

Hello, my name is Louisa Woodward, and I am going to be talking to you about deafness and dyslexia. I have chosen this subject as I work with deaf children and recently a child I work with was diagnosed with dyslexia. This is the first time the Teacher of the Deaf has had a child in the class with dyslexia.

Introduction

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).

The ALN legislative framework is created by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 (the ALN Act), the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021 (the ALN Code) and regulations made under the Act. The framework is in place and by the Welsh Government with the aim of ensuring that any learners with ALN can achieve their full potential by overcoming barriers to their learning. With the statutory framework being a collaborative, integrated process of assessment practitioners are able to constantly monitor the children and how they are being supported. By carrying out these assessments practitioners can plan efficiently and effectively so that they can facilitate early, timely and effective interventions. The framework posts a transparent and fair system so that advice and information can be provided and helps to resolve concerns and appeals. By being a unified legislative framework, supporting ALN for all compulsory school aged children or below and all young people who are still in school or further education (gov.wales 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). The New Curriculum for Wales (gov.uk 2024) incorporates Four Core Purposes throughout all areas of learning. Mandatory cross curricular skills provide the children with lifelong skills that will be needed when they leave education. The government takes on the responsibility of preparing the children to be able to thrive and adapt to the world around them. Qualified Teachers of the Deaf can provide deaf children with the requirements they need to help them develop in all areas, especially with speech and language development. Individual interventions support the children with the progression steps they require to meet their own individual needs and the impact their disability has on their learning. 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. Deaf children are very direct and see everything as matter of fact. When asking questions or speaking their minds they can quite often offend others by just saying what they feel or think. They will listen to other's opinions and thoughts but can be quite adamant with their own so will not take them into consideration. When deaf children talk, their structured sentences will differ from hearing as they do not tend to use small words such as is, if and. These are generally missed out during BSL, and sentences can be backwards (BATOD 2024).

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). It is important for parents to be reassured that it does not always mean that the baby has a hearing impairment as other factors could have compromised the tests such as the baby has fluid or a blockage in the ear. They will see the hearing specialist within four weeks of the test and further tests will be carried out. Levels and types of permanent loss vary for each newborn. There are lots of different reasons why a baby can have a hearing loss such as genetic factors, complications at birth or infections. If it is confirmed there is hearing loss in one or both ears then the hearing specialist will be there to answer any

questions and explain the next steps. They will explain if the baby will require hearing aids when they are older or discuss cochlear implants if that will be more beneficial to the child depending on the severity of the hearing loss. Families will have constant support from the audiology department at the hospital (nhs.wales 2025). Although deafness is a disability that is classed as an additional need and will have an impact on the children's learning there can also be more than one additional need present within the child. If deaf children are having difficulties with their learning and not meeting targets, it is easy to assume it is down to the hearing impairment. Deaf children have audiological equipment in settings that is tested daily to support their learning (audiology.org 2024). Teachers of the Deaf carry out one to one lessons with the children for their language development. 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). Teachers of the Deaf usually have a good relationship with parents/carers and communicate daily with them. Teachers of the Deaf will speak to parents if they feel there are any underlying issues with the child's learning, and they will explain to them the best approach to investigating and gain consent to complete any screenings. 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. Having difficulty reciting the alphabet that could be due to hearing the sound phonics. Slow speech development is common in deaf children especially if the disability is not picked up at birth. Deaf children are unable to follow two or more step instructions due to processing the information and this is common in children diagnosed with dyslexia. Deaf children have no spatial awareness and have problems with balance. This can cause mobility problems, and they will find hand eye coordination skills difficult. Phonological processing is difficult with memory and retaining information proving challenging for them (BATOD 2024). In today's world there is a lot more information and discussion around ALN and parents can be quick to assume their child has an issue if they are not meeting targets or milestones. Parents can raise their concerns for the child and push for diagnosis quickly, but this has its disadvantages as a child could be misdiagnosed, and their actual need will not be met correctly. Practitioners know that every child is different and unique and learn at their own ability and it is stated by Boyes Turner (2017) that 57% of practitioners think that children are being misdiagnosed with ALN. In the UK there is about 10% of the population with dyslexia, although this is not a proven fact as there could potentially be more that are undiagnosed or are not even aware they are dyslexic. It is thought to be genetic and

appears to affect more boys than girls (British Dyslexia Association 2021). It is unknown how many deaf people have dyslexia and information, and research is very limited (BATOD 2024).

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. This can be difficult for deaf children because it is an unfamiliar adult and they find it hard to work without establishing trust. The Assessor might need assistance from the Teacher of the Deaf to be deaf aware and if there is a communication breakdown and BSL needs to be used. When all the results are compiled, practitioners will have the information they need to determine if the child is dyslexic then they will be able to plan and prepare the interventions to help and support the child. Education Psychologists can come and observe the child and give their professional opinion. Different schemes of testing are used with Language Link being the first as it can be accessed from Reception class and up. The Aston Index is used predominately in most Early Years settings and the score can give a clear indication of the child's difficulties. Schonell reading and spelling tests are carried out within the screening. Deaf children have difficulty hearing high frequency words so when such words appear in the tests being carried out, it is difficult to know if the child has mis-spelt the word due to not hearing it correctly or if it is due to dyslexia. Phonological awareness skills are looked at and any difficulties that are present are noted and complied with the results of the other tests. The last step is a dictation task where a practitioner will say a sentence and ask the child to either repeat it back verbally or to write it down. Again, for deaf children it is hard to know if the child has struggled to hear the correct word. Practitioners' judgement can also be factored into the result too as they know the child and their abilities and whether the mis-spelt word could have been due to the frequency of it (gov.wales 2025). 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. Regular observations and tests will be carried out to see if the child is progressing and planning can be adapted if needed. After a diagnosis it is important to not only support the child, but parents as well will need it to. They might not want to accept that their child has another additional learning need. Providing the parents/carers with information and advice is crucial and reassuring them that their child will have the correct interventions in place to overcome all barriers to learning (gov.wales 2025).

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).

Thank you for your time, are there any questions?

Can deaf children learn Welsh or any other languages?

Deaf children are normally disappplied from learning the Welsh language and other foreign languages. It can be difficult for them due to their hearing impairment but with extra support they can achieve the skill. It is up to both the parents and the child to decide if they would like to learn the languages.

Who decides on the interventions that are put in place?

Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToD) can collaborate with the Additional Learning Needs Coordinating Officer (ALNCO) whilst the child is in the setting and together, they can work out next steps and adapt strategies that can be put into place to help and support the child with their learning and development. With regular observations, interventions can be adapted if needed.

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