

Deafness and Dyslexia

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) has the meaning given by section 2 of the ALN Act. It is stated as follows as a person has additional learning needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty or disability arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for additional learning provision. A child of compulsory school age or person over that age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or mainstream institutions in the further education sector (gov.uk 2025).

Inclusive Practice

There are at least 50,000 deaf children living in the United Kingdom as stated by BATOD (2024). Although deafness is a disability it should not hinder a child's learning and deaf children have the same rights as hearing children with access to education to develop their knowledge and understanding having the correct support. Deafness is a disability that is considered an Additional Learning Need in Welsh Government Guidance. A specialist deaf curriculum framework is in place to provide support to all deaf children and their families. It allows the children to gain more knowledge and understanding, helping them to excel within the setting. It is also designed to give them independence so that they can have their own individual identity, confidence to make informed decisions about their deafness right through to adulthood (NDCS 2022). All deaf children have regular access to Speech and Language Therapists (SALT) that provide phonic routines that are to be carried out daily in class. British Sign Language (BSL) and Signed Supported English (SSE) are used to communicate with children and deliver lessons so that all the children are included due to the diverse language barriers. Audiological Technicians play a role from birth until the children leave education. They are on hand to provide technical equipment and monitor and repair if required. Radio aids and sound fields allow deaf children to work alongside their mainstream peers (NDCS 2022). It is good practice for deaf children to work alongside hearing children for them to be able to have a different view of the world they live in.

Support Strategies

Kelly and Phillips (2016) state that there are 4 levels of the 'Multi-Deficit Model of Dyslexia' 1. Combination of generic and environmental risk factors; 2. Combination of neural systems affected by each risk factor; 3. Cognitive processes affected; 4. Behavioural level. Dyslexia can differentiate within individuals and so it can be difficult to diagnose. Dyslexia can also change within a person over the years due to factors such as the environment and setting they are in along with trying to meet demands (British Dyslexia Association 2021). Tests can be carried out to see if dyslexia can be diagnosed. The Literacy Difficulties Team will come into the settings to carry out the Aston Index Screening. After the screening is complete a multi-agency meeting will be held. It will include the Teacher of the Deaf, the Education Psychologist, the Literacy Difficulties Team Assessor, the speech therapist from the Speech and Language Team (SALT) and the Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) from the setting. Although it is thought that dyslexia is just a writing, spelling and reading challenge, more and more research and factors are emerging to show that the focus is shifting. (British Dyslexia Association 2021). Precision Teaching will commence within the Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP). This is a method, based on the NLP model, enabling learners to develop effective cognitive strategies for spelling. It makes use of visual imagery and may be a particularly suitable method for learners with dyslexia as often visual memory is a strength.

Identification and Diagnosis

NHS Wales (2025) states that 1 to 2 babies in every 1,000 are born with permanent hearing loss in 1 or both ears. A hearing screening test are offered to parents within six weeks of a baby being born within the UK. The automated otoacoustic emission (AOAE) test is completed first and if there is no clear response then a second test will be conducted the automated auditory brainstem response test (AABR). The results are giving as soon as the tests are finished, and should they both not give a clear response then the baby will be referred to a hearing specialist (NDCS 2022). When observations take place and it is clear progress is not being made then interventions will be altered and adapted. If after a significant amount of time progress is still not being made or not at the right level the Teacher of the Deaf will gain advice from the Additional Needs Coordinator and start the child on the pathway for further intervention and screening to discover if there is potentially an underlying additional learning need (gov.wales 2025). The British Dyslexia Association (2021) states that 'Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that mainly affects development of literacy and language related skills'. It is dominant from birth and its effects can be lifelong. It is very hard to diagnose a deaf child with dyslexia as the signs can be mistaken for the speech, language and processing skills that deaf children cannot comprehend.

Conclusion

Dyslexia and deafness are both additional learning needs that can affect children's learning and development. Identifying these needs as early as possible will give children the best advantage with their education. With the correct interventions, plans and strategies the children will be able to expand their knowledge further and learn all required skills throughout the cross curricular within the New Curriculum for Wales. Practitioners will be able to provide them with the correct support and help them gain confidence and understanding. Having inclusivity in Early Years settings will allow children to develop their individual skills in their own unique way. Even if children have additional learning needs they still should be given the same opportunities as others. UNCRC Article 29 states that 'All children have the right to an education' (UNICEF 2024).