



**Chris Heaton-Harris**

Member of Parliament for Daventry  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Tel: 020 7219 7048

August 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about support for deaf children and young people. I share your belief that deaf children and young people should have equal access to information, and I am glad that measures are in place to support them in educational settings.

I welcome the Department for Education contract with the National Association for Special Educational Needs, through which the department has funded the Whole School Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) consortium to equip the workforce to deliver high quality teaching for all children and young people with SEND, including specialist resources in relation to sensory impairments.

In addition, I know that those who teach classes of children with sensory impairment must hold an appropriate qualification approved by the Secretary of State for Education. Teachers working in an advisory role to support these pupils should also hold an appropriate qualification.

The Department for Education is increasing the total investment in the schools' budget with an additional £1 billion during the 2022-23 academic year to support children and young people with the most complex needs. Alongside this an investment of £2.6 billion will be made over the next three years to deliver new places and improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND.

In March this year, the Government published its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan sets out that the Government will establish a single national system that delivers for every child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities from birth to age 25 so that they enjoy their childhood, achieve good outcomes, and are well prepared for their next step, whether that's employment, higher education or adult services. The plan included a number of commitments to train teachers of children and young people with sensory impairments.

As part of this, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) is developing an apprenticeship for teachers of sensory impairment. They are working with universities, local authorities and sector representatives, including the National Deaf Children's Society, the Royal National Institute of Blind People and the British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People to develop the qualification. Subject to approval by IfATE, the apprenticeship will be published this



year and will be delivered in 2025, allowing for providers to prepare the courses for delivery.

It is important that communication is more accessible to those pupils who have hearing impairments. To this end, I welcome that schools can choose to offer sign language in their curriculum or include it as part of their extra-curricular activities programme. This includes

offering existing British Sign Language qualifications. I understand that the Department for Education is also working with subject experts and Ofqual on introducing a British Sign Language GCSE.

Funding is already available through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) for qualifications in, or focusing on, British Sign Language (BSL) up to and including Level 2. About 60% of the AEB has been devolved to Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority who determine which provision to fund for learners in their areas. The Education and Skills Funding Agency provides the remaining funding for learners in non-devolved areas. Some providers of Community Learning offer BSL courses, and those providers determine the course fees, including levels of fee remission. For qualifications at Level 3 and above, Advanced Learner Loans are available for certain BSL qualifications. BSL qualifications and the appropriate further education funding offer can be found here:

<https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/Search>.

There is a statutory duty, under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, for local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of ‘children in need’ in their area, including disabled children, by providing appropriate services to them. Services for disabled children provided under Section 17 will typically include short breaks for parent carers, equipment or adaptations to the home, and support for parents.

Section H1 of an education, health and care plan must specify all services assessed as being needed for a disabled child or young person under 18, under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. This may include services to be provided for parent carers of disabled children, including following an assessment of their needs under the Children Act 1989. Where this assessment judges that the family needs provision to learn BSL, it could be included here.



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Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**