



ToDs' CPD study

Helen Nelson introduces an exploratory study of the engagement of post-qualification Teachers of the Deaf in Continuing Professional Development

To date, neither the professional development needs of qualified Teachers of the Deaf nor the extent to which Teachers of the Deaf engage in further training have been a significant focus of research-led or governmental attention. Whilst this remains the case, there also is a clear expectation that Teachers of the Deaf will continue to develop their skills and knowledge over the life-time of their career. This is acknowledged by BATOD and forms part of the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, which states that Teachers of the Deaf should *"endeavour to maintain and continually update their professional skills and knowledge"*. There is also recognition that the initial mandatory qualification cannot encompass all the expertise a Teacher of the Deaf will require within his/her career. The most recent Specification for the Mandatory Qualification, with effect from September 2016, supports this view and refers to the need to provide opportunity for students to consider their future training and developmental needs on completion of the course of study (NCTL 2015).

Although the need for further professional development is acknowledged, there is no absolute requirement for Teachers of the Deaf to undertake or provide evidence of further training. This is in marked contrast to the requirements for other comparable professional groups,

e.g. Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists. These groups are required to evidence Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain their professional registration (HCPC 2012).

The landscape of deaf education has altered significantly over the course of the last 20 years and Teachers of the Deaf require the skills and knowledge to respond effectively to these changes.

The most notable developments are:

- Increasing involvement with newly identified babies and their families following the introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme.
- The increase in the numbers of children who are using cochlear implants.
- The increasing heterogeneity of the group of children, young people and families with whom the profession is engaged.
- The continued rate of technological innovation, both in relation to amplification options and educational tools.
- Significant changes in legislation embodied within the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice 2015.



For many practising Teachers of the Deaf, these changes have taken place since they undertook their initial training and even those teachers who are currently training or recently qualified, face the likelihood that their knowledge and skills will rapidly become out of date as a result of the pace of change. There is, therefore, a clear need for Teachers of the Deaf to be actively involved in professional development to maintain and extend their skills and knowledge.

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) has a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice:



"The SENCO and class teacher, together with the specialists, and involving the pupil's parents, should consider a range of evidence-based and effective teaching approaches, appropriate equipment, strategies and interventions in order to support the child's progress" (6.62).

It is difficult to see how Teachers of the Deaf can fulfil this part of their role without access to the current research-based and technological information upon which to base decision-making.

In response to this situation, an exploratory study is in development that will seek to look at the current involvement of Teachers of the Deaf in CPD. The initial study will be questionnaire-based and will evaluate the types of CPD qualified Teachers of the Deaf, who work for support services, are engaged in.

Respondents will be asked to identify:

- the professional development activities they have undertaken within the past 12 months
- why they undertook the training identified and what motivated their involvement
- what the perceived benefits are, in relation to both their own professional role and the outcomes for the children, young people and families they are working with
- whether they identify any restraints upon their ability to access appropriate development opportunities.

The study will be comparative in nature and will involve an evaluation of the responses of staff from a number of specialist support services within the UK. The heads of these services will also be invited to provide their viewpoint in relation to the issues they encounter in accessing appropriate professional development for the teams they manage. A selected number of respondents will also be invited to engage in an interview to probe some of the issues they have highlighted in more depth.

Whilst the study will be small-scale, it is hoped that it will provide an initial snapshot of the current situation to identify how well Teachers of the Deaf are able to access appropriate training and development opportunities.

If your service would be interested in taking part in this research please contact me by email:

h.nelson@maryhare.org.uk

Helen Nelson is Head of Courses and Senior Lecturer at Mary Hare.

References:

- DfE/DoH (2015) *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice: 0-25 years* (Available at www.gov.uk)
- HCPC (2012) *Your guide to our standards for continuing professional development* (Available at www.hcpc-uk.org)
- NCTL (2015) *Specifications for the Mandatory Qualifications for Courses Starting from September 2016: For specialist teachers of children and young people who are deaf.* (Available at www.gov.uk)