

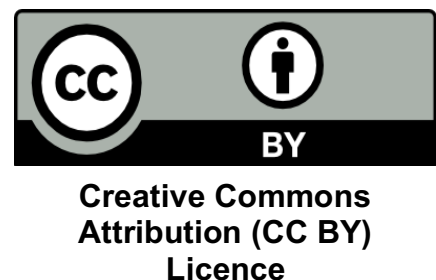
# Deaf Education in Scotland and Wales

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**Attitudes to British Sign Language in deaf education compared to Gaelic and Welsh**

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## **Abstract**

Having conducted a review of the impact of the Scottish national BSL plan on deaf education, in particular its issues, failures and successes, during Phase 1 of this project, the purpose of this report was to ascertain whether there is an appetite at government or local authority level for deaf children to be educated in either BSL-medium or bilingual schools – or whether parents of deaf children expect to see such provision – within the countries of Scotland and Wales, which have Welsh- and Gaelic-medium education provision respectively. Nineteen interviews with a total of 21 participants were carried out with Scottish and Welsh Government civil servants, national public body representatives, council officials, college and university representatives, families of deaf children, Teachers of the Deaf and third sector employees.

There were marked differences in the conceptualisation of BSL as a language between top-, mid- and low-level, with the top-level tending to veer towards BSL as a communication tool and having a greater awareness of language policy and the right to language. At the mid- and low-level, there was however, a tendency to frame deaf children according to their audiological status, and that even though health – more specifically audiology – is outside education, it clearly exerts a huge force over the work of Teachers of the Deaf which would explain their attitudes towards BSL. Gaps in early years provision for deaf children also emerged as an important theme, with recognition that it is this period that is vital for language acquisition. The final theme identified through the interview stage was the availability or scarcity of resources in both Wales and Scotland for the teaching of BSL and in deaf education.

We make 14 recommendations grouped under five headings: early years, language pedagogies, BSL teachers, Teachers of the Deaf and language policy. These include developing a new profession of BSL therapists to support efforts to develop BSL in deaf children in early years, the development of language pedagogies courses, the commissioning of mapping exercise of BSL teachers, the expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate courses to provide opportunities to develop fluency in BSL, initial teaching training courses that incorporate BSL, and training for qualified teachers,

supplementary resources and language sabbaticals for qualified teachers and Teachers of the Deaf.

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## Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>Abbreviation/Acronym</b>	<b>Full word or phrase</b>
BATOD	British Association of Teachers of the Deaf
Bòrd	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
BSL	British Sign Language
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence (Scotland)
CfW	Curriculum for Wales
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales
CRIDE	Consortium of Research in Deaf Education
DELTA	Deaf Education Through Listening and Talking
EWC	Education Workforce Council (Wales)
GME	Gaelic-medium education
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
iBSL	Institute of BSL
Mudiad	Mudiad Meithrin
NDCS	National Deaf Children's Society
SCQF	Scottish Curriculum Qualifications Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSC	Scottish Sensory Centre
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council
SVQs	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
ToD	Teacher of the Deaf
WME	Welsh-medium education

## 1 Introduction

The first independent impact study of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015, *The impact of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 on deaf education* (O'Neill & Wilks, 2021), was published in November 2021 to contribute to the review of the first Scottish national BSL plan, and to act as a discussion point for parents, teachers, organisations and deaf young people themselves about what changes the Act has so far made in relation to their education. The report made 14 recommendations for key stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Act, including a public debate regarding language acquisition and the binary attitudes (speech or BSL), engagement with families of deaf children and young deaf people, transparency in relation to the funding of third sector organisations, an increase in the availability of BSL courses and an improvement in providing BSL content on websites. Research exploring perspectives on the education of deaf children and young people in Wales (Mitchell, 2018) is, however, scarce. This follow-up report intends to go some way to address this imbalance, and interesting comparisons can be drawn between the Welsh and Scottish approaches to BSL as a language.

Within the UK, research has been conducted on the education of deaf children and young deaf people in Scotland (Grimes et al., 2007; Thoutenhoofd, 2006; O'Neill, et al., 2014; O'Neill & Wilks, 2021), England (Jarvis, 2003; Salter et al., 2017) and Northern Ireland (Doherty, 2012; O'Connell & Deegan, 2014). There has been no research conducted exploring the perspectives of stakeholders on the education of deaf children and young deaf people in Wales (Mitchell, 2018), until now.

Monolingualism has historically relied on education to impose the majority language (Hinton, 2016), but could education not also be used effectively to promote a minority language? May (2012) acknowledges that education cannot by itself reverse language shift but argues that as education accomplishes this for majority group members, it should be able to do the same for minority group members too. May (2012, p. 170) further argues that schools go as far as to extend and reconstitute what counts as 'accepted' and 'acceptable' cultural and linguistic knowledge. Teachers' positive attitudes towards the minority language (Gartziarena & Villabona, 2022) and a critical

awareness curriculum also show how education systems can support and maintain minority language use (Beaudrie et al., 2021).

In the case of Welsh, there appears to have been a successful reverse of language shift (Fishman, 1991) since Welsh began to be used as the medium of instruction in some schools following the 1944 Education Act (Prys Jones, 2014). To a lesser extent this has also been seen in relation to Gaelic in Scotland, where Gaelic-medium education (GME) started from 1985 (O'Hanlon, 2015) led by parental demand. Could BSL also be revived through the school system?

The difference between Welsh, Gaelic and BSL, however, is the fact that BSL is mired in a *deaf-disabled* and *language-minority* dichotomy (Wilks, 2022), which De Meulder et al. (2019b) call 'dual category status.' That is, the view of deaf children as disabled is often much more prominent than seeing them as potential members of a BSL-using linguistic minority. This undoubtedly clouds the minds of both medical and educational professionals who are involved in the education of deaf children. In addition, BSL is not the language of the home in 94% of cases (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004), so parents know little about the language when they discover their baby is deaf.

A number of themes were identified during the production of our 2021 report, and the aim of this supplementary report is to provide further context and understanding of the issues affecting the implementation of the BSL Act's first national plan in relation to deaf education and compare the Scottish approach with that of Wales. We will also discuss themes identified through interviews with various stakeholders, people involved in the education system or in maintaining Welsh, Gaelic or BSL in the two countries. This supplementary report will first briefly consider the education systems of Scotland and Wales and how they are similar or different especially in relation to minority languages. A literature review then outlines the conceptual framework (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4 there is discussion of the methodology underpinning the research interviews and their subsequent analysis. We then provide the findings from the interviews with stakeholders (Chapter 5) and finish with conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 6).

## 2 The education systems of Scotland and Wales

Age during school year	Scotland	Wales
0-3	Early years	Early years
3		Foundation Phase
4		
5		
6	P1	Key Stage 2
7	P2	
8	P3	
9	P4	
10	P5	Key Stage 3
11-12	P6	
12-14	P7	
14-16	S1-S3	GCSE
16-18	S4-S6	
	National 4 National 5	
16-18	Higher Advanced Higher	A Levels

Figure 1: Comparison of progression levels in Scottish and Welsh education systems

Scotland's education system is distinct from the rest of the UK, but the divergence became clearer following the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. The first Act the new parliament passed, the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act (2000) emphasised the 'presumption of mainstreaming', the assumption that all children would attend their local school, although the process had been evident from the 1990s (Pirrie, 2008). The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004) set the scene for a new and broader way of seeing additional needs which could apply to any child even temporarily (Pirrie, 2008), compared to the more overt

focus on difference, 'special educational needs', south of the border. The new Scottish 'Curriculum for Excellence' implemented from 2010 attempted to reduce prescriptive knowledge or too much 'clutter', focusing on cross-curriculum topics following children's interests and encouraging positive traits such as independence and citizenship. There has been debate about how far this approach has been successful (Priestley, 2018). More recently, a report from the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2021) has led to proposals for significant change in upper secondary education and the abolition of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), the exam board which also currently regulates its own qualifications.

Degrees in Scotland are four years long, rather than three as in other parts of the UK, and many young people still start university at age 17, a year younger than the rest of the UK. There is a strong tradition in Scotland that more of the peer group gains higher education qualifications than in other parts of the UK, often through vocational degrees or diplomas at college level (Weedon, 2022). Currently though, the proportion of the population studying for a first undergraduate degree or other undergraduate provision is 3.1% in Wales and Scotland, and 2.5% in England (ONS, 2021; HESA 2021)

Similarly to Scotland, the Welsh education system has diverged from the national curriculum which covered England and Wales since devolution in 1998 (Gatley, 2020). As Evans (2022) points out, this includes less of a focus on standards-based frameworks and more on teachers supporting children's 'rounded progress.' Nonetheless, the Welsh education system remained analogous to the English one, with most state schools following the national curriculum until the introduction of the new curriculum in Wales in September 2022. Further discussion about this new curriculum is below in section 2.4. Welsh education is divided into two major stages: pupils attend primary schools up to the age of 11 and secondary schools from 11 to 16 (Jones & Jones, 2014).

## **2.1 Early years**

We discuss here early years provision in Scotland and Wales with particular reference to multilingualism. Since our Phase 1 report (O'Neill & Wilks, 2021) we have been

interested to see how the implementation of the BSL Act in Scotland in relation to young deaf children compares with approaches to early bilingualism in Wales.

In Scotland, the main focus of early learning and childcare, a term introduced in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014), is on children aged three and four. Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act (1980) requires local authorities in Scotland to ensure that there is 'adequate and efficient' provision of school education and further education in their area' (Bharkhada & Long, 2019, p. 4). All three- and four-year-olds are eligible for a funded place in a nursery school or class and in some circumstances two-year-olds in care or with parents who have experience of care or are in receipt of certain welfare benefits (Scottish Government, 2022). There is some suggestion that funding for early years education could be extended to include one-year-olds (Seith, 2022). Nurseries may be provided by family centres, day nurseries, nursery schools and classes, childminders and playgroups, and operated by local authorities, private businesses, voluntary sector organisations, or in the case of childminders, self-employed individuals (Education Scotland, 2022a).

However, the teachers' union Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) is concerned about the falling number of qualified nursery teachers:

'The 'Concordat' between the Scottish Government and local councils has also created danger for the future of nursery education provision. The 'Concordat' means flexibility for councils to decide on the number and deployment of nursery teachers they employ which has often led to a reduction in the daily contact provided to young people' (Educational Institute of Scotland, 2010, p.3).

The Scottish Government has reduced the number of qualified teachers in nurseries and encourages instead a vocational early years Level 7 (sub-degree level) qualification (Seith, 2022). Nursery managers and lead practitioners need to meet the vocational standards, but there is no mention of bilingualism. Child language development and communication skills are mentioned briefly in one standard (Scottish Social Services Council, 2015, 16.5).

In terms of regulation, the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland are responsible for inspecting early learning and childcare settings and carry out individual and shared inspections of services for children aged three to school age (Care Inspectorate, 2022). A statutory duty is also imposed on local authorities to engage in consultations with parents with regard to how early education and childcare services are to be provided, and to publish plans based on the results of such consultations (Jarvie et al., 2021). Seith (2022), however, reports that the current system imposed a considerable amount of pressure on providers and that there should be just one inspection body instead of two.

In Wales, the Children and Families (Wales) Measure (2010) sets standards for the day care of children under the age of eight. Since September 2020, employed parents of children aged three and four are entitled to 30 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year. Children under the age of three can only attend privately run or voluntary sector day nurseries or are looked after by childminders or nannies (Eurydice, 2020). In terms of local authority provision, some incorporate nursery classes in primary schools, while others have limited provision and, in these areas, the voluntary sector often steps in, with most other fee-paying services independent businesses (Jones & Jones, 2014). Day care services throughout Wales are supported by the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Cymru and Early Years Wales. NDNA is an umbrella charity delivering information, advice, training and a quality scheme to its member nurseries and has 16,000 individual members (NDNA, 2021), while Early Years Wales has a total of 698 institutional members (Early Years Wales, 2020).

For regulatory purposes, the Childcare Act 2006 (Local Authority Assessment) (Wales) Regulations (2016) requires local authorities to prepare Childcare Sufficiency Assessments every five years and to keep these under review, which then extend to their individual Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. These then influence their plans to extend childcare in Welsh (Welsh Government, 2021).

Further education colleges are the main providers for early years practitioner training. In Scotland, nursery assistants and other workers working with children under the age of five are urged to take Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) in Early Child Care

and Education. Skills Development Scotland (SDS, 2017) sets out the government's view that the Early Learning workforce needs to expand and increase its skill levels. The best qualified staff are in council nurseries, but support worker roles are under-qualified, and specialist roles such as GME early years workers are difficult to recruit, despite growing demand for GME (SDS, p.13). Of the college enrolled childcare students (SDS, 2017), 40% are aiming for qualifications at National 5 or below showing that the sector is in general poorly qualified (data from 2015, p. 10). Recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges for the sector.

In Wales, those working in non-maintained early years education are expected to achieve a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Childcare or equivalent, and those in maintained settings are expected to obtain a Level 3 NVQ, with Level 3 roughly equivalent to A Level standard (Jones & Jones, 2014). The NDNA (2022a) and Early Years Wales (2022) also provide Welsh language training programmes for workers.

In both Scotland and Wales there is now government support for early years provision in Gaelic and Welsh. The gradual progress from the 1980s from informal parents' groups to statutory rights to early years immersion education is very similar in both countries. As both governments have prioritised parents' rights to free early years provision in general, the movement for early Gaelic and Welsh immersion preschool provision has benefited.

### **2.1.1 Scotland: Comhairlenan Sgoiltean Araich (Gaelic Preschool Association)**

Due to the early efforts of the now defunct Comhairlenan Sgoiltean Araich (CNSA) and the Gaelic Pre-schools Association, later known as Taic (McLeod, 2020), there is a substantial level of Gaelic-medium provision in Scotland. CNSA was founded in 1982 with four affiliated groups and 40 children and promoted and supported the development of local pre-school activities through the medium of Gaelic. By 2001 it had 129 registered groups attended by 2,020 children (Robertson, 2011), but from 2009, CNSA's funding was withdrawn, following which the Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the



Government-funded organisation which oversees Gaelic language plans, took over provision for children aged zero to three (McLeod, 2020).

### **2.1.1.1 Bòrd na Gàidhlig support**

MacLeod explains (2018, p. 36) how early years provision supported by the Bòrd includes funding for packs for parents with CDs, training for play leaders, and funding for the Scottish Book Trust for Gaelic early years resources. The packs for parents provide information on the benefits of bilingualism and answer questions about GME. Using ethnographic methods, MacLeod (2018) found that the playleaders wanted to take a more careful approach to supporting GME than the Bòrd. Play leaders did not want to intimidate parents in their first steps into a Gaelic-speaking environment. The focus of the sessions explored in the Edinburgh groups was on learning Gaelic as a family, and using Gaelic in rhymes and songs (MacLeod, 2018).

Since MacLeod's research was carried out, the Education (Scotland) Act (2016) came into effect which includes section 14, extending the right of parents to request GME from pre-school to primary education. This offers Scottish Government support for early years GME when parents request it. The process of requesting is via a simple online form (Scottish Government, 2017a). Funding for playworkers is available from the Bòrd and Comann nam Pàrant (Parents' Association) and made possible by the support of the Scottish Government through a Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning and Empowering Communities Fund Grant as received from Comann nam Pàrant (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2022c). The Comann nam Pàrant website (2021) provides information for parents whose children are in GME, and it explains:

'Early Year's Provision is an important part of the Gaelic-medium journey. The earlier a child is exposed to a language, the more likely it is that the child will then go on to recognise that language as an integral part of their identity, which will in turn nurture a lifelong affinity with the language and a strong commitment to maintaining fluency and proficiency in the language' (Comann nam Pàrant, 2021).

The entitlement to Gaelic-medium Early Years Education is now 30 hours per week if taken in term time (Comann nam Pàrant, 2021). Even if parents do not speak Gaelic at home, this amount of Gaelic input in early years settings means that many children will be fluent in the language before they start primary school. A bilingual video in Gaelic with English subtitles introduces parents and discusses their possible concerns about immersing their children in a different language (Comann nam Pàrant, 2021).

#### **2.1.1.2 Pàrant is Pàiste Ghàidhlig (Gaelic Parent and Child Groups)**

The Bòrd sets out advice for parents' group about how to constitute and run Gaelic parent and child groups, which they call 0 – 3 Early Learning Groups (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2022c). From 2020 these groups need to be constituted as charities; the advice includes support for parents on recruiting and supervising staff (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2020). This toolkit provided by the Bòrd explains all the steps, legal requirements, templates and registration with the Care Inspectorate that the parents' groups need to attend to. The job description provided in Gaelic and English does not specify the level of Gaelic needed, but it is clear interviews will take place in Gaelic (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2020). Thus, through the Bòrd there is government support available from the very early years in a GME play environment under parents' control, with funding for the playworkers.

#### **2.1.2 Wales: Mudiad Meithrin (Nursery Movement)**

Mudiad Meithrin (Mudiad), which translates as 'nursery movement,' provide parent and toddler groups and nurseries with grant funding from the Welsh Government through Welsh-language immersion teaching and support for children under the age of five, particularly where maintained Welsh-medium provision is not available or limited (Jones & Jones, 2014). Cylchoedd Meithrin (nursery groups) give 'every young child in Wales the opportunity to benefit from early years services and experiences through the medium of Welsh' (Mudiad Meithrin, n.d.). Mudiad's Cylchoedd Ti a Fi (You and Me Circles offer parents the opportunity to play with their children and socialise. Mudiad Meithrin currently has Cylch Meithrin, Ti a Fi parent-and-toddler groups, Clwb Cwtsh (Welsh taster courses for adults and children), and Croesi'r Bont (language support) (2022a). The Cylch are volunteer-led with parents forming local committees

who raise funds to cover running costs such as rent, materials and teachers' salaries (Griffiths, 1986; Mudiad Meithrin, 2022a). Mudiad also provides nursery staff Welsh-medium training and produces Welsh-medium pre-school materials and training packs (Jones & Jones, 2014). Aitchison and Carter (2000) argue that Mudiad's provision raises awareness of Welsh at a critical stage and ensures that children who move onto first- or second-language Welsh classes at primary and secondary levels have the necessary foundations in order to do so.

Mudiad's success can be attributed to its use of the immersion method of second language acquisition, and Siencyn (2019) suggests that two principles underlie the successful rollout of this methodology: when adults are able to vary their registers and styles when speaking to children, and when children have the ability to acquire language. A number of studies show that Welsh-medium pre-schools allow children to develop considerable Welsh language skills, in particular listening and comprehension, speaking and communication, and developing early literacy skills (Roberts and Baker, 2002; Hickey et al., 2014).

#### **2.1.2.1 Cymraeg i Blant (Welsh for Children)**

When governments throw their weight behind language policy initiatives such as developing Welsh-medium pre-school education, it can make a difference in intergenerational language transmission (Mackie, 2018). The Twf Cymraeg o'r Crud (Two Languages from Day One) programme is a good example of such an initiative. It was launched in 2002 and funded by the Welsh Language Board (Senedd Research, 2017) until it was replaced by Mudiad's Cymraeg i Blant in 2016 (NorthWalesLive, 2016). The success of the Twf project was attributed to its ability to reach out to prospective parents and parents of young children, and this was achieved due to strong partnerships with health professionals. For example, the pregnancy booklets that women carry with them to antenatal appointments include the questions 'which language/s do you intend to introduce to your baby' and 'have you received information about bilingualism from your midwife,' which prompt midwives to discuss language use with parents. This was particularly effective particularly as health professionals are generally well respected and trusted by parents, and their promotion of

bilingualism meant that parents often considered the issue seriously (Edwards & Newcombe, 2005).

It is important to note that the link between Cymraeg i Blant and health professionals was not without its problems, however. Edwards and Newcombe (2005) explain that language choice is often low on health workers' list of priorities, and their own personal experiences of language acquisition were also likely to influence what options they discussed with parents and their enthusiasm and commitment to the initiative. In addition, a considerable amount of time and effort is required for Cymraeg i Blant to establish relationships with these health professionals.

More generally, Twf was also socially inclusive, as it established links with organisations such as Mudiad, Mentrau Iaith (Welsh language initiative), Early Years Wales, Sure Start, Home-Start and Bookstart, and signposted parents to services such as the Children's Information Bureaux and children's libraries. Twf was also present at national and local events such as the Urdd Eisteddfod, 'fun evenings' for families, visits to libraries holding Welsh-language books and colouring competitions (Edwards & Newcombe, 2005). These efforts served to broaden Twf's reach and exposure to families across Wales.

## **2.2 Primary and secondary education**

In Scotland, education is compulsory between the ages of five and 15. Children start Primary 1 (P1) between the ages of four to five and have seven years at primary school, one more primary year than in the rest of the UK. Children must have a minimum of four years at secondary schools, though most continue to S5 and S6. Broad general education is P1 to S3 and then the senior phase is from S4 to S6 which allows more specialism and focuses the attainment of national qualifications (Scottish Government, 2021a).

In Wales, when a child reaches their fifth birthday, education is compulsory from the following term which begins in either September, January or April. The statutory curriculum for all three to seven-year-olds is 'Foundation Phase' and it is learning based on well-structured play in both maintained and non-maintained settings (Eurydice, 2020). At the secondary stage, statutory education covers age 11 to age

16 (Years 7 to 11 of statutory schooling), and is split into Key Stage 3 (for 11 to 14 year olds) and Key Stage 4 (14 to 16 year olds) (Jones & Jones, 2014). At age 16 school pupils take General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. Many 16-year-olds also take the Cymhwyster Bagloriaeth Cymru (Welsh Baccalaureate qualification) at Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced Levels in addition to a range of traditional academic and vocational qualifications, such as GSCEs (Jones & Jones, 2014).

### **2.3 The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence**

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) was a major educational reform from 2008 led by Professor Graham Donaldson, aiming to provide access to a broader range of courses and subjects (Gillies, 2018). The role of the Scottish Government is to provide guidance about the school curriculum, which means that schools can decide what to teach pupils at a local level, as long as they cover the three core subjects: health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. They are also urged to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to project work, teach with a local area focus, and consult with pupils (Education Scotland, 2019).

The implementation of the CfE has not been without controversy (Andrew, 2017). Gillies (2018) suggests this was due to a lack of government consultation with teachers, insufficient advice for teachers in the early stages, and piecemeal implementation, particularly at secondary and examination level. Priestley and Minty (2013) explain that there were two different levels of engagement with the CfE: first- and second-order engagement. The former was the initial welcome of the principles of the new curriculum, and the latter was practically non-existent due to a lack of understanding among schools of the curriculum's core ideas, and a conflict between these and schools' beliefs and existing practices, resulting in non-meaningful implementation. Another issue was teachers' ability to create curricula which persists (Priestley & Minty, 2015).

The Scottish Government turned to the OECD, an international body which reviews education systems, twice in 2015 and 2021 to review and revise the CfE and assessment arrangements. The most recent OECD report (2021) led to a serious

critique of the secondary curriculum and assessment structures in Scotland, which in turn led to the Government instigating a review led by Professor Ken Muir. The Muir Report (Scottish Government, 2022c) made recommendations reminding the Government of their support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires listening to children more. Muir called for teachers and parents to be involved in the discussion about the reshaped upper education system. Qualifications Scotland is to be established as a new awarding body to replace the SQA, one with wider representation from teachers, parents and students. The existing organisation, Education Scotland, will be reformed again to be more responsive to the needs and views of teachers, parents, students and employers.

A new inspectorate will be set up to support schools and issue annual reports on the quality of Scottish education. One crucial feature, for our purposes, is that the new inspectorate will create an inspection framework in early years which is less burdensome with the Care Inspectorate (Scottish Government, 2022c, recommendation 15). Currently school inspectors do not routinely inspect peripatetic services for deaf children or the early language work teachers of deaf children support with families in the birth to three age group.

## **2.4 The new Curriculum for Wales**

In 2015, Professor Graham Donaldson turned his attention to Wales, and reviewed its national curriculum requirements. Subsequently, the new Curriculum for Wales (CfW) was introduced in September 2022 to all maintained nursery and primary schools. For secondary schools, there is a phased introduction with schools able to choose whether to teach it to Year 7 in 2022/23 or wait until September 2023 when Year 8 comes within its purview. Half of all secondary schools have elected to introduce the CfW in Year 7 from September 2022. The CfW will then be introduced to Year 9 in 2024/25 and Year 10 in 2025/26, and Year 11 in 2026/27 (Senedd Research, 2022). Sinnema et al. (2020) say that the CfW is a bold new vision for curriculum, teaching and learning. Similar to the CfE in Scotland, the CfW allows teachers and schools to decide what to teach pupils, expects pupils to be involved in the curriculum decision-making process, and adopts a collaborative and cross-disciplinary approach to learning and teaching (Welsh Government, 2022a). Power et al. (2020, p. 319) elaborate: ‘teachers are

exhorted to explore subject knowledge more creatively, making it more student-centred - active learning is to be encouraged with a real-life relevance.'

The CfW's 'Four Purposes' (to support learners to become ambitious capable learners, enterprising, creative contributors, ethical, informed citizens and healthy, confident individuals) are designed to guide the entire curriculum, and its content is set out by 'Areas of Learning and Experience' which include 'Languages, Literacy and Communication' (Welsh Government, 2022b). These Areas reflect Donaldson's expectation that maintaining an 'identifiable core of disciplinary and instrumental knowledge' (Donaldson 2015, p. 38) and a 'broad and balanced education' (Donaldson, 2015, p. 20) is a priority. Paterson (2018) argues that this was likely a response by Donaldson to the criticisms of the lack of a core of disciplinary knowledge raised in Scotland by his reforms there.

In early years education, maintained settings are required to provide the CfW or a curriculum they have designed themselves that meets the legislative requirements. Non-maintained settings are also responsible for ensuring that they adapt and apply the principles of the *Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings Framework* (Hwb, 2022a) as appropriate to the children in their care and in how they provide their services (NDNA, 2022b).

The direction of the school curriculum in both Scotland and Wales is similar, though the introduction in Wales had more discussion with those affected. Designed for an internet age where knowledge can be found quickly and needs to be interpreted critically, very similar personal goals for children are highlighted in both curricula. There is more emphasis in Wales on schools deciding on their own priorities and taking local responsibility (Donaldson, 2016, p. 14) for how they are going to implement the curriculum. However, Sinnema et al. (2020) argue that the curriculum's focus on content will mean that other relevant practices such as pedagogy, assessment, and provision are less of a priority. Therein lies the danger; the inclusion of BSL in school-level curriculums across Wales may ignore well-established international pedagogical knowledge about the teaching of sign languages to both deaf and hearing children, because this knowledge is not inside the Welsh education system (Russell, 2021).



## 2.5 The qualifications framework: Scotland

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is the body that assesses public examinations and regulates exams. The regulatory function is likely to soon be the responsibility of a different organisation as a result of the Muir Report (Scottish Government, 2022). The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), used in Scotland's education system for over 16 years, has 12 SCQF levels, starting at level 1 with level 12 the most demanding (for example, PhDs) (SCQF, 2022).

It is possible to take national examinations (that is, National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher) in Gaelic in the subject areas of Gaelic, Geography, History, Mathematics, Applied Numeracy and Modern Studies (SQA, 2022). Resources to support these subjects are provided through Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (2022), which is funded by the Scottish Government's Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education and by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. So, after nearly 40 years of GME in Scotland, it is still not possible to study a wide range of secondary subjects in the language.

There are currently BSL awards set at SCQF levels 3 up to 6 (SQA, 2022). However, these are not complete National or Higher awards. When the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) sets up a register of BSL teachers, and when there is an initial teacher education pathway to gain qualified teacher status, only then will SQA consider creating complete National Qualifications in BSL (Personal Communication, Robert Quinn). Qualified teachers are needed to moderate and mark the examinations. Once National 5 and Higher BSL qualifications exist, then students can use them to help gain entry to Higher Education.

It is possible in Scotland for fluent BSL deaf signing candidates to take national examinations in BSL. Schools provide the BSL/English interpreters, although their level of BSL or interpreting skill is not specified by the SQA. The deaf candidate is filmed as they sign their responses in BSL. These are recorded, translated in the centre and sent to the SQA so the scripts and videos can be checked by an expert group, then marked as usual. This system is used by only a few students and examination centres each year (O'Neill et al., 2019a).



## 2.6 The qualifications framework: Wales

The Welsh Government is responsible for the regulation of qualifications in Wales and for setting the curriculum. A separate organisation regulates the non-degree qualifications and awarding authority, Cymwysterau Cymru (Qualifications Wales); this organisation was established in 2015 through the Qualifications Wales Act 2015 (Qualifications Wales, n.d.). The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) was established in 2003 and the levels capture all the learning from the initial stages (Entry) to the most advanced (Level 8) (CQFW, 2021).

‘Awarding organisations’ provide the examinations used by the Welsh education system. The Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) is the largest and it provides syllabi and examinations in both Welsh and English and is the main awarding organisation used by Welsh schools (WJEC, 2020). The new GCSE examinations in Wales will only be offered by the WJEC in future, and all materials will be available in Welsh and English simultaneously (Welsh Government, 2014b). In practice this means that pupils will receive both the Welsh and English versions of exam papers if they are studying subjects through the medium of Welsh (WJEC, 2020a, 7.1).

Qualifications Wales claims there is a range of BSL qualifications currently available on the CQFW framework, with some at Level 1 and 2 (Blaker & Evans, 2017). Two of the UK-wide BSL exam boards, Signature and Institute of BSL (iBSL), do allow children to take their qualifications, although no Welsh schools are set up as examination centres (Signature, 2022; iBSL, 2022). However, there are currently no BSL national qualifications available for primary or secondary school pupils in Wales. Qualifications Wales has indicated that there will be a new made-for-Wales BSL qualification aimed at school-aged learners (Qualifications Wales, 2021a), although it does not appear that this will be a GCSE.

Meanwhile, the Department of Education in London has begun the ‘complex process of developing subject content to see if a GCSE qualification in BSL is possible’ (Signature, 2019). Many other qualifications, mainly vocational, that are not administered by Welsh awarding organisations are still available in Wales (and in Welsh) due to the Welsh Government’s agreement and funding of awarding

organisations based elsewhere in the UK, particularly in England (Jones & Jones, 2014). So, it could well be that the English BSL GCSE could be adopted for use in Wales. Indeed, Qualifications Wales has confirmed that learners and schools in Wales will be able to access GCSEs developed in England where it is not available in Wales (Qualifications Wales, 2021b).

Qualifications	Scotland (SCQF)	Wales (CQFW)
	1	E1
	2	E2
	3	E3
	4	1
	5 National 5	2 GCSE
	6 Higher	3 A Level
	8/7 Undergraduate	5/4 Undergraduate
	10/9 Honours	6 Honours
	11 Masters	7 Masters
	12 PhD	8 PhD

Figure 2: Comparison of qualifications levels in Scotland and Wales

## 2.7 Approaches to languages: Scotland

The Scottish CfE considers language learning a skill that will enable young people to participate fully in a global society and economy (Andrew, 2017), and the Languages curriculum area includes Literacy and English, Literacy and Gàidhlig, Gaelic (Learners), Modern languages and Classical languages (Education Scotland, 2017). The Scottish Government's policy, *Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach*, aspires to give every child the opportunity to learn a modern language (known as the second language, or L2) from P1 until the end of S3, and a second modern language (known as L3) from P5 onwards (Education Scotland, 2022b).

In Scotland, English is the only language spoken in the home in 93% of households (Scotland's Census, 2021), which is a similar proportion to England and Wales. In the school system, the Government's 1+2 Languages Policy was implemented from 2012 (Scottish Government, 2012). Schools decide for themselves which second language

is to be introduced in Primary 1 and which third language(s) will come from P5, higher up the primary school. While Polish is the most widespread language other than English from the 2011 Scottish census, there is little provision for Polish in schools (McKelvey, 2017). In practice, clusters of primary schools often introduce the foreign language of the linked secondary school, which may mean that community languages are less likely to be used in primary schools (Hancock & Hancock, 2021). The other issue is capacity: primary teachers are largely a monolingual workforce in Scotland and there is no minimum requirement for entrants to the profession to have a qualification in another language (Teach in Scotland, 2022). In 2021 of the primary teaching workforce only 1.4% were from ethnic minorities; there are 33 Polish teachers, for example (Scottish Government, 2022a. Table 2.7). So, there is much more linguistic diversity in Scotland's households than in the primary teaching workforce. O'Hanlon et al. report (2016) that particularly in the upper primary years, teachers are anxious about not having the skills to teach other languages.

Diverse languages are not explicitly mentioned in the Additional Support for Learning Act (2004), though 'English as a Second Language' is seen as an additional support need (McKelvey, 2017). This may be one reason why McKelvey (2017) notes that bilingualism is often seen by education staff as a difficulty rather than an asset. An alternative system of complementary schools exists, often at weekends and run by volunteers, teaching Polish, Mandarin, Greek and Arabic etc. because these communities do not see their languages on offer in ordinary schools (Hancock & Hancock, 2021). Teachers and parents from the complementary schools wanted more interaction with councils and their schools, but this rarely happened. Hancock and Hancock (2021) see this as a missed opportunity for the school system to engage in communicative engagement with the new languages and communities of Scotland. Kanaki (2021) regards the 1+2 policy as neoliberal where the idea of 'choice' in the languages on offer is more like a tie that binds schools and learners to local authority workforce planning.

Gaelic-medium teachers generally consider the CfE to be aimed at a monolingual school population and tend to ignore bilingual children's altered pattern of learning (Baker 2011; Andrew, 2017). For example, many children entering GME do not have

any Gaelic in the home and the dominance of English in children's lives and outside the classroom often reduces the opportunities to provide enough Gaelic-only immersion environments (Stephen et al., 2010; O'Hanlon et al., 2020). Results in English and Gaelic achievement suggest that Gaelic remains the more challenging language for children in GME, though by P7 the average literacy achievement in Gaelic is at the expected standard, with English outstripping it (O'Hanlon et al., 2013).

### **2.7.1 Gaelic**

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act (2005) gave the official language agency, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, statutory authority and a range of powers and responsibilities, which includes producing a national Gaelic language plan and providing guidance for local authorities in terms of delivering GME. The Bòrd can also request specific public bodies to prepare a Gaelic language plan, and in doing so, adopting a 'sliding scale' approach whereby provision depends on the extent of Gaelic language use in particular areas of Scotland (McLeod, 2014). McLeod (2014), however, argues that as Gaelic is developing a national profile and as the Gaelic-speaking population is spread, Scotland-wide coverage is needed.

Parents can request education authorities to assess the need for Gaelic-medium primary education in their respective areas, as stipulated by the Education (Scotland) Act (2016). This assessment takes place in two stages: the preliminary stage followed by a full assessment. A wide range of factors must be taken into account, including evidence of demand and the views presented in a public consultation. Depending on the outcome of the full assessment, GME must then be offered 'unless it would be unreasonable to do so.' McLeod (2020) states that this system does not go as far as to give children a right to Gaelic education, but it does at least impose a greater responsibility on local authorities.

Earlier in the twenty-first century, Gaelic-medium primary education was often provided through Gaelic-medium 'units' situated in English-medium schools as opposed to Gaelic-medium schools as seen in Ireland, Wales and other minority language jurisdictions (McLeod, 2003). McLeod (2014) considers that this situation was not ideal as children in Gaelic 'units' would be exposed to English-monoglot fellow

pupils and staff, impacting language immersion and resulting in less Gaelic language acquisition (McLeod, 2014). Within this context and in light of the CfE's 1+2 approach, McLeod (2020) argues that the Scottish Government has never put in place measures to ensure that all school pupils learnt Gaelic, or to even ensure sufficient GME schools, with local authorities and schools choosing to teach European or Asian languages instead.

Nonetheless, teachers in GME are often required to ensure that they develop the language of L1 learners, ensure that L2 learners develop a robust foundation in the Gaelic language, and at the same time, provide both groups with a good education in all subjects (Andrew, 2017). Andrew (2017) considers what professional learning is available for teachers who teach Gaelic, particularly in GME, and confirms that it is limited. The GTCS only requires Gaelic-medium teachers to meet the Standard for Registration to qualify as primary teachers (GTCS, 2021) and does not hold them to higher account in terms of the Gaelic language or immersion pedagogies (Andrew, 2017). Teachers who hold full registration in primary or secondary can, however, add additional subjects/sectors to their registration, including Gaelic (GTCS, n.d.).

Recent research in GME shows that the teachers are not at all satisfied with the quality of bilingual teaching resources available to them (MacQuarrie et al., 2021). Translations to Gaelic of literature are often inappropriate in register. The recently introduced national assessments are in Gaelic, but the 'closing the gap' rhetoric was potentially threatening to GME, in the views of some teachers (op. cit.). In addition, there are as yet very few language assessment tools available to practitioners to judge when a GME pupil has language delay or additional needs (MacQuarrie & Lyon, 2019).

### **2.7.2 British Sign Language**

British Sign Language was first researched at Moray House College, now part of the University of Edinburgh, in the 1980s. The early research showed that the most fluent users were deaf people from deaf families; their use of BSL was used as the model for research rather than the more English-like signing of many deaf leaders of the time (O'Neill, 2022, in preparation). Partly as a result of this project, some schools and services started bilingual provision, for example, Garvel Deaf Centre in Inverclyde.

Where deaf staff were employed, it was as classroom assistants or BSL models. The project also included travelling to teach BSL to groups of teachers and BSL was part of the one-year long course at Moray House which teachers of deaf children were seconded to.

From the establishment of the new Parliament, the deaf signing community started lobbying for legislation to promote BSL, particularly in education (Lawson et al., 2019). Through close work with the cross-parliamentary group on deafness and a group supported by the Equality Unit in the government, the BSL and Linguistic Access Group, plans for BSL legislation developed from 2005 to 2015.

Over this period, BSL was available as a language in adult education settings in Scotland, largely in deaf organisations and businesses, rather than in further education colleges. In a few schools such as Donaldson's (the national deaf school, which stopped being a school for deaf children in 2014), children were entered for Signature BSL exams, but usually at low levels. BSL was not the preferred term used by teachers of deaf children in Scotland; Total Communication and using speech with sign simultaneously was and remains the preferred language policy of teachers and councils.

When the BSL Act (Scotland) (2015) was passed, it was clear that national education bodies such as GTCS, Scotland's national centre for languages (SCILT), the SQA, Education Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council had less responsibility than they had in relation to Gaelic. They were not asked to draw up organisational BSL plans but had one or two points allocated to them in the first national BSL plan (O'Neill & Wilks, 2021). Furthermore, the template used by the Equality Unit distributed to councils to help them draw up their own local BSL plans missed out most aspects of teaching and learning in schools. The template included points about transition into and out of school, trips, work experience and nurseries. The omission of teaching and learning may have been a mistake, but it allowed councils to remain vague about their commitments to using BSL with deaf children in schools. Teaching BSL under the 1+2 policy was generally included in council plans, however many plans made it clear they usually were waiting for SCILT to advise them (O'Neill & Wilks, 2021).

Since 2018 the Highland Council devised a BSL pack which has been widely used across Scotland to teach BSL to hearing children as L2 or L3 (Highland Council, 2022a). The pack includes videos with deaf signing models and communicative activities. Teachers using this pack rarely know any BSL; however, this is also true for many of the other L2 and L3 languages offered in primary schools under the 1+2 policy. BSL has become a popular L3 option for primary schools with a third of the authorities teaching it by 2019 (Scottish Government, 2021b); SCILT is also now offering live online BSL classes taught by a deaf tutor (SCILT, 2022).

Deaf children's experiences in Scottish schools are highly fragmented because of the 32 local council areas, each with their own policies based on government policy: the presumption of mainstreaming. Only 12 of these councils have resource base schools or deaf schools; it is most likely that BSL as a language will flourish when groups of deaf children can meet and see other children and teachers using the language. A few of the authorities with deaf schools or resource base schools employ signing deaf members of staff, usually in a support worker role. A handful of deaf BSL signers are qualified as schoolteachers, mostly working as teachers of deaf children, but only in three local authorities (O'Neill & Wilks, 2021).

## **2.8 Approaches to languages: Wales**

In Wales, with the introduction of the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience, the CfW adopts a fresh approach to the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages, with much of the guidance in this area focusing not only on these languages, but also Welsh, English and BSL. This effectively bringing all languages all under one umbrella in order to promote a multilingual approach to language learning, moving away from monolingual attitudes (Gorrara et al., 2020).

At the design and policy stage of CfW, BSL has been central to the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area. Work done at central government level led to consultation with deaf BSL sign linguists on explicitly teaching about BSL to deaf and hearing children (Education Wales, 2022). This is a radical departure from the way BSL is seen as a prop or tool for deaf children who are by definition disabled in other



parts of the UK. In the descriptions of learning (Education Wales, 2022, section 4) the language progression expectations are set out for English, Welsh, BSL and International Languages such as French. From the progression steps it is clear that BSL is envisaged as a curriculum for groups of deaf children with BSL as a first or main language, even though in Wales there are no deaf schools. The Languages, Literacy and Communication Area expects translanguaging practices, indicating a plurilingual curriculum informed by recent research (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Snoddon & Weber, 2021).

Gorrara et al. (2020, p. 254) consider the impact of this multilingual and even plurilingual approach to languages in the CfW and make it clear that if the Welsh Government's vision is to work, a 'radical rethink' of how the current and the next generation of teachers are trained and supported is needed, and in particular, rethinking who is a 'language teacher.'

### **2.8.1 Welsh**

The Welsh Government's ambition is to see the number of people able to enjoy speaking and using Welsh reach a million by 2050. In order to achieve this vision, the education system is vital, particularly in terms of early years provision, increasing the number of teachers who can teach in Welsh and increasing awareness and understanding (Welsh Government, 2017). Indeed, the progress made in WME has had a significant impact for the Welsh language nationally, and it applies at all levels (Aitchison & Carter, 1999). Welsh-medium provision provided by Mudiad Meithrin, in primary and in secondary schools has resulted in an increasing number of pupils able to speak Welsh (Aitchison & Carter, 1999). The Education Reform Act (1988) is responsible for this increase, as it mandated Welsh as a core subject from September 1999 (Davies, 1999; Aitchison & Carter, 2000; May, 2008; Williams & Morris, 2000). From that point onwards, all secondary schools (Key Stage 4) were required to offer Welsh as a second language to pupils up to 16 years old, and this green light had a significant impact on the number of teachers teaching Welsh and the development of resources (Davies, 1999; Welsh Government, 2017).



As a result, Baker (2003) argues that Wales has developed from monolingual literacy in Welsh among much of the populace to bilingualism and biliteracy as the norm in Welsh-speaking communities. However, there is evidence that Welsh is actually declining as a community language due to a number of factors: the diminishing role of agriculture, the collapse of heavy industries, the movements of migrants, and the impact of tourism (Jenkins & Williams, 2000).

## **2.9 Parent power**

Much of what has been gained in respect of Gaelic and Welsh language education has been a consequence of 'parent power,' including non-Gaelic and non-Welsh speaking parents (Baker & Prys Jones, 2000), as opposed to the 'influence of educational administrators, inspectors and teachers, although their support was also crucial' (Jenkins & Williams, 2000, p. 366). Parent power is also a relevant factor in respect of deaf education, particularly in relation to the use of BSL.

Local protests for Welsh-medium provision by parents have usually occurred where local authorities have not been proactive in introducing Welsh into the schools within its purview, and as the status of Welsh increased (Williams & Morris, 2000). Parents cite a range of reasons for selecting WME for their children: it offers a greater degree of discipline and academic achievement, the commitment of teachers promoting the language leads to a more positive approach to education in general, and it leads to the development of a national identity. Welsh language activities give a wider range of presentation skills while also promoting a sense of community, and knowledge of Welsh affords additional life chances within the regional labour market (Williams & Morris, 2000; Jenkins & Williams, 2000), and bilingual education generally improves employment prospects and an increases individuals' chance of promotion and affluence (Baker & Prys Jones, 2000). In addition, Rawkins (1979) suggests that parents who wish their children to attend a Welsh-medium school tend to be among those with an above-average concern for their children's educational welfare.

In Scotland, McLeod (2020) and Armstrong (2020) explain how parents were not satisfied with small and separate Gaelic units. In the cities (Glasgow, Inverness and Edinburgh) parents pushed for Gaelic schools which opened from 1999 onwards and

it was generally easier to draw in more families wanting Gaelic for their children in the cities than in the more rural traditional base for the language, where provision often remained scattered.

In relation to requests for BSL, though, parent power has been muted in Scotland. Several deaf schools have shut in the last 20 years (such as St Vincent's in Glasgow and Donaldson's in Edinburgh, a national school that changed function) with no significant outcry from parents. It is likely that the impact of newborn hearing screening, early aiding, early family support and early cochlear implantation leave many families hopeful that spoken English will be the most successful choice for their deaf children. Parents are often left struggling with completely inadequate provision for learning BSL even when they want to make it one of their family's languages:

*but it's like I want more you know? I'm not greedy, I just want there to be... I, I just want... I There's nothing wrong wi' that [laughs], you know. You know I just, I just want more. Like we could have conversations and we could think but as she gets older, you know, we need more, you know.*

(Scottish father, O'Neill et al., 2019b, p.63)

What was on offer to this family was a monthly drop-in parent and toddler club where BSL was being used to some extent.

A very poor hearing test clinic in NHS Lothian (British Academy of Audiology, 2021) has led to hundreds of deaf children in the region being late diagnosed. Sixteen late diagnosed deaf children have been referred to the cochlear implant centre in Scotland (NHS Lothian, 2022), but it is not yet known how many of them were eligible because of such late referral. BSL is likely to be the quickest and easiest way for these children to acquire a language. Parents have organised an action group (the Families Failed by Lothian Audiology Action Group) alongside deaf and hearing professionals who are members too. Members of this group have called for BSL therapists to make up for lost time and intensively provide BSL, a language which is always accessible (Allan et al., 2022; Dotdeaf, 2022). It remains to be seen whether parent power pressure for BSL provision can challenge local authorities' beliefs in speech-only approaches.

Local authorities have so far been reluctant to create new job roles such as BSL play workers or BSL tutors because the territory has for so long been dominated by one role, the teacher of deaf children.

### **3 Literature review**

#### **3.1 Deaf education**

Despite the fact that sign language has been used for centuries by deaf people in the UK, it is rarely used in education (Rowley & Cormier, 2021). Mitchell (2018) acknowledges that much discussion has been had and continues to be held about whether spoken and signed approaches to education are best for deaf children, with Gregory and Hindley (1996) explaining that the argument for the spoken approach is that deaf children need to integrate in the hearing world as most of them are born to hearing parents, with others arguing that acquiring a spoken language as a first language is more difficult for deaf children, but if they learn sign language first, it is easier to do so. The bimodal approach is an alternative approach developed in the USA, Scandinavia and the UK, challenging the traditional spoken approach (Swanwick, 2016).

In the UK, there are 22 schools with provision for deaf children: 18 in England, three in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland and none in Wales (BATOD, 2018). Only five of the 22 make it clear on their websites that their language provision is bilingual, that is, BSL and English. The remainder focus on Total Communication or utilise various communication methods suited to the individual child. This suggests that deaf education in general is still very much focused on speech and communication rather than the thorough acquisition of one or more languages.

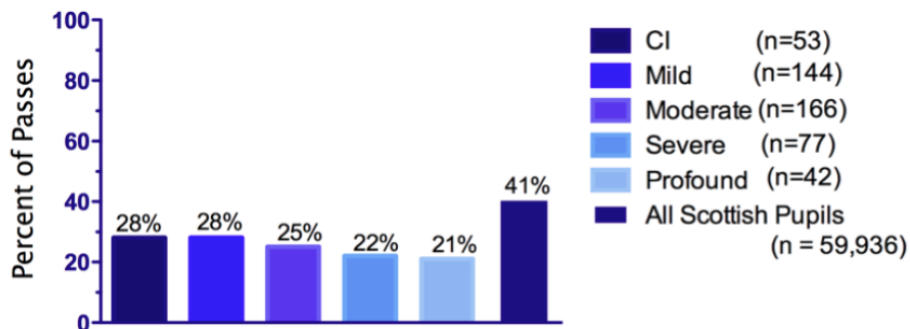
The dominant tradition in deaf education in Scotland is mainstreaming, with only 13% of school-age deaf children (who are moderately, severely or profoundly deaf) attending resource base schools or deaf schools where they have a higher likelihood of using BSL (taken from Consortium of Research in Deaf Education, 2021). Bilingual methods are discussed in a few Scottish local authority language policies, but the default position is spoken English. On average, only 9% of specialist teachers of deaf children in Scotland (142 reported) had SCQF level 6 or above (equivalent to Level 3,

or a Higher or A level in the language or more) which could be seen as enough to teach in (Ravenscroft & Wazny, 2016). But in this survey BSL skills were not reported for 43 ToDs; these teachers may have had no BSL skills.

Newborn hearing screening started in Scotland in 2005, so nearly all children deaf from birth in the school system now should have been screened at birth. However, there have been longstanding difficulties in Scotland about the effectiveness of early referral pathways and testing procedures which have come to light first in the NHS Lothian area (BBC, 2021; British Academy of Audiology, 2021). The Scottish Government is now conducting a national review of all audiology services (Scottish Government, 2022b). If referrals are prompt from health to education, then support for families should be available from when the baby is three months old, an international benchmark (Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, 2019.) However, in practice, the support for families has been inconsistent in Scotland. Despite the policy of informed choice (Young et al., 2005), BSL has not actually been available for parents to learn systematically anywhere in Scotland. Therefore, the name of the policy is highly misleading.

The outcomes for achievement in deaf education are usually weak. The National Deaf Children's Society reports GCSE results for England every year, noting that in 2021 it was the sixth year in a row where the average GCSE grades were one grade below those of the whole GCSE year group (NDCS, 2021). We know the English results of deaf 16-year-olds in Scotland from earlier in the century from a 2014 study (O'Neill et al.), based on children's school achievement from 2003 to 2010. Children in this group were not screened at birth, so were identified often after a gap of several years.

### English SCQF Level 5 or better



Data about All Scottish Pupils S4 English from Education Analytical Services Scottish Government Education Directorate, weighted average for years 2003-2010.

*Figure 3: Tariff score for 16-year-old deaf and hearing pupils at SCQF 5 English (O'Neill et al. 2014, p. 50).*

By 2010, 41% of all Scottish candidates aged 16 were achieving SCQF 5 or better in English aged 16. The percentage for deaf candidates ranged from 21 to 28%. A qualification in English at this level is important for progression to Highers and better study and work prospects. It is equivalent to GCSE English A\* - C, now called grades 9 – 4 in England. It must be noted that in this study children who were not entered for qualifications do not appear (O'Neill et al., 2014).

Deaf children born in 2005 or after will have reached the age of 16 from 2021 onwards. In theory, newborn hearing screening should reduce the time spent without access to a language for a large number of deaf babies. We may see an improvement in English attainment compared to the 2003-2010 data above. However, there have been many difficulties in establishing timely early support pathways in Scotland (British Academy of Audiology, 2021), and BSL has not actually been on offer to parents. There are only a few early years BSL immersion settings before the age of three, and none with a group of fluently signing staff.

Internationally there have been several recent studies which evaluate the level of success which deaf children achieve with spoken language. Meizen-Derr et al. (2018) studied 149 deaf children in the USA who were mildly to profoundly deaf, comparing their non-verbal IQ to their spoken language performance. Forty per cent of the children had spoken language performance at least one standard deviation below the

average (less than 85 on a standardised score). Children who were from low-income families, who were more severely deaf and non-white, had weaker spoken language performance. The authors' conclusion is to keep going more effectively at developing spoken language, particularly beyond the age of early intervention. Showing similar results, a study of 98 mainstreamed deaf children in Hong Kong (Lau et al., 2019) looked at spoken language performance in Cantonese, the home language of most Hong Kong families. Of these children, 59% had spoken language delay in Cantonese, 41% of whom experienced severe language delay. These authors conclude that since the 1960s the options available for deaf children's schooling and language choice in Hong Kong had contracted as deaf schools closed and narrowed their focus on spoken languages. They call for Hong Kong Sign Language to be available to more deaf children, one of the languages used in the city's highly successful co-enrolment project (Tang et al., 2014). The perspectives of both these research teams were different, their findings very similar, but their policy conclusions opposing. They reveal an often-unspoken conclusion about oral-only education approaches: for approximately 40% of deaf children, the results are very poor.

In the UK too, there has been a narrowing of options as deaf schools have closed. BSL is an alternative as it can be acquired quickly and easily by deaf children in immersion environments (Lillo-Martin & Henner, 2021). Yet this does not appear to be a viable option for most deaf children in the UK. About 92% per cent of deaf children are born to hearing parents (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004, US research) and as a result the influence of medical professionals such as audiologists, ear, throat and nose consultants and health visitors prevail over hearing (and sometimes deaf) parents of deaf children: treat the deafness, wear hearing aids, implant the child with cochlear implants, teach the child to listen and speak. In the absence of alternative information and influences, most parents will listen and act accordingly. Therefore, most deaf children will be mainstreamed and hardly ever access opportunities to learn BSL. Indeed, in the home, BSL is hardly ever used as the main language and families of deaf children do not routinely learn it.

Where deaf children are educated is often not the most important factor as they will continue to experience barriers that are not typical for their hearing peers. It is clear

that most deaf children are nonetheless educated in a mainstream setting (CRIDE, 2021), and there are some points to note with regard to the claimed advantages of educational inclusion. There is a real risk that children's communication needs will be overlooked within such settings, and they are also likely to experience social difficulties such as bullying and social isolation (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). Speech-only methods are attempted even when the deaf child has severe additional disabilities (Datta et al., 2020); speech and language therapists, however, have not developed the range of skills they need to support an increasingly diverse group of deaf children (Veyvoda et al., 2019). Snoddon and Murray (2019) contrast the term 'segregated settings' used by many proponents of mainstream education for deaf children with 'congregated settings', a term for deaf schools where signed languages can flourish. The normative definition of inclusion is challenged, and space given to deaf children's views. Andersson and Adams Lyngbäck (2022) listen to the views of children who have moved from mainstream to deaf school who found they could communicate in several ways while understanding more about themselves.

### **3.2 Language attitudes in deaf education**

'My mother, bless her ... three years before she died we had a hell of a row ... She said, 'They told me I must never sign to you and they were right' ... Oh God! 'You think I got a good education simply by you not signing to me?! If I hadn't signed with the Deaf, I wouldn't have got an education at all!' (Raymond Lee, as cited in Ladd, 2003, p. 297).

It is well established that the study of language attitudes has a strong link to deaf education policies worldwide (Burns et al. 2001) and Rowley and Cormier (2021) summarise this body of work in relation to different sign languages: attitudes in general (Burns et al. 2001; Krausneker 2015; Kusters 2014), attitudes relating to language planning, policy and revitalisation (De Meulder, 2018; McKee 2017; Snoddon 2018) and their impact sign language recognition (Conama, 2020).

Rowley and Cormier (2021) provide a further summary of the literature regarding language attitudes, replicated here:



'Attitudes can explain how language variation is distributed, the level of knowledge that a person has over their own language and even predict behaviour (Ladegaard 2000; Wicker 1969), have a major influence on language and educational policies and often provide valuable information for language planners (Ruíz 1984). Sometimes this language planning can have disastrous consequences (Kaplan et al. 2011), as is often the case in deaf education (Humphries et al. 2014), as although deaf people in the UK have used sign language for centuries (Jackson, 1990; Kyle and Woll, 1985; Ladd, 2003), sign language is rarely used in education, even today. This is largely due to misconceptions about the language itself and its impact on educational attainment. Generally, many professionals working with deaf children and their families, particularly those who work in medicine and education) believe that sign languages are not real or full languages and would prevent deaf children from learning to speak' (Rowley & Cormier, 2021, p. 2).

In the case of Welsh, language attitudes in Wales are reflected at Government level with their Cymraeg 2050 policy (Welsh Government, 2017), and this is implemented throughout the Welsh education system, with children required to learn Welsh between the ages of three to 16, and with the provision of WME. In Scotland, a similar policy exists for Gaelic although to a lesser extent, with Gaelic restricted to Gaelic-medium schools or as an L2 language. McLeod (2020) observes that the Scottish National Party's approach to Gaelic is rather lukewarm, with the Scottish Government's bilingual logo not the default and not making a Gaelic version of the ballot paper for the 2014 independence referendum available. Local authorities also demonstrated resistance to the Gaelic plans, objecting on the basis that Gaelic has never been spoken in their area and so Gaelic had no relevance. The number of public documents produced in Gaelic remains very small. Although not related to education, these examples demonstrate the language attitudes prevalent in Scotland against the Gaelic language.

In the case of BSL, there is limited bilingual provision and deaf education is by and large dominated by audiological and medical influences. In relation to the medical model of disability, Woodward (1982) confirms that Deaf people are often regarded as



'pathological' and 'fundamentally deficient.' Lane (1984, p. 134) quotes Prosper Meniere:

'The Deaf believe they are our equals in all respects. We should be generous and not destroy that illusion. But whatever they believe, deafness is an infirmity, and we should repair it whether the person who has it is disturbed by it or not.'

This belief remains intact even today (Ladd, 2003). It was also manifested in the Second International Congress of the Deaf in Milan of 1880 which proclaimed across Europe the 'incontestable superiority of speech over signs,' often presented as a particularly damaging historical event (Mantin, 2013, p. 23) for the Deaf community and sign languages, referred to as 'Oralism' (Ladd, 2003). It is within this context that researchers who undertake studies relating to deaf people tend to discuss Deaf people as hearing impaired and classify them according to the degree of impairment. Any other relevant topics such as language and culture are then framed according to these classifications (Padden & Humphries, 1990).

This approach is prevalent in deaf education: in early years, audiologists, other health care professionals, speech language therapists and teachers of deaf children become involved in the case of newly diagnosed deaf children (NDCS, n.d.) and influence the parents to think of audiological solutions such as hearing aids and cochlear implants to help their children function on a par with hearing children (Deaf Education through Listening and Talking, 2022; Scarinci et al., 2018). The idea that their child's language acquisition could be much quicker and easier by learning BSL from the outset is rarely mentioned to the deaf child's parents, unless those parents are exposed to individuals within the Deaf community. The silence about the need for adequate and comprehensible input in a signed language is noticeable in the literature. For example, Kelly et al. (2019) in a video to parents about supporting access to language say: 'If they often respond to auditory cues when you are talking to them, you may not need to rely so much on visual tips' (9:41). Perhaps actual input of a fluent signed language in the home or nursery is seen as a threat to the family. In contrast, the virtues of Makaton (n.d.), Signalong (n.d.) or 'baby signing' (Baby Signers, n.d.) are broadcast to parents of hearing children, who see the benefits of learning some form of sign

language for and with their children from an early age. The crucial difference is that these code systems can be easily learnt as a small collection of signed or gestured vocabulary.

In recent years, however, attitudes towards BSL have warmed. Following the enactment of the BSL (Scotland) Act (2015), McLeod (2020) remarks that compared to the implementation of the Gaelic language plan scheme, the formation of the BSL plans did not instigate any public controversy. The CfW includes BSL. In 2021, the first deaf contestant to appear on BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* not only raised the profile of deaf people in the UK, but also inspired a surge in people learning BSL (Lawton, 2021; BBC News, 2021), which only served to raise the profile of BSL and portray deaf people in a more positive light. In April 2022, the UK Parliament passed the BSL Act 2022 into law. This suggests that language attitudes towards BSL in the UK are more favourable.

Traditionally, deaf people have been excluded from education policy decisions (Ladd, 2022), but if they were granted a means of educational control, this would hold considerable symbolic purchase: there would be better academic outcomes for deaf children, a clearer match between the Deaf community's aspirations and subsequent educational provision, strengthen community links between members of the deaf community and services to ameliorate negative historical experiences, resulting in improved minority representation (May, 2008). In the case of the CfW, the Welsh Government is including deaf people (CfW Blog, 2022) in its policy decisions by establishing a BSL glossary development group and organising information sessions for Teachers of the Deaf, BSL tutors and other practitioners working in schools. Education Scotland has recently consulted with the British Deaf Association in drawing up a BSL Toolkit (Education Scotland, 2022c) looking at how BSL is used with deaf children in early years and schools, and how schools can respond better to the needs of deaf BSL signing parents. This involvement of a deaf-led organisation in an educational policy document is a positive step forward, fulfilling points 20 to 21 of the first National BSL plan (Scottish Government, 2017b).

### 3.3 Language planning

In terms of educating deaf children through sign language, language planning discourse is particularly relevant. As Baker (2003, p. 95) points out, for language planning to be successful, it has to deal with 'historical, social, cultural, economic and political realities.' Language planning usually manifests in language policies, and there are several aspects of language planning: government-backed policy for a country or region; corpus planning, that is, having or developing suitable language to deal with the functions that it needs; status management in terms of deciding which languages are official in different circumstances and how far peoples already there and migrant are allowed to use their languages; and language teaching policies in schools etc. (Spolsky and Lambert, 2006). The cases of Welsh and Gaelic serve as good examples of language planning (see sections 2.7.1 and 2.8.1 above).

Given the various ways in which language policy and planning has taken shape in Wales, it is clear that each approach had its own limitations, so Ahronson (2011, p. 89) suggests that in order to make an impact on language choices and use, 'a holistic approach to language policy and planning has to be adopted.' In Scotland, Gaelic language planning has relied perhaps too much on parent power and the affordances of legislation to expand primary GME. Although Gaelic has expanded beyond the traditional Gaelic speaking areas of the Western Isles to the Central Belt so that a majority of children in GME are from English speaking families, it is not yet certain that many of the young bilingual school leavers will use Gaelic in their everyday adult lives (Dunmore, 2022; Goalabré, 2022).

The BSL (Scotland) Act (2015) is the first time that language planning has been discussed and thought about in the context of BSL in the UK, with the production of the first Scottish National BSL Plan and local BSL plans. It can also be argued that the CfW is a form of language planning by virtue of BSL's express inclusion in the new curriculum for both deaf and hearing children. The BSL Act 2022 will introduce language planning for BSL at a national level through the formation of the BSL Advisory Panel (GOV.UK, 2022).

Putting language planning into the context of the UK as a whole, Kenny and Barnes (2019, p. 13) argue that ‘the UK has the potential to be a linguistic powerhouse,’ but there are two hurdles to be overcome. Firstly, the education system often instils ‘a lifelong English monolingualism’ (p. 13), secondly, even when there are pockets of multilingualism, this is often seen as ‘a problem rather than an under-exploited asset’ (Kenny & Barnes, 2019, p. 12). Kymlicka (2007) notes that the goal of language policy is – within this context – is ‘to encourage greater bilingualism in everyday life, so that most citizens will feel comfortable operating in either language in a wide range of functions’ (p. 513).

So, in the UK, bilingualism and multilingualism are often at odds with monolingualism, as can be seen in the case of Welsh and Gaelic, although Welsh appears to have won the battle for equality with English, while in Scotland, there is evidence to suggest that Gaelic still faces an uphill climb (McLeod, 2020). In the case of BSL, monolingualism takes on an additional dimension: not so much the battle between BSL and monoglot English, but also the audiological and medical influences, the disability label and Oralism.

### **3.4 Language revitalisation**

A motivation for language planning is that of language revitalisation, which is essentially what Williams (2000, p. 13) describes as ‘infusing additional energy into endangered language communities, usually by committed individuals whose sense of injustice are so profound that outstanding, even heroic, that efforts are made to advance the cause of the disaffected minority.’ Williams (2000) also suggests that a three-way partnership is needed to achieve revitalisation, consisting of the committed individuals and groups, the government and a receptive society.

In a situation where a minority group needs or desires policy makers to provide for their educational and language needs, Churchill (1986) suggests six policy responses. It is helpful to apply these responses to the case of deaf children in order to ascertain how severe the educational deficit is for such children to learn the language. These responses are set out as follows: learning deficit (Stage 1), socially linked learning deficit (Stage 2), learning deficit for social/cultural difference (Stage 3), learning deficit

for mother tongue deprivation (Stage 4), private use language maintenance (Stage 5) and language equality (Stage 6). On the lower end, Stage 1 suggests that educational disadvantages persist as a result of minority language usage, whereas Stage 6 sees the minority language given official or recognised status and it is provided for and visible in a range of public domains. In a similar vein, Ruiz (1984; 1990) uses the following categories which can be aligned with Churchill's responses: language-as-problem, language-as-right and language-as-resource. Churchill (1986) also attempted to categorise minority group responses to education policy, with the first level being the recognition phase, followed by the start-up and extension phase, the consolidation and adaptation phase and finally the multilingual co-existence phase.

In the case of deaf children, it is argued that we are at Stage 1 of Churchill's policy responses, whereby deaf children experience education disadvantages as a result of not being educated in their minority language, and BSL is firmly in Ruiz's language-as-problem category. In terms of Churchill's minority group responses to education policy, we are at the second level; the start-up and extension phase. Given that the language needs of deaf children are not explicitly recognised by the Scottish and Welsh legislature, there is at least some initial recognition of the distinct educational needs and the existence of deaf people as a distinct cultural and/or linguistic group which means that the first level has been achieved. The BSL (Scotland) Act (2015) does not refer to deaf children or education, although the first national BSL plan does set out goals relevant to education, and the CfW does not state that deaf children should be taught through the medium of BSL, only that they should have the opportunity to learn BSL on par with their hearing peers (Hwb, 2022b). With regard to the second level, having obtained a degree of recognition, the creation of minority language educational services or their further legitimisation, extension and improvement is sought after, and this is clearly the next step to take in Scotland and Wales.

There is clear evidence that whether a minority language survives or dies depends on how effectively the language is 'transmitted' from one generation to the next, with the home and family regarded as being vital for the language's 'intergenerational transmission' and in consequence, their continued existence and vitality (Fishman, 1991). It is to this issue that we turn in the context of language acquisition.

### 3.5 Language acquisition

Five to ten per cent of deaf children are born into deaf families that use sign language. In contrast, 90 to 95% are born into hearing families, and most of these do not use sign language at all (Mitchell and Karchmer, 2004). It is the institution of the family that potentially has the highest probability of reproducing and revitalising a minority language, and to ensure such revitalisation, early years education has a vital part to play. The first educational experience outside a home for many children is often a local nursery school, mother and toddler group or similar venture (Baker & Prys Jones, 2000).

Brentnall et al. (2009) explain that for effective language acquisition, learners need to use their home language and use them to learn the additional language, and if this is not possible, support should be tailored across the curriculum to provide them with opportunities to acquire the language of education. This is particularly important as there is evidence that education has an important role to play in revitalising minority languages and can even achieve reverse language shift (Benton, 1996; Stiles, 1997; May, 2012). It is therefore expected that a similar reverse language shift can be achieved for BSL, and in particular, BSL for deaf children.

However, Edwards and Newcombe (2015) point out that education is not necessarily the 'panacea that it might seem at first sight,' explaining that it in itself cannot achieve much change as it relies very much on the involvement of the family. Fishman (1991) has also warned against relying on education to achieve reverse language shift and emphasises that family plays an 'unexpendable bulwark' role, which he also refers to as 'home-family-neighbourhood-community processes' (Fishman, 1991, p. 95). While the home, family and neighbourhood are crucial domains for language planning, however, they are not easily accessible for language planners (Baker & Prys Jones, 2000).

In the context of Welsh, Evas et al. (2017) explain what parents need in order to transmit a target language to their children, and the three key factors which indicate whether a parent will speak a minority language with a child are: how natural it is to speak that language, the parents' concept of identity and how they acquired the

language, and whether they are proficient in that language. Elaborating on the naturalness point, if a parent's home language with their parents was not the target language or if the language was the education language, it is likely that speaking the target language to their child would not be 'natural' to them. Smith-Christmas and NicLeòid (2020) found that a heritage but minimal speaker of Gaelic who was enacting a post-vernacular family language policy, found it difficult to use the language with their babies in informal and intimate contexts; whereas a new speaker of Gaelic who had a pro-Gaelic family language policy was able to adopt appropriate child-directed Gaelic to her baby. On the second factor, Evas et al. (2018) explain that if parents consider the target language to an important part of their identity, they will use it with their children. In addition, if the language proficiency of the parents is low, it makes it more difficult for them to sustain its use. As Mackie (2018) explains:

They are unable to articulate the full range of emotions and concepts that they wish to express. The target language will not, therefore, be a language that they can use when deeply emotional, or exhausted, or which has the personal, in-family vocabulary associated with parent/infant dialogue. In this instance, they are very unlikely to be able to speak the target language exclusively, or even predominantly, with their child (Mackie, 2018, p. 46).

Therein lies the difficulty. BSL is unlikely to be core to the conception of a parent's identity, and consequently, of their families', for a number of reasons: while a deaf child is likely to consider BSL to be core to their own identity, the same will not necessarily be true of their hearing parents or siblings and extended family members and friends. This is compounded by the language attitudes that persist within audiological and medical spheres, the disability label and Oralism. Some families do decide that BSL will become an important home language, but usually these parents have particular determination, contacts or additional resources and information to help them achieve this (O'Neill et al., 2019b). If hearing parents decide to take it upon themselves to acquire BSL for the benefit of their deaf child, they will. It is therefore essential to ensure that provision is in place to enable them to do so.



### 3.6 Bilingual education

The term 'bilingualism' is often used to describe an education setting where children are exposed to the target languages to varying degrees (Jones & Jones, 2014). Research makes it clear that for successful childhood bilingual acquisition, it is necessary to have input of the second language in the early years (Paradis et al. 2011), and this approach is evident in some countries more than others, with children acquiring a second language in the early years, sometimes alongside their first language (Tang, 2016).

Grosjean (2010) argues that every deaf child should be able to acquire two languages: firstly, the sign language of the deaf community, and secondly, the language of the hearing majority, through a bilingual approach. Sign language has been reintroduced in some classrooms to combat the after-effects of Oralism (see section 3.2), and this is known as 'sign bilingualism' – also known as 'bimodal bilingual acquisition' - an approach adopted to educate deaf children. Bimodal bilingualism is usually explained by way of contrast with 'unimodal bilingualism,' where two words or phrases cannot physically be produced at the same time and is known as code-switching, whereas 'bimodal bilinguals' can switch between sign and speech and produce code-blends (the sign and spoken language simultaneously) (Emmorey et al., 2008). The benefits of adopting sign bilingualism in deaf education especially at an early age, regardless of the level of hearing and the availability of audiological devices, are well documented (Tang, 2016). Even though medical advancement and the decline of deaf schools has resulted in more deaf children receiving education in mainstream schools, there are pockets of sign language use due to the provision of ToDs or teaching assistants (McKee, 2008; Russell, 2010; Schick et al., 2006; Tang, 2016).

However, Tang (2016, p.192) suggests that Oralism continues to reign supreme in deaf education, usually in the form of 'oral-only spoken language with residual hearing' and audiological devices. To combat this, deaf children need to develop a 'strong conceptual and linguistic foundation in sign language' from an early age, so that such knowledge can be transplanted to a spoken language, supporting literacy in the process. The proficiency of ToDs and teaching assistants in sign language is also a concern (Knors & Marschark, 2012). There is also an argument that as sign language



does not have a written mode (for obvious reasons), it cannot be used to support the development of deaf children's literacy (Mayer & Leigh, 2010).

In order to combat the issues presented by deaf children in mainstream settings, Tang et al. (2014) suggests that a co-enrolment classroom could be a potential solution.

Tang et al. (2014) explain:

'dual language input is provided by the regular hearing teacher who teaches in an oral language and a teacher for the deaf who signs.... in a co-enrollment classroom, both teachers, Deaf and hearing, are tending to the educational needs of both DHH and hearing students, whichever medium of instruction they adopt. Incorporating a sign language into a regular school setting thus supports both DHH and hearing students to access the same and regular curriculum. For hearing students who start to be immersed in a sign bilingual environment at a young age, it also means they will become linguistically competent in a sign language, using it to facilitate comprehension of curriculum contents in class.' (Tang et al., 2014, p.7)

The idea of teaching both deaf and hearing children sign language alongside the monoglot language is somewhat radical, but the benefits of doing so are clear, particularly for deaf children. It would also mean that the number of hearing adults fluent in a sign language would increase considerably and would go some way to achieve transformative equality for deaf people (Wilks, 2020).

In Wales, bilingual education is familiar as it has two official languages, Welsh and English (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003), and education has a dominant role in achieving the Welsh Government's vision of a wholly bilingual Wales (Ware, 2019). In terms of WME and bilingual early years education, Jones and Jones (2014) suggest that there are two processes at work: language support education and immersion education, with the former being where children learn through their home language, whereas the latter will be the language of instruction in education. WME occurs where children from non-Welsh-speaking homes receive immersion education through Cylchoedd Ti a Fi (You and Me Circles) playgroups followed by nursery, reception and Key Stage 1 in schools, and Jones and Jones (2014) argue that this approach has

encouraged the growth of WME. In Scotland, Gaelic does not have the same national status as Welsh in Wales, so the mode of Gaelic-medium teaching varies considerably and depends on the teacher, the levels of Gaelic fluency among the children, and the importance the teacher attaches on Gaelic-medium teaching (MacNeil, 1994).

There has been considerable debate surrounding the impact of bilingualism on development, specifically the advantages, disadvantages and the effectiveness of a bilingual education (Baker, 2011). It is to these advantages and disadvantages that we turn next.

### **3.6.1 Advantages**

The advantages of bilingualism are well-recognised. These include: a better working memory (Morales et al., 2013), an improved performance in maths (Lauchlan et al., 2013), better family engagement (McLeod et al., 2019), greater attention control (Bialystok et al., 2008), improved problem-solving and creative thinking skills (Pearl & Lambert, 1962) and social advantages (Fan et al., 2015). The role of parents and their choices also encourages the development of these advantages (Dolson, 1985).

Another area in which children receiving bilingual education have an obvious advantage acquiring an additional language as it means they develop a wider range of skills, the ability to analyse language and, as a result, a better understanding of the essentials of a language than their monoglot peers (Griffiths, 1986, p. 46-47). In relation to the latter, Vygotsky (1962) explains that when a child views the language as a 'system,' they are then able to approach the language in a more abstract way and in terms of more general categories. Bialystok (2006, p. 598) further argues that when compared like for like, bilinguals are 'equally matched to monolinguals,' and in fact, acquiring a second language not only ensures proficiency in the first language as well as the second, but also an in-depth understanding of the academic content or curriculum that they are learning (Lambert & Tucker, 1972). Williams (1994) elaborates that if the students have understood it in two languages, they have really understood it. It is therefore clear that students receiving a bilingual education do not experience any loss in the development of their academic skills in the monoglot

language. The same rationale does not appear to be applied to deaf children learning English or any other spoken languages through BSL.

In the context of Gaelic, GME is seen as a hallmark for quality education, and attracts parents who understand the value of education, and they may choose GME for their children due to the benefits of bilingual education, even though they may not have any connection with Gaelic and the Gaelic community (McLeod, 2020). Such bilinguals showed superior skills in terms of executive function, such 'benefits' related to cognition and involved the understanding that speakers could know and use both Gaelic and English (McLeod, 2020). Indeed, a 2010 study concluded that in English reading, GME pupils do better than their English-medium peers (McLeod, 2020).

Sign bilingualism and co-enrolment in deaf education have a positive effect on language skills, literacy, and in developing the ability to recognise and manage emotions and to cope with conflict, although deaf children may still lag behind their hearing peers (Tang, 2016). However, these results do dispel the myth that developing proficiency in sign language has a negative impact on the acquisition of the spoken language (Tang, 2016). Co-enrolment can also help deaf children achieve higher levels of grammar, phonology and vocabulary in sign language, and encourages positive social integration between deaf and hearing children (Tang, 2016).

### **3.6.2 Disadvantages**

We cannot consider the advantages of bilingualism without considering its possible disadvantages, and it can be ineffective as well as effective, and largely depends on what actually takes place in classrooms, the relationship between teachers and students and between groups of students, and the quality of the resources provided to facilitate learning (Baker & Prys Jones, 2000). A commonly known disadvantage of bilingualism is reduced vocabulary in either or both acquired languages (Paez & Rinaldi, 2006; Windsor & Kohnert, 2004). However, Lauchlan (2014) argues that this to be expected because children actually learn two words for each item, and in any case, the vocabulary of the two acquired languages combined would still be larger than the vocabulary of just one language.

In Scotland, there are concerns about the quality of GME pupils' Gaelic language skills (McLeod, 2020). Firstly, once acquired, opportunities to use the Gaelic language are limited, with a few exceptions such as those who grew up in Gaelic-speaking homes and those who ensure its usage at home (Dunmore, 2016). Baker (2011, p. 265) and Dunmore (2016, p. 729) elaborates: there is always a chance that '[p]otential does not necessarily lead to production' of the language by immersion students.

There is some evidence to suggest that co-enrolment may not result in significant gains for deaf students. Co-enrolment programmes observed by Kluwin (1999) and Kreimeyer et al. (2000) found deaf students' attainment was higher than is typical, but that they still fall short of their hearing peers. In the context of maths, Tang (2016) found an improvement in scores, and argues that deaf students are more likely to catch up to their hearing peers the longer they receive co-enrolment education.

To conclude this section, the case for bilingualism appears rigorous (Cummins 1979; Baker 2008; Bialystok 2001). Mehmedbegovic (2008) argues that it is important that curricula should highlight the benefits of bilingualism and this is what has happened in the CfW (see section 2.8). Brentnall (2009, p. x) adds: 'if bilingual education is justified and successful for bilinguals in Welsh and English, is it justified for those who speak other languages?'

### **3.7 Developing language skills**

Once a bilingual approach has been adopted, the question then arises about what methods should be utilised to ensure that the children are taught in two languages, such as English and BSL. The most common method used in bilingual education is immersion. We will also consider the benefits of translanguaging.

#### **3.7.1 Immersion education**

Yamamoto et al. (2008) argue that where fluent speakers in any language are in the minority, the immersion approach is the most effective strategy to educate children and ensure language transmission to future generations. In terms of defining immersion education, Johnstone (1994, p. 43) suggests that it occurs when 'children, normally from a majority language (L1) background, receive a significant amount of

their education through a second language (L2) from teachers who are native speakers or highly fluent in the immersion language.’ Lyster (2007) refers to immersion education as ‘additive bilingualism,’ and Andrew (2017) explains that this is when they are taught at least half of the curriculum in an additional language that they are acquiring at the same time. Siencyn (2019) argues that there are two requirements to ensure the effectiveness of immersion education: that adults should vary their linguistic registers and styles when speaking to children, and that children have the ability to acquire language.

In terms of how Welsh is taught, for children in English-speaking areas, WME is immersion education, and in Welsh-speaking areas, it is a mixture of maintenance language education and immersion education (Lewis, 2008; Hickey et al., 2014). In Scotland, the Strategy for Languages Report (Scottish Education Department 2007, reported by Hancock, 2014, p. 181) and the Languages 1+2 Report (Scottish Government, 2012) acknowledge the ‘good example’ of GME and the benefits of bilingualism. It appears that in the primary sector, Gaelic is taught through the immersion approach, with children for whom Gaelic is an L1 or an L2, and the majority of pupils don’t have Gaelic as a home language (Nance, 2020).

The immersion approach presents its own unique challenges, and continual professional development for the teachers who engage in immersion education are required to have ‘competence in both language and ... teaching ... for successful immersion [education]’ (Walker & Tedick, 2000, p. 15), as they are doing both (teaching the curriculum and a language). There is also an ongoing debate about whether L1 and L2 should be kept separate in the classroom (Hickey et al., 2014). Therefore, teachers – as central to achieving the aims of an immersion programme – need to be fully informed at all career stages as to second language acquisition – particularly in an immersion education context – in order to teach (Stephen et al., 2010; Baker, 2011; Andrew, 2017; Ní Dhíorbháin & Ó Duibhir 2021; University of Edinburgh, 2022a). Baker (2011, p. 300) notes that immersion teachers have to ‘wear two hats: promoting achievement throughout the curriculum and ensuring second language proficiency.’

This is a particular issue in Scotland, with Pollock (2006) explaining that the disparity between what is expected and what teachers experience is large. There are few teachers with the prerequisite knowledge of primary education, bilingual and immersion education and professional practice (Andrew, 2017), with full registration with the GTCS being the same for GME teachers as for all other primary teachers, and they do not need to show the GTCS that they have the additional skills and knowledge required. In contrast, the EWC in Wales asks whether teachers are Welsh speakers, teach/support learners through the medium of Welsh, or are able to teach Welsh as a second language (EWC, 2022).

### **3.7.2 Translanguaging and transliteracy**

Williams (1994), with his supervisor Colin Baker, developed a theory and conducted research on how ‘translanguaging’ develops language skills across the curriculum in secondary schools. Baker (2003) offers a detailed explanation of ‘translanguaging’ within this context:

‘These terms describe the hearing or reading of a lesson, a passage in a book or a section of work in one language and the development of the work (for example, by discussion, writing a passage, completing a work sheet, conducting an experiment) in the other language. That is, input and output are deliberately in a different language, and this is systematically varied. In translanguaging, the input (reading or listening) might be in one language, and the output (speaking or writing) in the other language. Across different lessons this is varied to ensure progress in both languages across the curriculum’ (Baker, 2003, p. 85).

Williams’ (1994) research provides evidence that translanguaging and transliteracy are effective in developing language use and in learning curricula, and this is not because of the amount of time given to each language, but the activities that are allocated to each language. To summarise, Baker (2003) set out four advantages: they encourage a greater comprehension of the subject area being taught; they can help develop fluency in the weaker language; they can encourage a better relationship between home and school; and they allow both fluent English speakers and learners

of English to be taught together. In more recent studies of translanguaging, Li (2022) sees translanguaging as emerging from pupils' own bilingual lives and agency. Bilinguals do not think in named languages but make use of all their resources in social encounters, including in the classroom, and they are acutely aware of social and political differences between languages and how they are used. Li (2022) further proposes that co-learning is an important principle in using translanguaging in the classroom, where the teacher facilitates, scaffolds and encourages pupils to reflect on their language use to co-create new knowledge.

Translanguaging can, however, give rise to several problems given the complexities involved in teaching through two languages. In particular, Peace-Hughes (2022) describes in relation to GME that children have an overwhelming influence of English in their home lives, the playground and their online digital lives, despite being aware of the advantages of bilingualism. There is also an argument that that translanguaging has most benefit for pupils who are reasonably fluent in both languages (L1 and L2) (Williams, 2003; Hickey et al., 2014). Hickey et al. (2014) also contend that rather than for the teaching of a second language, translanguaging encourages bilingualism, that is, assisting children to learn to use the two languages bilingually.

The concept of translanguaging has recently been linked to deaf education, focusing in particular on the combination of sign, written and spoken languages, seen as a positive step and supports the argument that deaf education should consist of bilingual provision, but concern has been expressed that this approach to deaf education could promote the spoken language rather than the sign language (De Meulder et al., 2019). Swanwick (2017) echoes the point raised by Williams (2003) and Hickey et al. (2014) that deaf children need to have relative fluency in both languages for this approach to work, and she also points out that the educators need to have the skills and knowledge to facilitate learning in the classroom.

## **4 Methodology**

For any research project, it is important to identify the correct methodologies to use, not only to inform the scope and design of the research being carried out, but also to ensure the project is academically sound, as well as to raise, consider and deal with



the most pertinent ethical questions. This research project is no exception, and this section aims to set out, explain and justify our chosen methodologies.

#### **4.1 Positionality**

When carrying out qualitative research, positionality must be considered in terms of the researcher's awareness of the 'lack of stasis of our own and other's positionality,' (Holmes, 2020, p. 8), and this section aims to outline the position adopted by the researchers of this project.

Rob Wilks is deaf since early childhood and his language preference is BSL. He grew up in South Wales as the only deaf member of a hearing family and following an education in a deaf unit, was mainstreamed at primary and secondary schools with a resource base for deaf children. He is married to a deaf woman who was mainstreamed, and they have three children, two of who are deaf and attend a primary school with a resource base for deaf children. Rob is a qualified solicitor and specialises in equality and human rights law, with a particular interest in sign language recognition. Rachel O'Neill first saw fluent BSL in a residential school for deaf children when she was a play worker after leaving school. She became a teacher of deaf children, which at that time meant not discussing sign language at all. Rachel learnt BSL through the Deaf community in Manchester, using it for much of her work in resource bases in schools and colleges. She uses BSL regularly with deaf friends and colleagues. She trains teachers of deaf children in Scotland, and also teaches a course about bilingualism and immersion education on the Primary Education with Gaelic degree.

The background of both authors marks them as uniquely placed to carry out a research project with a mixture of deaf and hearing stakeholders, although Rob and Rachel did not select participants based on whether they were deaf and hearing; Rob focused on Scottish stakeholders as Rachel is well-known in Scottish deaf education circles, while Rachel focused on Wales. Rob also interviewed some stakeholders in Wales.

#### **4.2 Research questions**

The overarching research question is:



How does the approach of the devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales to language planning support the promotion and encouragement of BSL in deaf education?

This is broken down into sub-questions as follows:

- a. What approach(es) do Scotland and Wales take to language planning generally?
- b. How do Scotland and Wales deliver their devolved powers in relation to education, and to deaf education in particular?
- c. What bilingual potential exists in both nations in relation to BSL?
- d. How do Scotland and Wales conceptualise BSL in terms of *deaf-disabled* and *language-minority* rights?
- e. To what extent does the *deaf-disabled* paradigm persist in Scotland and Wales in the context of deaf education?
- f. How do stakeholders perceive the role of the national bodies, local authorities, parents, colleges, universities, parents of deaf children and the voluntary sector in relation to deaf children's use of BSL and bilingual potential?

### **4.3 Research interviews**

Research interviews are the most obvious example of qualitative research methods, with other data collection tools being questionnaires and observation. Hannabuss (1996, p. 22) describes it as 'seeing the social world from the viewpoint of the "actor" ... the people ... [who] work in organisations doing particular jobs ... and what they say and do (and what they say they do and think about what they do).' The product of these interviews, the transcriptions, then 'exteriorise' what has not previously been revealed.

There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Carruthers, 1990), and the semi-structured interview is described by Borg and Gall (1983, p. 442) as follows:

‘The semi-structured interview ... has the advantage of being reasonably objective while still permitting a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reason behind them.’

Bugher (1980, p. 2) further comments that:

‘The person-to-person interview is best for obtaining in-depth opinions. People are remarkably honest and frank when asked their opinions within a context that is properly structured — that is, (1) when the respondent knows the purpose of the interview, (2) when the questions are properly worded, and (3) complete anonymity is guaranteed with respect to the interviewee's responses. These conditions can best be met through personal contact.’

However, Carruthers (1990) warns that in order to be useful, semi-structured interviews must have a structure of sorts, which can in the form of a schedule or list of universal questions. This is the approach that was adopted in the research interviews; a master interview template (Appendix 1) was split according to the themes identified and tailored to each individual interviewed according to their affiliation. Some individuals fit more than one more profile, and additional questions were asked of those, a common example being that of Teachers of the Deaf who were also council officials.

Nineteen interviews with a total of 21 participants were carried out with Scottish and Welsh Government civil servants, national public body representatives, council officials, college and university representatives, families of deaf children, young deaf people, Teachers of the Deaf and third sector employees.

Stakeholder category	Number of interviews	
	Scotland	Wales
Civil servants	1	1
Colleges and universities	1	1
Local authorities	2	

<b>National public bodies</b>	<b>3*</b>	
<b>Teachers of the Deaf</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Third sector organisations</b>	<b>2<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>†</sup></b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>

*Figure 4: Number of interviews by stakeholder*

\* One of these interviews had two individuals representing one national public body

† One of these interviews involved three representatives in one organisation covering Scotland and Wales between them

Each interview was conducted by Rob with a BSL/English Interpreter (funded by Access to Work) present to facilitate communication and/or provide a voiceover for the purpose of transcribing, or by Rachel. Each interview was recorded (video and audio) and then transcribed by an electronic notetaker from the University of South Wales' Disability and Dyslexia Service and stored in a central cloud folder using OneDrive. Subsequently, the data were analysed using NVivo 20. Although there are arguments about analysing the data in the language of the interview (Young & Temple, 2014), on this project we decided to translate to English to facilitate coding, but we were able to look at the five videos in BSL to discuss coding decisions.

#### **4.4 Qualitative analysis**

The qualitative content analysis approach (Schreier, 2012; Snelson, 2016) was adopted for the Phase 1 report (O'Neill & Wilks, 2021). For Phase 2, a coding frame was developed in order to carry out thematic analysis, that is, identifying themes from the data collected from the interviews which were then used to assess further the impact of the Act on deaf education and undertake comparisons with Wales.

Thematic analysis has attracted much attention by scholars, but we have paid heed to Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflective thematic analysis approach, whereby qualitative research is:

'... about meaning and meaning-making, and viewing these as always context-bound, positioned and situated, and qualitative data analysis is about telling

‘stories’, about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the ‘truth’ that is either ‘out there’ and findable from, or buried deep within, the data. For us, the final analysis is the product of deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, something that is active and generative.’ (Braun & Clarke, p. 591)

Thematic analysis approaches within this context include coding reliability theme analysis, codebook theme analysis and reflexive theme analysis. Coding reliability measures aim to assure the quality and reliability of coding and mitigate researcher subjectivity, whereas codebook theme analysis is the process for correctly identifying the material relevant to each ‘data domain,’ that is, topics with fully realised themes that have developed from the data collection (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

Braun and Clarke (2019) also posit that the themes are not ‘in the data,’ as such. Instead, they emerge from the data utilising the researcher’s analytical skills, knowledge, assumptions and resources. They are not ‘obvious’ nor ‘taken-for-granted,’ and can be organised around a shared topic but not shared meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p. 594).

Applying this methodology to the present context, the coding frame focuses on the themes identified in the first phase of this research project, namely language planning, bi-, multi- and plurilingualism, language attitudes and the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 (O’Neill & Wilks, 2021). We therefore identified data that were produced by the interview transcripts, and utilising the coding frame, were able to group data into data domains. Within this context, the coding, guided by a pre-determined codebook or coding frame, has assisted us to identify the material relevant to each data domain.

Ultimately, what this method aimed to achieve was a reflective thematic analysis. Through the analysis of these data we constructed three over-arching themes which help us understand the situation of BSL and deaf children in the education system in Wales and Scotland: the varying conceptualisations of BSL as a language; the gaps in provision in the crucial early years for deaf children; and the lack of resources to move BSL and English bilingualism forward for deaf children in the two countries. These themes were then analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis,

whereby we engage in ‘deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, something active and generative’ (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 591). On a practical level, this manifested in the use of specific comments on sections of data using annotations, and by each person using these tools for the same purpose, we could keep track of each researcher’s thoughts and our joint constructions of themes (Wiltshier, 2011).

## 5 Interview findings and discussion

Figure 5 shows the initial map showing the themes raised by the 19 participants. The original themes of bi/multilingualism, language policy, language attitudes and the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 from Phase 1 formed the basis of the interview questions (see Appendix 1) and as such, the fact that these themes were identified through the coding process came as no surprise. This enabled us to engage in deep and prolonged data immersion and reflection. Three new themes were also drawn out from the interviews: the conceptualisation of BSL as a language (which includes the themes identified in Phase 1), gaps in early years education for deaf children and the availability of resources for the teaching of BSL or BSL-medium education.

The interviews confirmed that whether BSL is conceived as a communication tool rather than as a language with bilingual potential depended on whether the participants were deaf and hearing and top-level and mid- to bottom-level personnel, *deaf-disabled* rather than *language minority* ideology continues to persist, and there remains a general reticence of both national and local public authorities to do more than the bare minimum in implementing the Scottish Government’s National BSL Plan. In addition, it was clear that bilingualism was better understood in Wales and Scotland due to the prevalence of WME and GME.

During Phase 1 of this research project, we had briefly looked at early years provision as part of the local authority plans produced during the first cycle of the Scottish Government’s national BSL plan under the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. We concluded that deaf children need to learn or acquire BSL as soon as possible, and preferably within the first three years, but nursery staff do not have the required fluency in BSL, and even then, the amount of contact time is too short (Dills & Hall, 2021). We estimate

that to acquire BSL, deaf children need exposure to fluent BSL users for 40 percent of the week (Pearson & Amaral, 2014). Recognising that early years' education required further examination, we took it upon ourselves to interview two representatives from early years organisations in Wales. We were unable to identify and interview any equivalent personnel in Scotland within the tight timeframe for the turnaround of this report. As a result, the theme of gaps in early years education emerged through the analysis.

A prominent theme raised through most of the interviews was that of resources, or the lack thereof. This is in reference to the need for more funding, qualified BSL teachers to teach BSL in primary and secondary schools, BSL development for ToDs, training for early years practitioners, opportunities for families of deaf children to learn BSL, and BSL teaching materials, qualifications and networks.

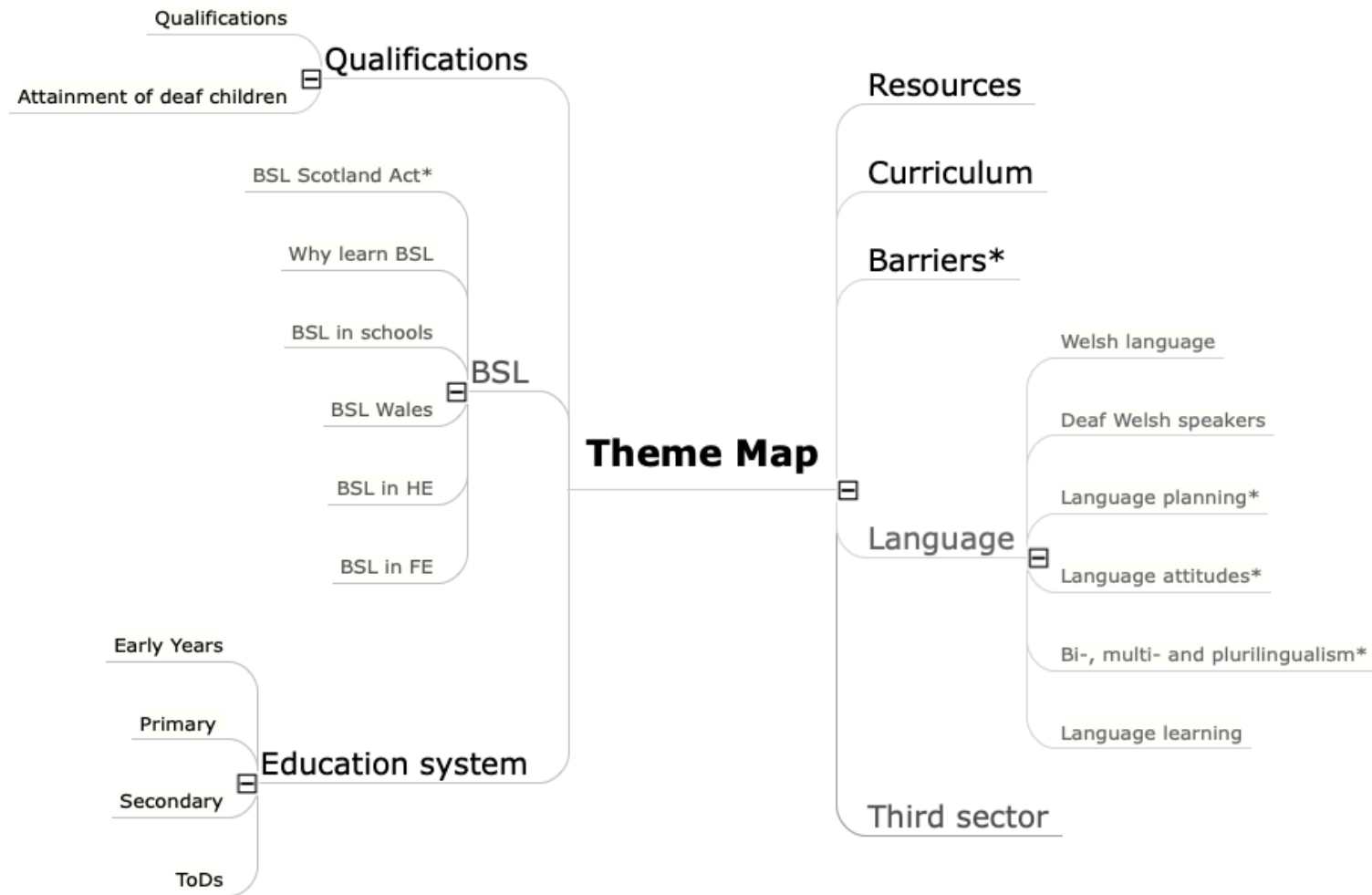


Figure 5: Theme map

\* Relate to questions asked; first two questions were about language policy and bilingualism/multilingualism

## 5.1 The conceptualisation of BSL as a language

The interviews revealed that the conceptualisation of BSL as a language continues to be a challenge for stakeholders due to pervading attitudes towards deafness as a disability. For non-disabled people, disability is usually perceived in two forms: in the shape of a visible physical impairment, or a perhaps hidden sensory or mental impairment. Deafness will fit within the latter form (Wilks, 2022; Wilks, 2020).

From the interview data, there were two clear distinctions to be made in language attitudes: between deaf and hearing participants, and between top-level and mid- to bottom-level personnel who were interviewed. For example, two civil servants were interviewed, one from the Scottish Government, and the other from the Welsh Government. One was deaf and one was hearing, but their thoughts on language planning, bilingualism, multilingualism, and the need for BSL in education were very much aligned.

*bilingual, multilingual and plurilingual which is really, really, important (GV01W)*

*When we think of deaf children, I assume we think there is more need, it is more important for those deaf children to learn sign language and that means they can be bilingual people. It's harder for them in society with barriers in place, so therefore, having a language and a foundation to learn other languages is really important. I think it is key that BSL should be there as their foundation language. (PB02S)*

*BSL therefore has to be available in the education system too. (PB02S)*

These attitudes were also prevalent at national public body level:

*increasingly see BSL situated within that L3 language. It's probably the fastest growing L3 in the country at the moment. (PB01S)*

*we don't want BSL to be taught in a way that's less engaging than other languages. (PB01S)*



*for me, it needs to be part of their education although they may use hearing aids, lip reading; the ability to sign is a communication device (PB04S)*

However, one national public body representative did interestingly refer to the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 as the 'Deaf Act' (PB03S), suggesting that in the minds of some hearing individuals, BSL is inextricably linked to being deaf, rather than a language in its own right. In addition, it could be inferred from one interview that the SQA consider BSL a communication tool rather than a language:

*Interestingly we didn't have any languages qualifications before we were given this one to look after. So, we dealt with things like core skills, we dealt with National 1 and 2 which are the lower-level qualifications, particularly for candidates with learning disabilities more than any other kind of disabilities. (PB03S)*

It is interesting that the SQA staff working on BSL have a background in lower-level qualifications designed for people with learning difficulties, rather than say, the languages team. This is a further example of the medical and health influences that pervade the education sector.

### **5.1.1 Teachers of deaf children (ToDs)**

When interviewing teachers of deaf children, who were also local education authority representatives, there were marked differences in language attitudes.

*Language planning, that's not a term that I have heard a lot enough about or know a lot about to my shame (ED08S)*

*In the context of deaf education I would imagine that it is to do with assessing in an ongoing way what type of, language/communication mode our pupils and parents are using and whether they are more specifically in the BSL side of things which of course, is a whole spectrum of different signing; or whether they are more specifically towards the oral side of things (ED08S)*

*people outside of deaf education are a bit more understanding (ED04W)*

*my job has not been really to support with or encourage or develop BSL within the students I support (ED05S)*

*we call it Visual Communication (ED06S)*

There was one hearing ToD however, who had a positive attitude toward BSL:

*we do that to start to develop strategies to improve certain aspects of the language, whether that be, BSL, English or the written language (ED07S)*

What is interesting is that the language attitudes of ToDs outlined above also affected their perception of (deaf) BSL teachers, whereby they assume that BSL teachers cannot be actually qualified teachers and registered with the GTCS or EWC:

*would love personally, on a national scale for them to introduce somebody to train up deaf tutors so they understand exactly what's involved with the National 3, the BSL Awards and then have an almost like a National Internal Verifier (ED06S)*

*My worry is that you would have people going in, saying they are a signer and they're a Level 4 or Level 5 and really the quality of what we'd be providing wouldn't be good enough. (ED07S)*

### **5.1.2 The right to language**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (the Convention) (United Nations, 2016) was mentioned by a representative of a national public body in Scotland:

*a lot of focus now, is on the [Convention] and written within that is the right to use your respect, language and your ability to communicate in how you feel comfortable. For us, BSL would sit in that umbrella of children's rights in a sense. (PB04S)*

Exploring this comment further, article 29 of the Convention states that the education of the child shall be directed to 'the development of respect for the child's parents, his

or her own cultural identity, language and values.’ There is an argument that children could acquire BSL at a later stage through self-determination (Knors & Marschark, 2012), as commonly happens. However, self-determination and language acquisition are two different things, and children tend to be fluid in terms of self-determination until they reach adulthood. Clark et al. (2020) argue that deaf children also have rights which may not coincide with their parents’ views.

In relation to language acquisition, generally, it appears that the disability label distracts from the fact that BSL is a language, and instead the focus is on the parents’ decisions for the deaf child, often a binary choice between being ‘oral’ or ‘BSL.’ There is often no choice in most environments as BSL is generally not visible and not usually advocated as a language of choice by health and educational professionals involved in the deaf child’s health and education from the point of diagnosis. It therefore often falls upon the education system, along with the health professionals, to make the decisions on behalf of the parents regarding their deaf child’s language acquisition.

Returning to the Convention, the national public body representative does not think that BSL needs to be written in the Scottish CfE as the way it works allows flexibility for its inclusion:

*does it need to be written into the curriculum? Probably not, because it’s really enshrined if we’re taking this rights approach to the curriculum and it’s very much the direction of travel within education in Scotland at the moment (PB04S)*

A third sector representative also wonders whether the Convention can be used to challenge authorities’ approach to deaf education:

*whether we can use the redress mechanism and use Article 24 [sic] of the UNCRC to actually match the carrot of a BSL Plan with a stick of the redress mechanism where a deaf child’s right to education are being breached. (PB02S)*

Indeed, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) provides for supporting families with deaf children to learn sign language as a right of

children with disabilities, 'so that parents and siblings can communicate with family members with disabilities' (UNCRC, 2007).

### 5.1.3 Influence of health and educational professionals

Focusing on the influence of health and educational professionals on parents and families of deaf children, it is worth noting that Deaf discourse is gravitating in a direction that considers being Deaf is one of a multitude of identities that exist within any single deaf individual (Kusters et al., 2015; Wilks, 2020), so the present issue is not about whether deaf people have a Deaf or disabled identity, or being 'oral' or 'BSL,' but about which identities are recognised and allowed to develop within their education. ToDs, however, tend to frame deaf children according to their audiological status:

*We would always use the term deaf rather than hearing impaired or hearing loss and we would tend to categorise our young people by those who are BSL users and those who are not ... we also have to, obviously, sub-categorise almost (ED08S)*

*we have everything from profound, bilateral loss to severe loss but with an additional learning need/additional physical need/additional social/emotional overlay (ED03W)*

Deaf participants, on the other hand, agree that 'labelling is an issue and create additional barriers' (ED01S) and 'I don't label. Big D deaf, small d deaf, hard of hearing – I avoid all of that because I don't think those labels help' (TS01W). To elaborate:

*I don't think we should have classifications because it feels like, then, you're putting deaf children into boxes, I see deaf children as individuals, I think they're unique, deaf children. I don't like the idea of labelling them. (ED01S)*

*I don't think it's helpful to categorise children, deaf children in that way. I think it's better to say the language they use allows a child to have their own personal discovery of what's best for themselves, whatever language that is; whether it's oral language or sign language education. (TS01W)*

*I would say deaf children are seen as disabled, they are labelled as deaf sometimes and when it comes to BSL, it's quite complicated; some see that as a language and others don't see it as a language, they see it as a communication tool for deaf children because they're disabled; and some see it as both. They think, oh, it is a language, but it allows deaf children to access things rather than a language in its own for everybody. (PB02S)*

*I don't think the measure of an audiogram has an impact on language choice. It teaches ways of categorising. (TS05S)*

Therefore, even though health – more specifically audiology – is outside education, it clearly exerts a huge force over the work of ToDs. Despite global literature about language deprivation and the risk of allowing speech-only methods to be imposed, this clearly has not made an impact on ToDs yet (Hall et al., 2019; Howerton-Fox & Falk, 2019; Hall et al., 2018; Snoddon & Paul, 2020). Indeed, many ToDs once allocated are involved in the health care of deaf children; they will attend review meetings with health professionals such as ear, throat and nose consultants, audiologists, speech and language therapists together with the deaf child's parents, and they often assist with the maintenance of hearing aids, cochlear implants, radio aids and other devices (BATOD, 2017), all of which serve to emphasise their close working relationship with health services.

The impact of this approach to deaf education on deaf individuals is made clear from two deaf participants:

*the medical profession telling my parents not to sign to me because it wouldn't be a good thing to do, that they should 'speak to [xxxx]. 'You must speak to her, don't sign'. In a way, my parents adhered to that advice and listened to those medical professionals because they assumed that was the best thing. But now, she's realised that actually she should have not taken that advice and really should have learnt to sign when we were younger (ED01S)*

*Myself, I grew up in an oral education system, I didn't start signing until I was 25. Before then, I avoided sign language, I thought I'm alright, I'm quite big-*

*headed, I can speak, I can lip-read, I thought look at those poor deaf people signing and I didn't realise there was a language. So, it wasn't until I was 25 and started being involved with the [xxx] that my life absolutely changed from that point and my career sky-rocketed. Before then I was quite passive and I didn't know what was happening in the world around me, I struggled every day. I didn't know where I was going with my career. My mind was really active, but no-one recognised my skills, so there were language barriers all the time. (TS01W)*

#### **5.1.4 BSL**

ToDs do, however, generally support BSL (or the ones we interviewed did):

*We would absolutely love it to be but it's just money (ED03W)*

*our first desire is to help our deaf pupils who are BSL users or sign language users to achieve their potential because they have huge potential (ED08S)*

but there is 'trepidation,' at least in Wales because of the inclusion of BSL in the CfW and the expectation that ToDs will fill the role of BSL teachers in addition to their current responsibilities and the adoption of the CfW more generally within their respective schools:

*There's been ... maybe not resistance, but sort of, I don't know. Trepidation, trepidation. Maybe some scepticism from teachers of the deaf (ED04W)*

*the feedback we had from our recent session, well all of them were kind of we're already overworked this is you know, is this part of our role, is it, you know, the BSL curriculum doesn't change the role of teachers of the deaf and it's up to the local authority really. You know we've discussed with our manager and we've decided to provide some support to schools who want to use BSL even if they don't have a deaf child in the school. But it is limited. You know our priority is the deaf children. (ED04W)*

Some of this trepidation is also due to a number of resourcing issues, mainly BSL teaching, discussed in detail below.

There is also evidence of anxiety regarding the inclusion of BSL in deaf children's education:

*When we introduced BSL or sign let's call it sign, let's not call it BSL, we very much go down the route at the beginning that it's there to help them with communication, we don't label it, we explain there are differences and different types of signing ... So, we introduce sign, and we call it Visual Communication, is what we call it at that stage; and we have found calling it that takes massive pressure off parents and it has made parents far more comfortable with using their hands. I think, when you call it BSL and it's a different language, it's a different order it's aargh (screams), and we've found calling it Visual Communication it takes the pressure off and the parents start signing far more with their kids when there's no pressure to do that. (ED06S)*

At authority level, there was clear evidence to suggest that there was a lack of awareness regarding the amount of time it takes to learn a language. In the context of recruiting learning support assistants, for example, it was clear that senior managers are unaware what is needed to use BSL for deaf children's support:

*if we get a new learning support assistant for example, they will fund for them to do a Level 1 or even a Level 2 BSL qualification, but they assume that means that then, they are completely fluent in BSL and capable of delivering you know, anything. (ED03W)*

## **5.2 Gaps in early years education for deaf children**

During interviews with a ToD and third sector representatives, the importance of early years education was emphasised:

*At the moment we have a young boy who has just started nursery so he's just three and it is just wonderful to go into nursery to see their hearing peers who have no experience with deaf children previously, playing with him. He is*

*teaching them some signs and if they can't get their message across, they go to the adults and ask what the sign for such and such is and going back and interacting with him. It is lovely to see. (ED08S)*

*I think it goes back to the early years really, when it comes to language and as we know, like 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents and that kind of support and information may not be there from the start (TS02W)*

This gap in early years was discussed most creatively by the Welsh third sector playgroup representatives. ToDs in Scotland work with parents in the early years, but they did not have a proposal about 0 to 3-year-olds. In one case, the rural situation was the main concern they had:

*With the reality being in the remote areas, if we're saying you must do BSL there is not the people to deliver it in the remote areas and [xxx]. I'm a realist as well (ED06S).*

There has clearly been no thinking about this in the ToD profession; the right to learn the language is not discussed. It is clear that imaginative solutions are needed, but our teacher participants did not suggest any, which is why the Welsh third sector interviews were particularly enlightening in the context of bilingualism and attracting families to a minority language in the early years. One participant in particular demonstrated an understanding of the difficulties facing deaf children in early years:

*if you've got a new-born hearing test and we know that this child is very hard of hearing or probably deaf, what they actually need to do is to support the parents and the other immediate care-givers around that child from that point in time when they are a very tiny baby to start to developing the BSL skills themselves so they, at home, can support that child as well. There is no point just saying, when they rock up to playgroup ... or nursery at 2 or in a year's time, well we've trained all the staff, the staff can do it because what happens to that child in their immediate family and their extended family context. If there's no support for the family unit. (EY01W)*



It is important to remember that in Wales, the success of WME for early years has been sustained over 50 years as a result of the work of Mudiad Meithrin:

*We've been quite fortunate here in Wales as well because obviously, the structure has been there for quite a long time in terms of the early years structure since the late 60s, early 70s, for Welsh-medium pre-school. (EY01W)*

Therefore, it is expected that introducing BSL to deaf children in early years will take at least the same amount of time to gain at least the same level of prominence and impact. The challenge is how to get structural informal education opportunities in Wales and Scotland established like this for BSL.

In terms of the actual impact of the playgroups, the impact of Welsh-medium playgroups on families is explained as follows:

*We bring people in and show that actually isn't really hard and it can be done, and kids enjoy it, and everybody is just all there together. Basically, it gives them a chance to talk to people, maybe, meet people they wouldn't have met before and to ask questions from someone that's a professional but isn't a health professional (EY01W)*

It is made clear that community feeling is key to keeping the families coming, and the playgroups work because advice and information is provided to parents by well-trained and knowledgeable professionals well versed in language pedagogy. In addition, one participant attributed the Welsh-medium Ysgol Sul (Sunday School) network through chapels which encouraged even families with English-schooled children to the revival of Welsh, drawing on cultural roots widely shared in Welsh culture. Such an approach would be more difficult for BSL because hearing people do not usually share Deaf cultural conventions or habits. There are, however, examples of how parents have been invited to Deaf community events and deaf schools in particular have opened their doors to the wider community (Ladd, 2022; Frank Barnes School, 2022; Derby Royal School for the Deaf, 2022; St Roch's Secondary School, 2022).

In relation to the influence of medicine and health, even in the context of Welsh, it is clear that health professionals can and do influence parent choices:

*... Because one of the things we find is actually health visitors and things tend to have very personal views of things and actually a lot of it is based on their own experiences with their own children in terms of the language at schools and the area. (EY01W)*

*just hide it [the Tomee Tippee machine] when you know the health visitor is coming, just put it in the cupboard. Everybody uses it but nobody admits it. (EY01W)*

In Scotland, health visitors are the main authority figures who will have contact with children aged 0 to 3 who are not placed in childcare settings so are likely to be a lead professional in any planning meetings about a child who needs additional support, though others in health, education and the voluntary sector could take on this role for child planning purposes (Scottish Government, 2022). However, it is the ToD or sometimes the speech and language therapist (SLT) who regularly visits the family home to support the family around the deaf infant's language and emotional development. The example from Welsh shows that the influence of health professionals in the early years is not always a positive one; both health visitors and early years ToDs and SLTs may need some convincing and training to be able to put forward bilingual options for deaf infants.

### **5.3 Resources**

It became apparent as we interviewed participants in Wales and Scotland that the resources available for BSL are far less than what exists for Welsh and Gaelic. This manifests itself in a number of key areas: there are institutional challenges where a great deal more infrastructure is needed in relation to BSL before the language will be able to achieve the success of Welsh or Gaelic; there are resource implications for changing language attitudes too – particularly due to pervading medicine and health

influences – and finally there are other challenges which Welsh and Gaelic also face, though to a lesser extent.

The key areas of concern are the availability of BSL learning for deaf children and their parents and families, the number of potential teachers and early years practitioners able to teach through BSL or to teach BSL who are well-versed in respective curriculums, bi- and multilingual education and immersion education and translanguaging, the number of ToDs fluent in BSL and/or have an in-depth understanding of language pedagogy, and how deaf children can be better supported in the classroom by teaching assistants and learning support assistants fluent in BSL. Above all, funding is needed to achieve these desired outcomes. These issues are summarised in Figure 8.

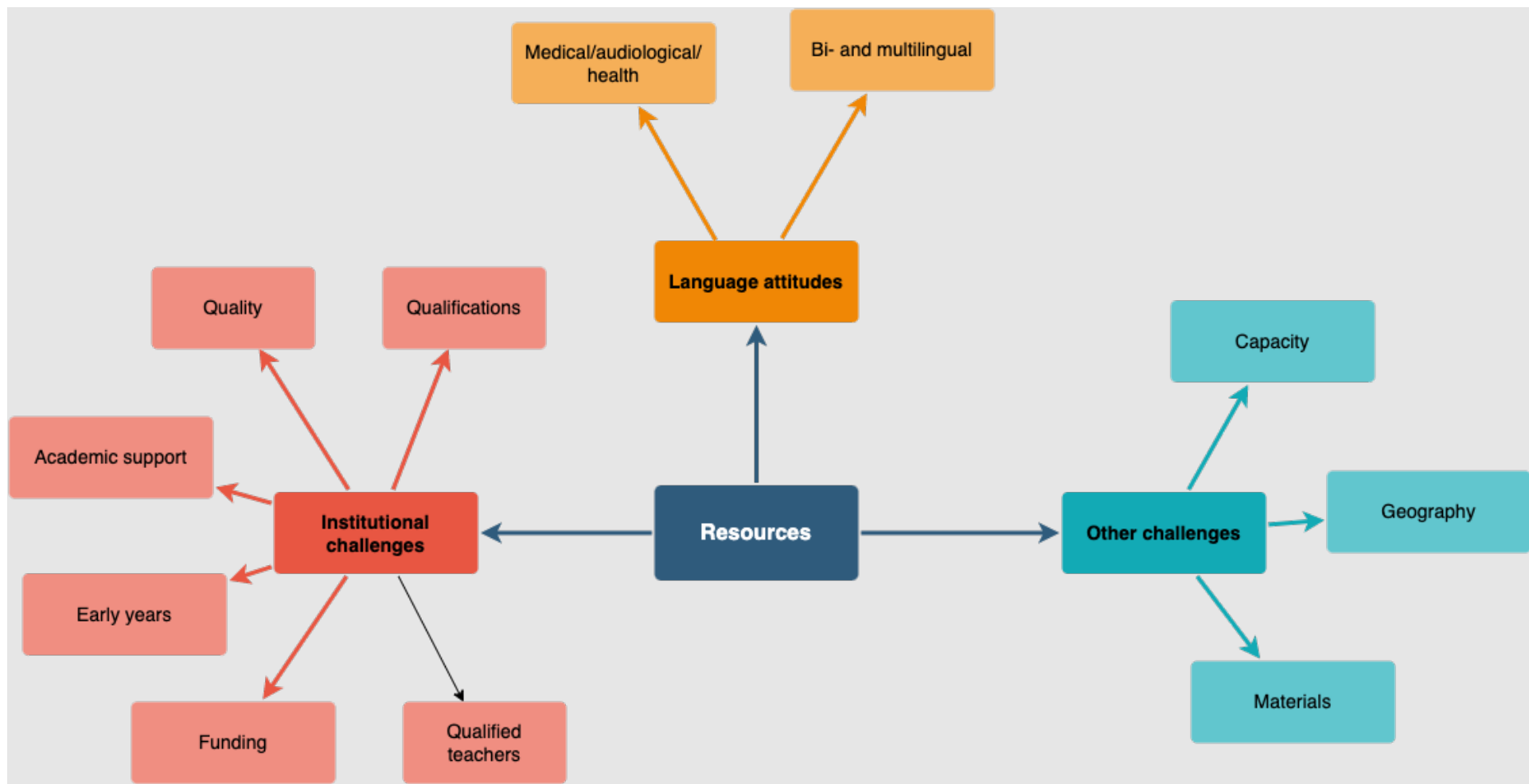


Figure 6: Resources

From the perspective of the Welsh and Scottish Governments there is acknowledgment that the development of BSL in education is still in its early stages:

*That seems to be a bit of a sticking point in terms of BSL specifically they are still trying to understand what the gaps are within the teaching, the qualification itself, how/what needs to be taught at that level. We're at that kind of figuring out stage at the moment, explorative stage. (GV02S)*

*There are resources being commissioned because there was absolutely nothing out there suitable and made for Wales, particularly when we think about Welsh-medium schools needing this as well (even less for them). So, we have some resources being developed but all of this will happen over time. We had to go to colleagues in Scotland, London and Wolverhampton to get that academic expertise to support this work. We haven't got the capacity in the Higher Education system in Wales. All of this 'jigsaw' needs to be addressed before we can move forward. It's a big job and nobody is kidding themselves that the publication of the guidance is the end of it, that is only the beginning. (GV01W)*

It is within this context that we now discuss what resources are needed in Scotland and Wales as identified by the participants to ensure that deaf children have access to an education that includes BSL.

### **5.3.1 BSL learning for deaf children and their families**

As identified in the Scottish national BSL plan and in the Phase 1 report, there needs to be more focus on BSL learning for the families of deaf children:

*unfortunately, with BSL, we are concerned that families have that option hindered because of lack of availability and that's not right, it should be available as an option. (TS02W)*

Scottish Government funding of the National Deaf Children's Society's (NDCS) family sign language 'Your Child, Your Choices' project following the publication of the first

national BSL plan came to an end in 2019, although the NDCS continue to deliver these sessions to families:

*We do continue to deliver family sign language in Scotland, although it's not part of the BSL partnership work anymore. (TS03S)*

In Wales, the Welsh Government commissioned a report (Bowen & Holtom, 2020) which confirmed that in terms of BSL learning in Wales, provision is inconsistent across the country, and that there is a prima facie case for BSL to be classified an Essential Communication skill for parents and carers of deaf children, but that adequate time to recruit and train tutors and funding are needed:

*independent review which Welsh Government did, following on from various deaf organisations looking at the availability of BSL opportunities for parents of deaf children to learn BSL. And it really showed how patchy it is and how difficult it can be in different areas. Sometimes the barrier is cost, sometimes the barrier is time of day of sessions, sometimes it's the type of information covered in those sessions (TS02W)*

No further action has since been taken in Wales. It is clear that in both Wales and Scotland, there is no overarching strategy to ensure that parents and families of deaf children are afforded opportunities to learn BSL, which are clearly important for deaf children to achieve language acquisition and bilingualism.

### **5.3.2 Teachers**

A recurring theme throughout all the interviews was the lack of qualified and/or trained teachers to assist the development of BSL as an international language in Wales, or a 1+2 language in Scotland. This clear gap also has a significant impact on opportunities for deaf children to acquire BSL as a first language in their early years.

*the availability of appropriately trained and qualified teachers in BSL, that has been a barrier. (PB03S)*

*Getting trained teachers to take it to the next stage further is what we need. (PB04S)*

*currently we can only really access Levels 1 and 2 and anything more than that people have to travel a distance. Currently, there is no one locally who is trained to teach Level 3 or above, so people have to travel. (ED08S)*

There is also a lack of tailored courses in terms of teaching BSL as part of the CfE, rather than the usual approach of teaching BSL through the awarding bodies Signature or iBSL, which have awards from Entry level to Level 6 (Signature, n.d.b; iBSL, n.d.):

*We need tailored courses that focus on the curriculum, the vocabulary within the curriculum, the concepts within the curriculum because we are sending people to do BSL courses but the reality is that while they are becoming more confident about signing and using their hands/body language/facial expression, the content of the courses is not really what they need on a day-to-day basis at work. It's fine for conversation, but it's not what they really need to be teaching and supporting. (ED08S)*

There are a considerable list of things that are required to ensure that there are sufficient qualified and/or trained BSL teachers to meet the inevitable demand for BSL learning: an expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate language courses to provide individuals with opportunities to develop fluency in BSL, initial teacher training courses that incorporate BSL as a subject, continuing professional development training courses for teachers who are already qualified and the resources to supplement such training courses. Much can be learnt from the capacity-building efforts for Gaelic and Welsh, including language sabbaticals, whereby teachers are released from their teaching duties for up to one year to learn a new language:

*a lot of what some schools are doing now is a lot of teachers are doing like a Welsh sabbatical. So there is funding, there's there's funding for. And it teachers want to either. I mean, it's. Then we take a whole year or who might take just a term. (ED04W)*

Teacher recruitment is one of the most enduring challenges that continue to affect Gaelic Medium Education, so prioritised by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the General Teaching Council of Scotland (Bòrd, 2022; GTCS, 2020). Despite efforts to deal with

the shortage, a number of issues remain and yet the demand for Gaelic-medium teachers continues to increase. In response, the Bòrd undertook a recruitment drive, Thig Gam Theagasg (Come Teach Me), but there are only a limited number of candidates with the required skills, compounding the issue. While the Universities of Edinburgh, the Highlands and Islands and Strathclyde offer undergraduate Gaelic teacher education degree programmes, the University of Aberdeen has withdrawn its initial teacher education provision (McLeod, 2020). The fact that only three universities in Scotland offer such courses also makes it difficult to recruit Gaelic-medium teachers.

A prerequisite in terms of the development of such courses and resources is to ensure that their distribution is geographically appropriate in both Wales and Scotland to maximise the ability for individuals to engage in the learning opportunities available. Also, bearing in mind that bilingual and immersion education requires that teachers are fluent in the target language, opportunities must be given to learners to hone and develop their language skills in BSL, such as by immersing themselves in Deaf communities and Deaf culture, either in a professional or personal capacity.

A short-term solution could be to work in partnership with other schools, local authorities and universities to provide teachers who are fluent in particular languages. A deputy headteacher we interviewed explained how they ensure that their school is able to provide 1+2 language resources in different languages according to their pupil demographic and choice:

*We've also got some German speakers, and I think what we're going to do with them, we are looking at just introducing them so that they have an option maybe, of attending another school, another local school, that's something we could work in partnership with so they are getting credit for what they know as well. (ED07S)*

*There are quite a number of Polish speakers, but I don't have anybody who can do Polish for that, so, we can't assess it, but in terms of Arabic, we've got a member of staff who is a teacher and also an Arabic speaker. And for*



*Portuguese, we've formed a link with [xxx] University, and they provide staff to work with the Portuguese speakers. (ED07S)*

Another option would be to utilise what is known in Wales as athrawon bro (area teachers). Jones and Jones (2014) explain that a team of Welsh teachers was set up in the 1980s to support the Welsh provision for the then national curriculum. The service was funded by local authorities and grants from the Welsh Office grants, followed by the Welsh Language Board and then the Welsh Government. An athrawon bro team exists in most local authorities and they work in both primary and secondary schools to deliver the curriculum. There appears to be no equivalent in GME, although e-Sgoil (2022) provide specialist classes online and support for GME teachers.

Above all, a significant amount of funding is required from the Welsh and Scottish Governments to ensure that the capacity for BSL learning in Wales and Scotland is maximised. It is also important that the regulatory bodies for teachers, namely the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the Education Workforce Council in Wales, alter their registers to allow those teachers with BSL qualifications to register their ability to either teach BSL or to teach through BSL.

Over the next few years, several possibilities are opening up for signing deaf people to become teachers. In Scotland, a new undergraduate degree is starting in Primary Education with BSL (University of Edinburgh, 2022b); the entry qualifications are fluent (SCQF 6 or above, or equivalent by skills test) BSL, Higher English and National 5 Mathematics or equivalent. The Welsh Government could sponsor places on this degree in the same way that the Scottish Government is. In addition, in Wales there is a Foundation Degree in Deaf Studies at Llandrillo College which has run for many years (Llandrillo College, 2022). With an additional 60 additional credits, which could perhaps include top-up English, maths and science (Welsh Government, 2018, App.2 p.35), this could lead deaf signing applicants to apply for a PGCE in Wales to work in schools as BSL teachers. Bursaries are available in Wales for Welsh speakers to train on PGCE courses as it is a priority subject (Welsh Government, 2022c); the same could apply to BSL. The development at the University of Edinburgh School of Education and Sport could expand to the PGDE Secondary BSL strand to add to the

existing languages. In this way, signing deaf teachers could enter the teaching workforce in much larger numbers than at present.

### 5.3.3 Quality of BSL teaching

An issue that goes hand in hand with the need to increase capacity for BSL learning in Scotland and Wales is ensuring that those who teach BSL are qualified to teach, are fluent in BSL or have achieved BSL qualifications at a certain level and are knowledgeable about the curricula context in which they teach BSL. Atherton and Barnes (2012) note that it is difficult to ascertain how many people teach BSL, at what level, and using which curriculums as there is no central register nor a requirement for BSL teachers to register with a professional body.

There is the political argument that those who teach BSL should be deaf people. De Meulder et al. (2019) explain that as sign languages' popularity has increased, there is a tension between their promotion and deaf people's loss of ownership and authenticity, in particular allegations of cultural appropriation and revisions to sign languages by non-deaf people. A national public body representative was acutely aware of the potential issues in this area:

*I don't know how the deaf community would take that because it would be unqualified teachers teaching, who are not fluent in the language themselves? Though I don't know what the feelings would be around that and I don't want to offend anyone. But we do have a capacity issue. (PB01S)*

The main sticking points countering the argument that only deaf people should teach BSL are: there are insufficient numbers of deaf people who have the qualifications required to train as teachers (that is, Highers or A Levels and/or undergraduate degrees), deaf people with BSL qualifications will be of a limited number (although deaf people may be fluent in BSL, minimum benchmarks may need to be set in order to ensure quality) and deaf people are not proportionately distributed across Scotland and Wales making their geographical reach an issue.

Atherton and Barnes (2012) confirm that barriers exist for BSL teachers as follows: not being able to obtain the necessary qualifications and English literacy due to BSL teachers' non-traditional academic backgrounds and experience; how training is delivered, that is, with a hearing rather than deaf focus; poor quality resources and materials which are not tailored for deaf people; the lack of career progression and the part-time nature of BSL teaching (Atherton & Barnes, 2012). McKee, Rosen and McKee (2014) further note that sign language teachers are usually of small number, typically of casual employment status, specialised qualification requirements are often lacking, they face barriers to mainstream higher education, and there is a lack of sign language-specific teaching preparation programmes. All of the above issues must be addressed to ensure successful outcomes as the demand for BSL learning in the Scottish and Welsh education systems grow.

A third sector representative highlighted quality issues in Wales at an early stage:

*we were aware of organisations who were selling classes to schools because it was on the curriculum but actually, they didn't have any qualification at all in BSL. (TS02W).*

Awareness of this issue is evident at Welsh Government level, with the Welsh Government representative explaining the Government's position:

*we can't say you need to have a certain qualification to be a teacher because in a primary school in Wales you'll have people teaching Welsh and French who have no qualifications whatsoever in those languages. If we make that point for BSL we would have to do that for the other languages as well. Basically, we would be digging ourselves a big hole. However, these organisations can say that, and they can share the information and say 'we would recommend that somebody teaching have this qualification'. We recommend it and our guidance does say it is important to work with deaf community, it's really important you work with people with expertise in BSL (GV01W).*

This quote refers to a note for schools and regional consortia on teaching BSL as an additional language produced in partnership by six organisations in Wales. It recommends that schools and colleges reassure themselves of the relevant teaching skillset as well as linguistic fluency of potential BSL tutors, that they should generally be qualified to at least two levels above that which they are teaching and that opportunities to include native users of BSL are valuable. A third sector representative explained the motivation behind this note:

*I spoke to the Welsh Government and they said they could not set out that people could teach BSL and the curriculum would have to have a minimum level because they said they don't set that out for any other language. They don't set it out for Welsh, French, German or anything, so they couldn't set that out, but they understood the concern. So, what we did we worked with other deaf organisations to create a statement about BSL, just to help promote and raise awareness of it and what people should be looking for and that went out to our regional educational consortiums. (TS02W)*

In Scotland, teachers of modern languages must have 80 credits about the language and culture as part of their degree, and they must have lived in the country for at least six months (GTCS, 2022). Usually, language degrees require a year abroad being immersed in the target language and culture; this is not relevant to BSL but close engagement with Deaf communities in the UK could be seen as parallel. It would be possible to ask for 80 credits at undergraduate level in BSL and Deaf Studies, but currently more hearing people than deaf take these degrees (for example, at Heriot Watt University, the University of Central Lancashire, the University of York St John and the University of Wolverhampton). Some discussion with GTCS may enable deaf graduates who are fluent in BSL to attend a top-up course about BSL as a language.

In terms of assessment, another participant working at council level commented:

*I now have secondary schools who are using the Pack, at the broad general education level which is at the end of their third year secondary. And they're saying we will take it on as a qualification but I'm going Whoa, you are not*

*qualified to assess, how can you assess it, how can you possibly take it on as a qualification? (ED06S)*

This raises another issue in relation to how BSL learning is to be assessed. So, as well as developing capacity for BSL learning in terms of teachers and resources, there is a need to ensure that there exists a body of assessors who are also suitably qualified and knowledgeable about BSL to be able to set and moderate BSL assessments.

On the subject of quality assurance, a third sector representative in Wales made the following suggestion:

*I think we need to establish a centre of excellence for BSL in Wales and I wouldn't advocate the third sector run that. It needs to be government funded and it needs to be properly funded by some other source rather than the third sector. (TS01W)*

There have been similar calls for a Gaelic Academy, but this idea was not greeted with enthusiasm by the Bòrd or the Scottish Government, and the Bòrd established a Corpus Support Group instead (McLeod, 2020). A BSL Corpus was developed by the Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre at University College London (BSL Corpus Project, 2022) and it contains data from Cardiff and Glasgow, but more corpus collection is needed, with a particular focus on Wales and Scotland BSL regional variations.

It is clear that efforts need to be made to achieve the professional formation of BSL teachers and assessors, utilising current bodies such as the Association of BSL Teachers and Assessors. De Weerd et al. (2016) summarise that proficiency in sign language, pedagogical and linguistic knowledge and regular contact or involvement with the deaf community are prerequisites for teaching sign language.

#### **5.3.4 ToDs**

It was clear from the interviews that teachers of deaf children (ToDs) generally did not consider themselves as being suitable personnel to teach BSL, with one ToD remarking:

*I do think that it has to be done in the correct way and it has to be done by the correct people. We've got to be very aware of levels. Levels of proficiency, levels of ability to teach, to tutor and the understanding of the wider community as well (ED08S).*

Another issue with ToDs teaching BSL is capacity. The note for schools and regional consortia on teaching BSL as an additional language highlights that ToD and sensory support services are often running to full capacity in their primary role of supporting deaf learners but that it can be beneficial for schools and colleges to reach out to these specialist local authority services for advice or help to suggest potential tutors.

The same ToD considered ToDs to have a 'dual role' with the deaf young people they are working with to encourage the usage of BSL and ensuring that their learning through BSL is appropriate to the level being learnt (ED08S), in order to 'give [them] the opportunities to celebrate their use of a different language.' They also considered that they have a role in encouraging hearing children by providing vocabulary and encourage their enthusiasm for learning the language (ED08S).

There was a general consensus that ToDs have a specific role to play in deaf education, and it was mentioned by ToDs based in Wales that are no deaf ToDs fluent in BSL in Wales:

*I don't think there's any uh, you know? Deaf BSL signing teachers of the Deaf in Wales. (ED04W)*

There are, however, hearing ToDs who consider themselves to be fluent in BSL (ED03W, ED04W). Another issue raised was the fact that there is no ToD training programme in Wales, and this was a concern because teachers qualified in Wales who express an interest in deaf education are not able to receive ToD training that incorporates the CfW:

*there isn't a teacher of the deaf Trainer training programme in Wales. You've got to go outside of Wales. So it's especially now if there's BSL, the curriculum with, they're going outside of Wales or not going to actually learn anything about that, that's correct. (ED04W)*

A ToD participants placed the onus on local education authorities to increase the number of ToDs:

*The Council has to provide the appropriate number of teachers of the deaf who are trained. It has to also provide the funding for training to an appropriate level of BSL usage. (ED08S)*

A deaf participant set out their vision of the ToD profession:

*it's really important that you have teachers of the deaf for deaf children. It could be CODAs who have excellent BSL skills, who are from a deaf family and understand deaf culture. It could be a teacher who has excellent BSL skills. (ED02W)*

Going forward, it would appear that local education authorities should not rely on ToDs to teach BSL as they do not have the capacity within existing workloads to do so, and many of them are not fluent in BSL to a sufficient level to be able to do so. Instead, the focus must be on developing BSL teaching capacity and on increasing the number of ToDs who are fluent in BSL so that BSL-medium or bilingual education can be improved upon and developed for deaf children.

### **5.3.5 Language pedagogy training**

In response to the considerable influence of health – more specifically audiology – on education and the work of ToDs, teachers and other teaching staff, there is clearly a need for a shift in language attitudes towards the education of deaf children from audiology, speech and communication to language development. It is clear from the interviews that many ToDs themselves were either not aware of language pedagogy, that is, language planning and policy, bilingualism and multilingualism, or they did not or could not make the connection between such pedagogy and BSL. It is therefore suggested that those involved in the teaching of deaf children should undertake training or continuing professional development that incorporates language pedagogy including bilingualism and immersion education, and that any initial teacher or ToD training and the equivalent for teaching assistants and learning support assistants, should include language pedagogy. This should lessen the influence of health



professionals in deaf education and ensure that language acquisition through BSL remains a priority for deaf children.

It would be prudent to consider a number of issues that have come to light in Gaelic- and WME in relation to languages that may need to be addressed in the context of BSL. In the GME sector, a range of organisations offer ad hoc professional development courses. The Bòrd and Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (Go!Gaelic) (Stòrlann), a Scottish Government body that develops resources for GME, provide funding for professional development courses and various annual events (Andrew, 2017). Alas, access to professional development courses for Gaelic-medium teachers are limited (Milligan et al., 2012; Stephen et al., 2012), and the geographically dispersed nature of Gaelic-medium schools across 14 local authorities, often in the more remote locations of Scotland, creates difficulties in accessing online materials where there is no broadband provision (Andrew, 2017). There is also evidence of schools' unwillingness to release staff for external continuing professional events (Milligan et al., 2012; Stephen et al., 2012). These issues will invariably also affect BSL-related professional learning programmes.

A number of useful ideas were also identified in the Welsh- and GME literature which can be applied to the case of BSL. For example, at management level, Mehmedbegovic (2008) suggests that headteachers could be targeted with training that focuses on language, recruitment processes and person specifications for headships that focus on language, which would encourage them to develop a positive attitude to bi- and multilingualism and immersion education.

In Wales, further education colleges provide Welsh language and methodology training for early years practitioners, although Mudiad's Cam wrth Gam (Step by Step) programme, funded by the Welsh Government, also leads to a Level 3 qualification in Childcare, Learning, and Development and utilises work-based placements in early years settings and schools (Jones & Jones, 2014; Mudiad Meithrin, 2022c). Language sabbaticals (see above) can also be utilised as opportunities for teachers to engage in language pedagogy.



In terms of the geographical limitations prevalent in Wales and Scotland, online learning tools are a useful solution to roll out not only BSL learning opportunities for children in schools, but for professional learning as well. A national public body representative in Scotland pointed this out:

*Like Wales, we have geographical challenges in terms we have a number of small, rural and remote communities, and it's really important that the children that go to schools in these communities have that same breadth of curriculum that is, a rich curriculum, that everyone else is entitled to. So, this is a really effective way of making sure that even if you live on an island, your school can offer really high quality BSL classes. (PB01S)*

and also provided this reassurance with regard to the quality of the teaching:

*We've found that the quality of the teaching is not diminished by being online, at all and they're still able to build a relationship with the pupils. (PB01S)*

There are a number of examples of online training. The Scottish Government awarded £700,000 to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) in 2016 to deliver distance learning classes (McLeod, 2020) known as e-Sgoil (2022). Education Scotland has hosted Gaelic Education conferences and hosts an online forum to disseminate and exchange of best practice (Andrew, 2017). The availability of online learning has also expanded since due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Similar provision could therefore occur for BSL-related courses and pedagogical training where it is not possible to deliver face-to-face learning. Even though Education Scotland and some Scottish teaching unions were against two-way online communication through the Covid-19 pandemic, many ToDs did keep going with informal online interactive video teaching with deaf children (National Deaf Children's Society, 2020). Good practice exists in Australia and increasingly in the UK from online BSL teachers.

### **5.3.6 Materials**

Compounding the lack of teaching and personnel capacity for BSL in both Scotland and Wales, is the lack of resources and materials. There is arguably sufficient and well-developed material for the teaching of BSL by Signature and iBSL and by higher

education institutions, but these have been created independently of the Scottish and Welsh curriculums and are generally aimed at hearing adult learners, not deaf or hearing children. This lack of resources and materials was acknowledged by the Welsh Government representative:

*There are resources being commissioned because there was absolutely nothing out there suitable and made for Wales, particularly when we think about Welsh-medium schools needing this as well (even less for them). So, we have some resources being developed but all of this will happen over time. (GV01W)*

*We had to go to colleagues in Scotland, London and Wolverhampton to get that academic expertise to support this work. We haven't got the capacity in the Higher Education system in Wales. (GV01W)*

It is due to the Welsh Government's efforts that a BSL Glossary is being developed (CfW Blog, 2022). In Scotland, a BSL pack has been created by staff employed by Highland Council:

*there is also some of our colleagues in Highland have created a training pack which they have shared with other schools and Local Authorities and because it's been accessible to teachers and there has been demand; it has been something that has ticked a lot of boxes, and the children are motivated to learn and that has made an impact on the capacity within the Scotland to do that. So, it's an improving picture. (PB04S)*

The Council's Highland Deaf Education Service developed the BSL Education 1+2 pack which includes various materials so that schools can deliver BSL classes virtually (Highland Council, 2022a). However, there is an awareness that the BSL pack as it stands is not enough, and that it needs further development:

*we need somebody on high to say, right you've got a job for a year, digitalise everything, produce a booklet for Nat 3, Nat 4, we need something at that kind of level (ED06S).*

### **5.3.7 Qualifications**

The SQA has now developed BSL awards from SCQF levels 3 through to 6 (SQA, 2022a), with level 3 suitable for S3 to S6 pupils (SQA, 2022b), that is, from age 14 upwards. This means that the SQA has achieved its goal as set out in the first national BSL plan. However, there are no qualifications for BSL for children in primary and secondary school up to S2, but then there are no qualifications for modern languages including Gaelic below level 3 either (SQA, 2022c).

The issue for deaf children is that they:

*have to wait until they're at L4 [sic] level where those resources are (TS05S)*

A national public body representative did consider that BSL could be an L2, but a formal structure needs to be put into place for this to be achieved:

*It is not in L2, we would like it to be but in order to do that we need two things: structure to be able to show the progression of children. We have experiences and outcomes that go from early level to top level at age 15 and the structure that underpins the progression needs to be in place. (PB04S)*

These BSL progression levels are now in the Welsh curriculum from early primary upwards, which is a significant step. While a range of BSL qualifications is currently available in Wales on the CQFW, with some at Level 1 and 2 (Blaker & Evans, 2017), equivalent to the first two years of an undergraduate degree, one ToD did suggest that the way forward would be a BSL GCSE:

*If there was a formal GCSE, I think that would be the thing that would swing it because school could justify on the basis of qualifications so, it would have a positive impact on outcomes for learners and they could show attainment. Introducing BSL as a GCSE would be the trigger to more funding/resources to teach BSL to all year groups. (ED03W)*

This is a good point and could also apply to National 5 in Scotland. To achieve this in Scotland, a GTCS register of qualified BSL secondary school teachers would be needed, or wider partnership arrangements with modern language teachers working with BSL tutors.

### 5.3.8 Early years practitioners

Resourcing issues persist even in Welsh- and Gaelic-medium early years settings, although Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales) has advised that:

'Local authorities and organisations which manage non-maintained settings should provide support and training for practitioners on immersion methods of language learning and provide guidance on how language, literacy and communication skills (Welsh) can be developed in a way which is compatible with the philosophy and methodology of the Foundation Phase' (Estyn, 2015, p. 8).

An early years third sector organisation representative had concerns about the logistics of providing language support to individual children in non-maintained education settings:

*that child might need support for two hours a day and finding that person who is available for the two hours where it is funded or it is difficult to stretch that out to be a sustainable post for the person, you know. How do you make it work when the child might only be in that education space for two hours or might be there for, you know, for a few more hours on some days but not on other days is one of the challenges? (EY02W).*

A third sector organisation representative also confirms that it is somewhat of a postcode lottery:

*basically the decisions that families make at that stage with regards to how they communicate might be influenced by the reality of the provision in their area. (TS03SH)*

Exploring these issues more fully, in Welsh-medium early years education Siencyn (2019) notes that Mudiad has struggled to recruit fluent Welsh-English bilingual arweinyddion (leaders). A similar position is evident in Gaelic-medium early years education. In a study by Stephen et al. (2010) of 127 preschool education and care

respondents, one-third found it difficult to recruit staff with the required early years qualifications and experience, a further third stated that they had experienced this issue in the past, and three-quarters struggle to recruit suitable Gaelic-speaking staff. In the Gaelic National Plan 2018 – 2023 (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2018), Early Learning and Childcare is a priority area. Recent job descriptions for early years workers have statements such as ‘applications from Gaelic speakers are essential’ (Highland Council, 2022) and ‘The successful applicant must demonstrate competence in speaking the Gaelic language’ (City of Edinburgh Council, 2022).

In terms of the qualifications of early years practitioners, a Welsh third sector representative confirmed that following a cooperative agreement reached between the ruling Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru, the Flying Start programme provision has been extended for three years to include two-year-olds (Welsh Government, 2022d) to match existing provision for three- and four-year olds, supervisors in non-maintained settings have to be qualified at Level 5:

*Flying Start asks the supervisor to be qualified at Level 5. (EY02W)*

Social Care Wales (2022a) confirm that a Flying Start leader needs to be qualified at Level 5, and a worker at Level 3 (Social Care Wales, 2022b). Cam wrth Gam (Step by Step) delivered by Mudiad Meithrin leads to a Welsh-medium Level 3 qualification (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022c). In Scotland, qualifications start at SCQF Level 6 for progression into promoted posts, but the qualifications are not required to start a career in the early years and childcare sector (SSSC, 2022). Mudiad (2022b) offer free courses for staff in cylchoedd meithrin, day nurseries and childminders to learn Welsh, and in 2020/21, 45 individuals studied the Level 3 Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development apprenticeship course and 9 individuals the Leadership and Management course in Children’s Care, Play, Learning and Development at Level 5. These courses are part of Mudiad’s National Training Scheme in partnership with Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Gower College, Swansea (Mudiad Meithrin, 2022a). In Scotland, providers such as Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (Go!Gaelic) provide resources for teachers undertaking their training through local authorities. There does not appear to be any requirement in terms of minimum level of Gaelic fluency for early

years and childcare. Personal communication from a Gaelic-medium initial teacher educator, Fiona Bowie (2022) suggests that parents fluent in Gaelic are often on the interview panel and help assess the level of Gaelic fluency.

Therefore, the picture in relation to BSL is not unique. In fact, BSL in early years education is almost non-existent apart from what provision may be made by local authorities. For example, the Hearing-Impaired Service hosted by Torfaen County Borough Council on behalf of neighbouring authorities Newport City Council, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council has provision for deaf children in early years with a weekly drop-in session at which ToDs and support staff are at hand to interact with the deaf children (Newport City Council, 2022). In Scotland, there is little mention on the local council BSL plans of developments in provision for families to learn the language. Fife has an example (Fife Council, 2019, 1.7) where the number of parents who have attended a course will be counted. It would appear that the Welsh model is the most robust, requiring early years leaders and workers to have minimum qualifications, and it is within this framework BSL can be incorporated. The quantity and quality of early years BSL available in the home (Hall, 2020), for example through peripatetic bilingual nursery workers, or in early years settings, has not yet been imagined in either country.

### **5.3.9 Funding**

Underpinning the resource issues identified above is the matter of funding. Funding, or the lack thereof, was clearly an issue for many participants:

*there hasn't been any increased funding specifically for BSL in any way and that is very difficult (ED08S)*

*And I think without that funding kind of side of things, it a lot of people are sort of well, how's it going to work if the money is not there kind of thing (ED04W)*

*We would absolutely love it to be but it's just money because in order to offer that. Without funding behind it to integrate BSL learning into schools I just don't think it's going to have a huge impact personally. (ED03W)*

*we lack the capacity to be able to do all of that, we don't have, we've only got one person who's working in the spirit of partnership with us. We don't have the money to do that, so, I am now looking for funding to be able to develop this further or looking for partners who will work with me, so we can develop it. (PB01S)*

However, the Welsh Government representative made it clear that:

*There's funding in schools, so, at the moment it's up to schools if they want to see what is available in their area, if they want teachers to get a better understanding of BSL awareness or for BSL lessons themselves (GV01W)*

In Scotland, a national public body representative pointed out that the Scottish Government invested £40 million to local authorities to fund the implementation of the 1+2 languages policy as part of the CfE:

*Government have given money to the Local Authorities, so about £40 million has gone to the Local Authorities to fund the implementation of this policy. They've given time for it to be put in place because obviously we're talking about the upskilling of an entire workforce. So, it's been two parliamentary terms to get that in place and also, they fund us to create the initiatives, the promotional work, the support work that goes on round about languages. (PB01S)*

Given that BSL can be taught as a L3 language, why has some of the £40 million available not been used to develop resources for BSL teaching in schools?

The Bòrd offers grants for education practitioners such as qualified teachers or early learning and childcare practitioners to complete a Gaelic immersion course for one year in order to then teach through the medium of Gaelic for the local authority (Bòrd, 2022a). It also offers Gaelic education grants for a career in Gaelic teaching or Gaelic early learning and childcare and provides further training opportunities to GME teachers (Bòrd, 2022b). In Wales, there is a National Sabbatical Scheme in operation, with Cardiff University, Bangor University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David offering courses at five learning levels (learnwelsh.cymru, 2022). The courses are free



of charge with the Welsh Government providing a grant to cover supply costs and travelling expenses (Cardiff University, 2022).

To date there appears to have been no concerted effort to allocate funding by either the Welsh or Scottish Governments purely focused on BSL, although both governments already have mechanisms in place for Welsh and Gaelic, which could easily be extended to cover BSL. This could be the way forward to ensure that the capacity is developed for BSL to be utilised in early years, primary and secondary education, and for the upskilling of ToDs.

## **6 Conclusions and recommendations**

‘Counting solely on the hearing culture and on an auditory/oral approach to language, because of recent technological advances, is betting on the deaf children’s futures. It is putting at risk their cognitive, linguistic, and personal development and it is negating their need to acculturate into the two worlds that they belong to. Early contact with the two languages and cultures will give them more guarantees than contact with just one language and one culture, whatever their future will be, and whichever world they choose to live in (in case it is only one of them).’ (Grosjean, 2010, p. 144).

The purpose of this report was to ascertain how far Scotland and Wales have come in order to achieve this ultimate goal and indeed, whether there is an appetite for it at government or local authority level or whether parents of deaf children expect to see such provision. Indeed, Aitchison and Carter (1999, p. 177) remind us that ‘the ability of a lesser-used language to maintain and reproduce itself depends on the degree to which it lends active support from those who control public opinion and wield economic and social power.’

Once this first hurdle is overcome, it should be noted that education is a complex system and introducing a minority language in the system is a time-consuming and painstaking process as it requires the provision of linguistic continuity throughout the phases (Mustafina, 2012). Rawkins (1979) also points out that conflict is likely when a school switches its linguistic status. Due to a lack of resources, along with likely low enrolment numbers, will make it unlikely that a local authority would obtain the



necessary permission to build a new school just for deaf children where the demand for a bilingual education including BSL warrants such a provision. An alternative approach would be reassign existing school buildings for the purpose of teaching deaf children through resource-based provision.

The aim of this supplementary report was to examine the themes identified in Phase 1 – bi/multilingualism, language policy, language attitudes and the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 – to provide further context and understanding of the issues affecting the implementation of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015’s first national BSL plan in relation to deaf education and compare the Scottish approach with that of Wales. We initially considered the education systems of Scotland and Wales and how they are similar or different especially in relation to how they deal with minority languages. A literature review then outlined the conceptual framework (Chapter 3) and in Chapter 4 we discuss the methodology underpinning the research interviews and their subsequent analysis. Chapter 5 provides the findings from the interviews with stakeholders, leading us to the present chapter in which we outline our conclusions, set out our recommendations, and discuss next steps.

## **6.1 Summary of findings**

The interview findings are summarised in diagrammatic format at Figure 7. The conceptualisation of BSL as a language was clearly dependent on who was interviewed and rested on whether BSL was viewed as a language or as a communication tool for deaf people. A mixture of deaf and hearing individuals were interviewed, and differing views could be discerned between them, as was the case between top-level and mid- to bottom-level personnel. The conceptualisation of BSL as a language was clear at top-level, that is, government civil servants and national public bodies, and tended to veer towards BSL as a communication tool from mid-level (local authorities) and low-level (ToDS). Conversely, there was a greater awareness of language policy and the right to language, that is, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, at top-level, which decreased towards the lower levels, and a greater awareness of language policy among third sector representatives. Nevertheless, at the mid- and low-level, there was generally a positive attitude towards BSL, but this was accompanied by ‘trepidation’ and anxiety in ToDS, and lack of

awareness in local authorities about the amount of time it takes to learn a language. It was clear, overall, that those at mid- to low-level tended to frame deaf children according to their audiological status, and that even though health – more specifically audiology – is outside education, it clearly exerts a huge force over the work of ToDs which would explain their attitudes towards BSL.

Gaps in early years provision for deaf children also emerged as an important theme, with recognition that it is this period that is vital for language acquisition. It was clear that the Welsh third sector playgroup representatives understood the importance of language acquisition in the early years, and one of them was quite easily able to apply this to the case of deaf children and BSL. Among ToDs, it was quite clear that they did not have any proposals to ensure language acquisition in deaf children between the age of zero and three before they start their formal education. The work of Mudiad Meithrin, particularly its Cymraeg i Blant scheme, serves as a useful model for encouraging parents to consider early years learning and childcare for their children in bilingual settings. The link between early years and health services was also made clear.

The final theme identified through the interview stage was the availability or scarcity of resources in both Wales and Scotland for the teaching of BSL and in deaf education. There is a clear case for putting BSL learning for the families of deaf children on a formal footing. There is a distinct lack of qualified and/or trained teachers to teach BSL in both Wales and Scotland, compounded by the lack of BSL courses and tailored courses that allow learners to learn BSL in the context of the CfE or CfW. Much can be learnt from the capacity-building efforts for Gaelic and Welsh in this regard, and there were examples of language learning in schools by way of partnership working with other schools, local authorities and universities and the utilisation of ‘area teachers.’ It was made clear that it is not known how many BSL teachers there are in the UK, which makes workforce planning all the more difficult. Ideally, deaf people should teach BSL, but as one national public body representative pointed out: there is a capacity issue, and deaf people have non-traditional academic backgrounds and experience which makes it difficult for them to obtain teaching qualifications and meet standards. There was also some discussion about a ‘centre for excellence’ for BSL.

The ToDs who were interviewed were clear that they were not suitable personnel to teach BSL, although it would be expected that they teach deaf children bilingually. This means that an upskilling of the ToD profession is needed, as well as an uptake in training and recruitment. Teaching materials also need to be developed tailored towards the Scottish and Welsh curriculums and appropriate for deaf or hearing children rather than adults. A clear case was made for a BSL GCSE which one participant thought would trigger more funding and resources to teach BSL to all year groups in schools. In terms of early years provision, in Wales, leaders and workers are required to have minimum qualifications, within which framework the requirement to learn BSL can be incorporated. Finally, funding needs to be put in place to achieve all of the above.

Above all, it is argued that the interviews affirmed that 'questions of language are basically questions of power' (Chomsky, 1979, p. 191). In the present case, the power is in the hands of the health and educational professionals which is all-pervading, influencing the language attitudes of ToDs towards BSL in particular. While it would be foolish to expect this link to be severed completely, it is clear that health and educational professionals need to receive language pedagogy training in relation to BSL as they do in relation to Welsh and Gaelic.



Figure 7: Interview findings

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Having conducted a review of the impact of the National Plan on deaf education, in particular its issues, failures and successes, in Phase 1 of this project which produced 14 recommendations, we would like to add the following recommendations, grouped into four themes.

### **6.2.1 Early years**

#### **Recommendation 1**

Utilising Mudiad Meithrin's Cymraeg i Blant's model, the benefits of BSL and language pedagogy for deaf children should be incorporated into the training of midwives, health visitors, newborn hearing screening, ear, throat and nose consultants, cochlear implant centre personnel and audiology departments in Wales and Scotland.

#### **Recommendation 2**

A new profession of BSL Therapists should be developed to support young deaf children and late diagnosed children and those who have not thrived using speech-only methods.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Funding should be made available for early years workers working in early years learning and childcare settings with deaf children to learn fluent BSL (to SCQF 6 or Signature/iBSL Level 3).

#### **Recommendation 4**

Funding and provision should be made to allow parents and families of deaf children to access BSL learning.

## **6.2.2 Language pedagogy**

### **Recommendation 5**

We recommend that higher education institutions in Scotland and Wales form a working group to explore the development of language pedagogy courses with pathways in Welsh, Gaelic and BSL, applying a joined-up approach to deal with the common issues associated with bilingual education and the teaching of international languages and 1+2 languages.

## **6.2.3 BSL Teachers**

### **Recommendation 6**

The Welsh and Scottish Governments should commission a mapping exercise to establish the number of BSL teachers currently practising in Wales and Scotland so as to ascertain the extent of the qualifications and skills gap for the teaching of BSL.

### **Recommendation 7**

There should be an expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate language courses to provide individuals with opportunities to develop fluency in BSL, initial teacher training courses that incorporate BSL as a subject and continuing professional development training courses for teachers who are already qualified, and resources developed to supplement such training courses.

### **Recommendation 8**

Until similar provision is established in Wales, the Welsh Government should fund places for four students per year to complete a Primary Education with BSL at the University of Edinburgh.

### **Recommendation 9**

Funding should be extended by the Welsh and Scottish Governments to include language sabbaticals for qualified teachers to learn BSL.

### **Recommendation 10**

In order to achieve more joined up thinking and action, existing networks for BSL Teachers, deaf teachers and ToDs should work together. These networks include the Scottish Deaf Teachers Group, the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf, d/Deaf Teachers of the Deaf, the Association of BSL Teachers and Assessors, the Sign Bilingual Consortium and the Scottish Sensory Centre.

### **Recommendation 11**

Welsh, Gaelic and BSL language provision networks should be afforded the opportunity to work together to deal with the issues common in Welsh-, Gaelic- and BSL-medium education.

## **6.2.4 Teachers of deaf children**

### **Recommendation 12**

The Welsh Government should work in partnership with a ToD qualification provider to provide more opportunities for (language) teachers in Wales to qualify as ToDs with a view to developing a ToD course in Wales.

### **Recommendation 13**

Funding should be extended by the Welsh and Scottish Governments to include language sabbaticals for ToDs to learn BSL.

## **6.2.5 Language policy**

### **Recommendation 14**

We would urge the Scottish Government to incorporate these recommendations and the recommendations set out in the Phase 1 report in the second Scottish National BSL Plan for the period 2024 to 2030.

### **6.3 Next steps**

It is clear that there is much to do to improve deaf education in Scotland and Wales, and to increase capacity for BSL learning across the board. More joined up thinking across the sector is essential. We propose that a UK-wide deaf education conference is organised for 2023 or 2024 to which stakeholders at all levels should be invited to disseminate knowledge, language pedagogy and best practices.

Further research is also needed about how deaf children's access to curriculum is affected by being educated through languages in which they are not yet fully fluent, to further support the inclusion of BSL in deaf children's education.



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## Appendix 1

# Interview Questions

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### Plenary questions

1. What is your understanding of the term 'language planning'?
2. What approach(es) does [Scotland/Wales] take to language planning generally?
3. What do you understand is meant by the term bilingualism or multilingualism?
4. What languages would you consider to be 'available' in [Scotland/Wales] for children to learn in school? How easy is it for children to become fluent in languages other than English?
5. [If do not mention BSL] Should BSL be a language included in children's education? What about deaf children's education?
6. How would you describe deaf children? What barriers do they face? Do you consider there to be 'groups' of deaf children with different communication needs, education needs? Describe them.
7. What do you know about BSL? Do you consider it to be a language or communication tool?
8. How important, in your view, is it that deaf children learn BSL? What about hearing children?
9. What role does [[Scottish/Welsh] Government/national public body/councils/Teachers of the Deaf/college/university/families of deaf children/young deaf children/third sector] have to ensure deaf children are able to use BSL and become bilingual or multilingual?

### Scottish and Welsh Government civil servants

#### *Scotland only*

10. Are you aware of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015? What is it for?

11. Have you had any involvement in the development or implementation of the first National BSL Plan?

If so:

12. Can you tell us what work you have done?

### ***Wales only***

13. Are you aware of the Senedd's agreement in principle for a BSL Act for Wales?

14. What changes do you think such a BSL Act would bring in Wales?

15. Have you been involved in the development of the new Curriculum for Wales?

If so:

16. What has your involvement been?

17. What is the Curriculum for Wales' approach to languages, especially for BSL?

18. What plans does the Government have in the pipeline to support the inclusion of BSL in the national curriculum?

## **National public body representatives, councils, college and university representatives**

### ***Scotland only***

19. Are you aware of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015? What is it for?

20. Have you had any involvement in the development or implementation of the first National BSL Plan?

21. [If so] Can you tell us what work you have done?

22. What plans do you have in the pipeline to support the inclusion of BSL in the national curriculum?

### ***Wales only***

23. Are you aware of the Senedd's agreement in principle for a BSL Act for Wales?

24. What changes do you think such a BSL Act would bring in Wales?

25. Have you been involved in the development of the new Curriculum for Wales?

If so:

26. What has your involvement been?

27. What is the Curriculum for Wales' approach to languages, especially for BSL?

28. What plans do you have in the pipeline to support the inclusion of BSL in the national curriculum?

## **Teachers of the Deaf**

### ***Scotland only***

29. Are you aware of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015? What is it for?

30. Have you had any involvement in the development or implementation of the first National BSL Plan or local authority BSL plan?

31. [If so] Can you tell us what work you have done?

32. In your view, is the BSL (Scotland) Act making an impact on the deaf children that you teach?

33. What does your school need in order to deliver these plans, e.g. staff training?

### ***Wales only***

34. Are you aware of the Senedd's agreement in principle for a BSL Act for Wales?

35. What changes do you think such a BSL Act would bring in Wales?

36. Have you been involved in the development of the new Curriculum for Wales?

If so:

37. What has your involvement been?

38. What is the Curriculum for Wales' approach to languages, especially for BSL?

39. What plans do you have in the pipeline to support including BSL in your school curriculum, particularly for deaf children?

40. What does your school need in order to deliver these plans, e.g. staff training?

## **Families of deaf children**

### ***Scotland only***

41. Are you aware of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015? What is it for?
42. In your view, is the BSL (Scotland) Act making an impact on your deaf child?

### ***Wales only***

43. Are you aware of the Senedd's agreement in principle for a BSL Act for Wales?
44. What changes do you think such a BSL Act would bring in Wales?
45. Are you aware of the new Curriculum for Wales, and in particular, the inclusion of BSL in the national curriculum?
46. What impact do you think including BSL in the curriculum will have for your deaf child and family? What do you hope for?

## **Young deaf people (aged 18+)**

### ***Scotland only***

47. Are you aware of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015? What is it for?
48. In your view, is the BSL (Scotland) Act making an impact on you?

### ***Wales only***

49. Are you aware of the Senedd's agreement in principle for a BSL Act for Wales?
50. What changes do you think such a BSL Act would bring in Wales?
51. Are you aware of the new Curriculum for Wales, and in particular, the inclusion of BSL in the national curriculum?
52. What impact do you think BSL being in the new curriculum will have for you? What do you hope for?
53. [If no ideas] What impact do you think it will have on college, university, job prospects, access?

## **Third sector employees**

### ***Scotland only***

54. Are you aware of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015? What is it for?
55. Have you had any involvement in the development or implementation of the first National BSL Plan?
56. [If so] Can you tell us what work you have done?
57. In your view, is the BSL (Scotland) Act making an impact on deaf children? How?

### ***Wales only***

58. Are you aware of the Senedd's agreement in principle for a BSL Act for Wales?
59. What changes do you think such a BSL Act would bring in Wales?
60. Have you been involved in the development of the new Curriculum for Wales?  
If so:
  61. What has your involvement been?
  62. What is the Curriculum for Wales' approach to languages, especially for BSL?
  63. What plans do you have in the pipeline to support the place of BSL in the national curriculum, particularly for deaf children?