely monitored. If at some point in the future, demand for resource base placements increases, a plan should be in place that triggers a process of re-evaluating whether a local resource base should be re-established. From taking new born hearing screening results into account, Halton Borough Council has asserted that there are no deaf infants who would require a resource base in the near future. It must be fully

considered that deaf children requiring a resource base may move into the local area and children may develop deafness in the early years, for instance as result of meningitis. A future increased need for a local resource base cannot be ruled out.

**Recommendation 6: To support children transitioning into mainstream school**

Each pupil transitioning from spending time at the resource base into full time mainstream school should be supported emotionally and educationally. It should be considered that children may feel that they have less of a sense of a deaf peer group or identity. The additional needs of deaf children in a mainstream school setting should be carefully considered. For instance, there should be an understanding that deaf pupils may need to undertake group work and discussions in quieter areas.

**Recommendation 7: To make reasonable adjustments to mainstream school**

Reasonable adjustments should be made to the mainstream school setting to make it as optimum as possible for all deaf children's education and learning. Sufficient investment in good acoustics and technological equipment should be made.

**For further details please contact:**

Hazel Badjie, Regional Director, North West England  
Direct line: 01706825022 (voice)  
Mobile: 07890318724  
Email: [hazel.badjie@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:hazel.badjie@ndcs.org.uk)

Sally Etchells, Policy and Campaigns Officer  
Direct line: 02070141179 (voice)  
Email: [sally.etchells@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:sally.etchells@ndcs.org.uk)