



Every Child Matters Don't they?

Mentoring for Success

A study to consider the feasibility of a mentoring scheme in Cumbria for young people with hearing loss.

May 2006

Foreword

I am delighted to write a forward to this study which is the culmination of three years of hard work.

In the Autumn of 2003 as a result of our concerns about the number of young deaf people who were leaving school and were finding themselves underemployed or unemployed or struggling with the further education system we invited the key agencies involved to form a multi agency working group to consider how we could respond to the challenge that this presented to us all.

It was agreed that a conference should be convened to hear from young people who have been through the system, leaders in the education field and employers. This took place in October of 2003, was very successful and resulted in a conference report being produced and an action plan.

The steering group has been overseeing the process of delivering the action plan since then.

Thanks to the Learning and Skills Council (Cumbria) who have been supportive since their creation in April 2001 this piece of research was commissioned in October 2005.

The recommendations in this report provide us with an agenda which will keep us busy for the next three years and beyond!

It is vital to young people who are deaf, especially when we are assured by the Government nationally and our County Council here in Cumbria that:

'every child matters'

We must make sure that those words have real meaning and are not simply a powerful sound bite.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the members of the Transition Working Group for their energy and commitment to working in partnership with each other.

John M Brown

Chief Executive of Cumbria Deaf Association and Chairman of the Transition Working Group.

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1. Foreword:

When I began this piece of research for the Transitional Years Working Group, I had little experience of working with deaf people. I have been involved in education, mental health and the voluntary sector for nearly thirty years and in a previous job I worked alongside a deaf colleague, but that experience gave me very little knowledge and understanding of the issues and challenges that face people with hearing loss every day of their lives.

I am very grateful, therefore, to have had the opportunity to learn so much over the four months I worked on this report. If I had the chance to do it again there are things I would do differently.

Firstly I would like to have spent more time talking to young people about their experience of living with hearing loss in mainstream schools and colleges. The voices of those I did meet have been inspirational to me and I have been privileged to meet young people from the age of five (at a specialist unit in a Cumbrian primary school) through to their mid thirties.

Young people are at the core of this work and it is vital to ensure that we give them the chance to talk about their experiences in a safe and open way. Deaf children do learn to manage and in most cases succeed in a 'hearing world' and the frustrations or anxieties that they feel are often kept hidden or in many cases not even understood as being part of the challenge of living with hearing loss. These frustrations and anxieties can take their toll on the mental wellbeing of young people and adults as they progress through their lives, as evidenced by government research.

Secondly I would like to have had the opportunity to spend more time researching what happens when young people move into employment. Unfortunately this fell beyond the scope of the research and the time available. This is an area for further study.

This report could have been twice as long there is so much to think about and discuss! However I believe that it highlights a range of issues that can be positively addressed with good partnership working and judicious funding. I commend the aspirations of the individuals and agencies who are working so hard to make a difference to those who live with hearing loss and I hope that the report will prove a valuable resource not just to groups in Cumbria, but also to a wider audience.

2. Introduction:

In October 2003 representatives from Carlisle College, Connexions Cumbria, Cumbria Deaf Association, Cumbria County Council and The Learning and Skills Council organised a conference entitled **Supporting Young Deaf People during the Transitional Years**. The aim of the conference was to consider the changing needs and aspirations of young deaf people and how key agencies might work more closely together to take proposed actions arising from the conference forward. A Transitional Years Working Group was established to carry out recommended actions.

1.1 The Study

A key action arising from the conference 'Supporting Young Deaf People during the Transitional Years' was:

Explore the possibility of a mentoring project for young deaf people in Cumbria, along the lines of the Tyneside project. (p 4)

The Learning and Skills Council provided the funding to support a feasibility study, managed by Cumbria Deaf and overseen by the Transitional Years Working Group.

A researcher was appointed to carry out the study which ran from November 2005 to March 2006. The aim of the study was to find out:

- What are the experiences for young people growing up in Cumbria?
- What are the support needs and aspirations of young people in Cumbria?
- What support networks are available to young people accessing education and employment in Cumbria?
- What are the barriers to young people in accessing education and employment opportunities
- The potential benefits of mentoring in supporting young people through the transitional years

This report has been written based on the results of the information gathered and includes a discussion of themes arising from research findings as well as points to consider for action.

The report has been edited and agreed by the Transitional Years Working Group and will be disseminated to all those who participated in the research as well as those attending a follow up conference.

2.2 Acknowledgements

The study was made possible with the help and support of a large number of participants:

- ❖ The Transitional Years Working Group
- ❖ All the deaf young people and adults that generously gave their views and experiences for the study. They are all a source of inspiration.
- ❖ AimHigher Education Project
- ❖ The Learning and Skills Council
- ❖ Connexions Personal Advisors
- ❖ Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators based in Cumbrian mainstream secondary schools
- ❖ Learning Support Managers based in Colleges of Further Education
- ❖ Staff of Cumbria Deaf Association including Social Workers for the Deaf
- ❖ Specialist Advisory Teachers of the Deaf
- ❖ Bransty School and the Specialist Teacher responsible for the Deaf Unit
- ❖ Cumbria County Council Education Department Statistics Unit
- ❖ Mentorpoint
- ❖ MPath; mentoring service for young people in care
- ❖ Mentoring and Befriending Foundation
- ❖ Marion Grimes; researcher with the Achievement of Deaf Pupils in Scotland study
- ❖ National Deaf Children's Society Befriending and Peer Education Project (Glasgow)
- ❖ Parents of deaf young people who were prepared to share their views and experiences
- ❖ Learning Support manager at Morecambe and Lancaster College
- ❖ Dr Stephen Powers; researcher Birmingham University
- ❖ John Fisher for helping to interpret the assessment statistics

3. Summary of Findings

3.1 The agencies and organisations working with deaf young people provide invaluable support that is generally well thought of by young people and their families. The skills and expertise of individuals is highly valued. Cumbria is a large and rural county which can make networking difficult and hard to prioritise within an individual's work load. Whilst protocols in education seem well developed there are less well established systems of information sharing across education, health and social care (including the voluntary sector). However, by encouraging and facilitating knowledge, information and skills exchange, the Transitional Years Working Group and its subgroup (Sensory Impairment Working Group 16+) is beginning to make positive changes to the way that agencies work together in Cumbria. (Chapters 4 and 7)

Recommendation for Action: A 'compact of joint-working' may be a useful way to acknowledge and formalise some of the good practice that has been highlighted in the research responses contained in the report. This group could also work together to attract funding for joint projects.

3.2 Information about the achievement of students with hearing loss was difficult to obtain in Cumbria. This seems to reflect a national picture. Studies are presently being undertaken that may give more reliable information. (Chapter 3)

Recommendation for Action: Cumbria County Council and Connexions could work together to provide an annual report of deaf students' achievement and destinations upon leaving school or college. Even though population numbers are relatively low this information, over a longer period and in conjunction with other evaluation processes, could enable the development of a more strategic approach to support services.

3.3 Deaf young people who took part in the research generally spoke highly of their experiences in mainstream primary schools. Many of them found the transition from primary school to secondary school difficult. This is a potentially traumatic experience for any child but deaf young people said that they were often confused or lost and talked about spending much of Year 7 feeling lonely or depressed. (Chapter 7)

Recommendation for Action:

Many schools have mentoring or buddy schemes to support Year 7 students settle into secondary education. Schemes could be helped to support deaf students by providing additional deaf awareness training for prospective buddies/mentors and peers within the schools. Schools that provide additional preparation and learning support for new students could pass on their expertise to other schools through the SENCO network. Secondary teachers need to be encouraged to attend INSET on Deaf Awareness and the particular needs of their deaf students.

3.4 Many young people who took part in the research regretted their lack of British Sign Language (BSL) skills. They readily acknowledged the benefits of hearing aids and cochlear implants but mentioned a number of reasons why it would be helpful to learn BSL. These included:

- Oral/aural communication is very tiring to use all the time – particularly when learning new things. BSL is far less tiring to use.
- When meeting other deaf people who use BSL it helps to feel part of a community and shared culture
- When things go wrong with technology individuals can feel powerless and lose their means of effective communication
- Aural/oral communication has limitations in large groups or noisy environments

Recommendation for Action:

Strategies and approaches need to be considered that will encourage families of deaf children to learn BSL. An opportunity to meet with other families and children who use BSL may help to highlight the benefits of learning the language. A leaflet using some of the testimonies of those young people who took part in the study may help highlight the reasons for learning to sign. Schools could be encouraged to offer BSL as an additional subject for anyone to learn.

3.5 The majority of people who responded in the research felt that providing positive deaf role models would be beneficial to young people. A significant majority of the young people interviewed did not know any deaf adults and very few deaf young people. They felt that they were the only ones facing the challenges of managing their hearing loss in a mainstream school. Young people's experiences in education and some work situations were characterised by periods of loneliness and loss of confidence due to their deafness.

Recommendation for Action: A mentor scheme should be established that provides positive deaf role models for young people. The scheme would take a person-centred approach to the individual needs of young people but would also organise group activities that gave young people a chance to meet together and share common experiences. Recruits for the mentoring scheme could come from deaf young adults who could additionally benefit by developing skills and even qualifications in mentoring.

3.6 The low incidence of deaf young people in Cumbria means that schools will often only have one or two deaf students at any one time, and perhaps long periods of time with no deaf students at all. Specialist Teachers of the Deaf have an invaluable role going into schools to provide direct support to students and advice to staff. However there is very little opportunity for students (or teachers) to meet others from different schools. This means that young people often feel isolated with their deafness.

Recommendation for Action:

An inter-schools conference on the impact and implications of deafness that could be planned and organised with young people would create a platform for exchange of knowledge and experience. It would raise the profile of deaf awareness in Cumbria and could be the launch for other initiatives such as a mentoring scheme.

3.7 The experiences of deaf young people in employment have only been touched on in the report. The respondents who talked about their experiences of work gave a picture of lack of awareness of deafness on the part of employers and colleagues. In some cases this led to discrimination and bullying, in others to communication problems and isolation within the work place. An outcome for

young people stated in 'Every Child Matters' is economic wellbeing. One of the aims of schools, colleges and the Connexions service is to support young people into the world of work and it is important to check what is happening to individuals as they move into employment.

Recommendation for Action:

It would be useful to build on the information collected in the report and further track the experiences of young people as they move into employment. A programme of deaf awareness for local employers could be established with the support of Connexions and Access to Work service.

4. Hearing Loss, Young People and Achievement.

“About one or two in a thousand children are born deaf and an additional child in a thousand will become deaf during childhood. 90% of deaf children are born into hearing families” *National Deaf Children’s Society, iv, Feb 2002*

4.1 There have been many changes over the past two decades in the education of deaf children. Many more children are being educated in mainstream schools with the support of improved hearing aid technology and cochlear implants.

How much is known about the benefits of inclusive education to deaf young people or the difficulties that they may face within a mainstream setting?

The study talked to 19 young people and adults ranging from 12 years to 46 years to find out their views and experiences of school, further education and work. Whilst this cannot begin to be representative of a general population of young people with hearing loss (as discussed in Chapter 7) each respondents view must be acknowledged for the perspective it gives.

In addition to the qualitative information collected from the 19 respondents, figures for Standardised Attainment Tests (SATs) at Key Stages 2 and 3 (Ages 11 and 14) and GCSE results were obtained from Cumbria County Council. Connexions Cumbria was able to give an overview of the destinations for young people with hearing impairment (14-21 years) in Cumbria. The details and results can be found in Chapter 7, but first, in order to put some context to the information given by respondents in the study, a review of relevant research literature was undertaken.

4.2 Educational Attainment

“In the United Kingdom there has been a remarkable lack of even the basic data on outcomes, including raw data on examination results.” (S Powers, 2002, p 5)

In his paper written for the **Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education**, **Dr Stephen Powers (2002)** considers what influences might affect the attainment of deaf students in mainstream schools. He cites research evidence from the United States that indicates deaf students in general are still underachieving, although other studies report *“groups of deaf students performing significantly better than the majority.” (Powers 2002 p 1)*

Dr Powers examined research literature that considered possible factors such as:

- Audiological factors – does the degree of hearing loss have any influence on academic achievement? Does an earlier diagnosis make a difference? It seems that studies are inconclusive on both these issues.
- Gender – studies of possible gender influence in deaf students seem to reflect the influences of gender in hearing students. That is the gender differences in the achievement of deaf students are the same as those in hearing students.
- Family Influences- There is some evidence from the 70's and 80's that deaf children of deaf parents achieve at a higher level than deaf children of hearing parents. Researchers have explored possible reasons such as (i) a possible genetic cause (deafness in children with deaf parents is more likely to be genetically caused), (ii) the greater acceptance of deafness by deaf parents and (iii) the pre-linguistic skills preparation that deaf parents may be able to provide. However again there seems to be no clear evidence to explain the difference in achievement. One particular study mentioned in the paper found two factors that were significantly linked to achievement; (a) 'adaptation to deafness' which involved a positive attitude towards the deaf community and an acceptance of the deaf child and (b) 'press for achievement' which involved high educational and occupational expectations. (Bodner-Johnson 1986 in Powers 2002)
- Ethnicity – studies of ethnicity as an influencing factor have taken place in the United States but these findings are complicated by socio-economic factors and cannot really be generalised to the UK.
- Language and Communication Approach- A study in the United Kingdom (Lewis 1996 in Powers 2002) of 82 sixteen year old deaf students found that that more than three quarters read at levels higher than 11 years. However the data is confounded by lack of information on other possible factors such as the language used at home or family socio-economic factors.
- Educational placement – A number of research studies have indicated that deaf students achieve better academic results in mainstream schools. Powers argues that the research does not take into account other confounding factors such as intelligence and hearing loss to be sufficiently reliable in its conclusions.
- Early Intervention – Evidence seems to indicate that there are benefits in diagnosing hearing loss as young as possible. However one study cited in the paper demonstrated that the benefits of early intervention may be lost over time (Musselman, Wilson and Lindsay 1988 in Powers 2002)

Following his study of GCSE examination results in 1995 and 1996 Powers concluded that:

“For too long there has been scant information, certainly in the United Kingdom, even on straightforward measures such as examination results. This information should be available

every year, but also information on other outcomes, including measures of non- academic achievement”

(Powers 2002, p16)

The “**Achievement of Deaf Pupils in Scotland**” project has been collecting data from Scottish schools since 2000. It is the “*only annual, national longitudinal database of deaf children in Europe*” (ADPS 2005). The project consists of a national survey of deaf pupils collating detailed information of each deaf pupil. The database is able to input information on a range of variables such as hearing loss, school placement, and examination results. The study has had a good response rate which has helped to give a range of findings that will be useful in developing policy and resources for supporting deaf children in Scotland. In addition to the national survey the project has also undertaken qualitative research to find out more about the experiences of deaf young people and their parents. There has also been a survey of teachers working with deaf pupils. This has provided valuable information on the recruitment and training of teachers of deaf children. (ADPS 2005)

The research has not been without difficulties, as one of the researchers outlined in a recent telephone conversation (Marion Grimes Feb 2005).

The study has been successful in collecting a large amount of data, but as yet has not had the time and resources to fully interpret and publish their results. It has also been difficult to complete the qualitative elements of the study especially setting up interviews with pupils due to the rural and isolated nature of many schools in Scotland. This reflects some of the difficulties this study has had in recruiting and accessing young people.

There is some information that seems to indicate deaf young people are not achieving as well as their hearing counterparts. Again the small numbers and range of other variables means that information needs to be collated for a number of years to ensure reliability and validity. The study indicates that at Scottish Standard Grade (equivalent to GCSE Ordinary Level) “*a smaller proportion of deaf children achieve credit awards compared to hearing children*” (ADPS Dec 2004) In the Scottish Education system ‘credit’ is approximately equivalent to GCSE O Level A*/A/B grades. The information seems to indicate a skewing towards foundation level for deaf pupils at all placements (mainstream or special school). ‘Foundation’ level is approximately equivalent to E/F/G grades at GCSE ‘O’ level.

Educational attainment is important for helping a young person move on to further education or into the job market, but schools are not solely about academic achievement. Students with hearing impairment who attend mainstream schools can experience communication difficulties with their peers both in the classroom and in social situations. It is difficult for a deaf person to follow a conversation in groups of more than three people because a hearing aid simply amplifies all the sound around. (Access All Areas, 2001)

Missing out on, or misunderstanding important social information can have a significant impact on a student’s school experience. Not understanding what is going on can lead to behaviour that may seem inappropriate on the part of the deaf student. This can reinforce other students’ negative perceptions of them possibly resulting in bullying or name-calling or simply feeling uncomfortable in the deaf students company. The results of this for the deaf student may be a sense of isolation affecting self esteem and confidence. (Deafness and Education International, 1999)

In addition there are often only one or two deaf students in a mainstream school so there is no opportunity to share their experiences with some-one in a similar situation. This can increase the

sense of social isolation and exclusion. Assumptions are often made about how a deaf student is managing because they will develop coping strategies to deal with the way the hearing world behaves toward them. Much is hidden by a nod or smile to give the impression that all is understood – when in fact it isn't.

“People who are at increased risk of social exclusion are among those most likely to have mental health problems” (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004)

Deaf young people as a group are potentially vulnerable to mental health problems. Studies indicate that 40% of deaf children experience mental health problems as compared with 25% of hearing children. (Dept of Health 2005)

“there needs to be greater emphasis on communication support in primary, secondary and further education and employment geared to the needs of the individual, if we are to avoid the level of social exclusion which has such a negative impact on the mental health of deaf people”
(Dept of Health p 20, 2005)

The importance of the learning environment should not therefore, be underestimated in supporting young people in their social and emotional development. In recent years a greater awareness of how school ethos can impact on learning, coupled with an increasing recognition that schools have a role to play in managing young people's relationships with each other (eg, through anti-bullying interventions) has strengthened schools' pastoral influence. The role of the school is therefore central to the achievement and wellbeing of deaf young people as they move into the transitional years of moving on to college, employment and the adult world. Cumbria County Council is committed to developing an inclusive society in Cumbria. Its inclusion Policy for education underpins the central role schools have in helping to achieve this:

“Inclusion is about recognising and valuing difference and an inclusive school is a model for the kind of society we hope to promote” (Cumbria Inclusion Policy, 2003)

5. Support provision for deaf young people in Cumbria

“Successfully moving on from school is a shared activity and requires everyone involved to be working together.” *Cris Lewis; Transitional Years conference, Newton Rigg, October 2003*

5.1 The National Context

In September 2003 the government published a green paper “**Every Child Matters**” that sets out a framework for services that cover children and young people from birth to 19 living in England. The aim of the green paper was to support the development of each child’s potential and to reduce negative experiences for children such as educational failure, poor health, engaging in antisocial behaviour. Through consultation the green paper arrived at five outcomes that organisations will work together in partnership to achieve.

The Five Outcomes to help children and young people to:

- **Be Healthy** – enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
 - **Stay Safe** – being protected from harm and neglect and growing able to look after themselves
 - **Enjoy and Achieve** – getting the most out of life and developing broad skills for adulthood
 - **Making a positive contribution** – to the community and to society and not engaging in anti-social behaviour or offending behaviour
 - **Achieve economic wellbeing** – not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving potential
- (Every Child Matters 2003)

Following the Green Paper the **Children Act 2004** was passed through parliament. The Act provides the legislative framework for developing more effective and accessible services that will work to achieve the five outcomes set out in Every Child Matters. These include the following:

- Appointment of a Children’s Commissioner by April 2005
 - Develop local partnerships that involve local authorities working closely with public, voluntary, private and community sectors, and with children, young people and families
 - The establishment of a statutory Local Safeguarding Children Board
 - Local Children’s Trust in operation by 2008
 - Each local authority appointing a Director of Children’s Services by 2006
 - Each local authority identifying a Lead Council Member for Children’s Services by 2006
 - The development of an Integrated Inspection Framework
 - The improved sharing of information across disciplines
- (Children Act 2004)

5.2 Making things happen locally

Cumbria County Council has fully embraced the new developments for integrating children's services and in 2004 appointed a project officer to ensure that information about the changes that are being undertaken is kept up to date and accessible. The project officer; Michael Blakey can be contacted at Children's Services, 5 Portland Square, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1PU, or email michael.blakey@cumbriacc.gov.uk .

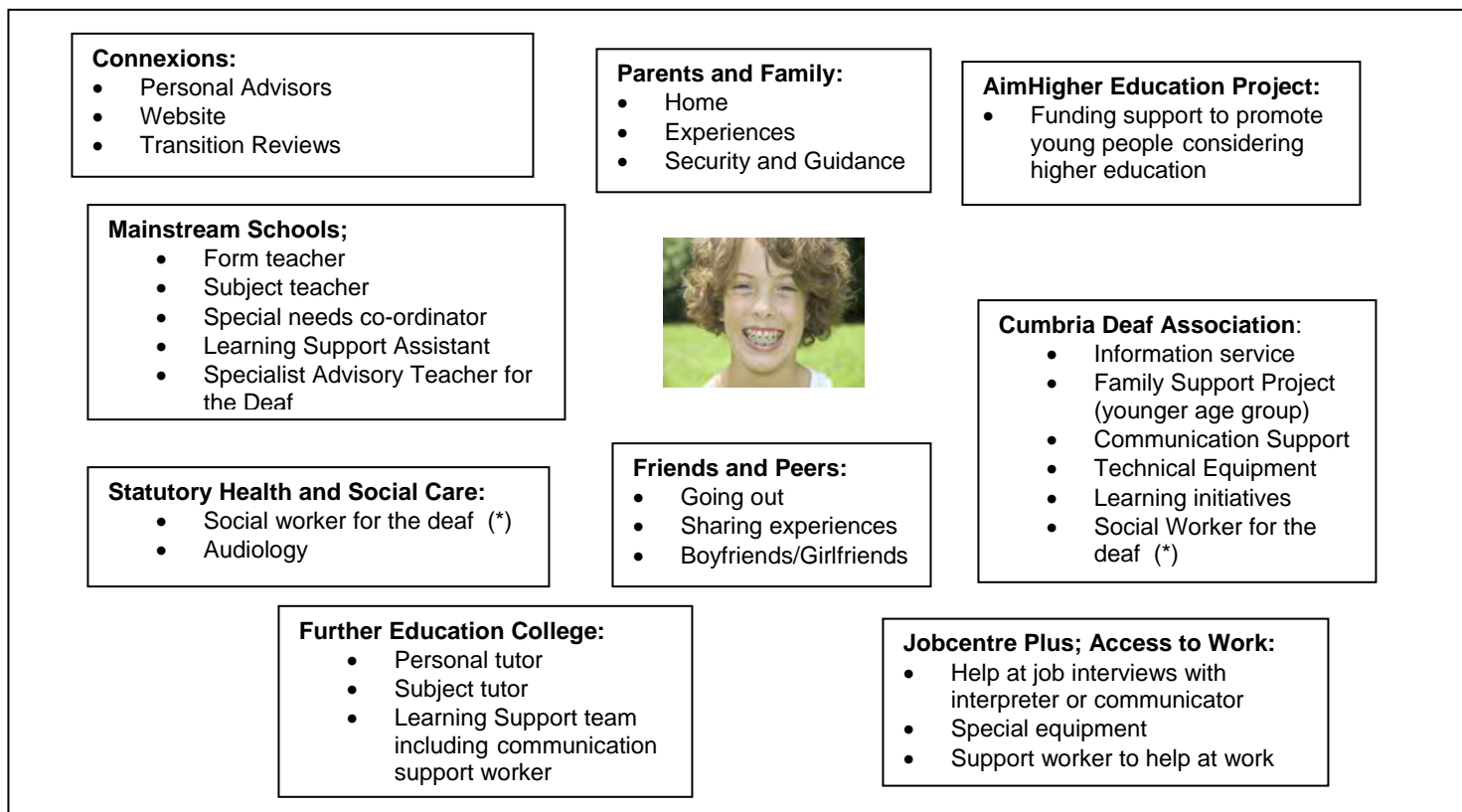
The government publication “**From Vision to Reality: transforming outcomes for children and families**” offers four guiding principles to support Cumbria in making the proposed changes:

1. Partnership - working with the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and children and families
2. Leadership – people who are recognised, respected and mandated to create change by stakeholders
3. Managing Change – the local authority's role is to lead community change and spend time building the capacity of communities to achieve the change
4. Learning and Evaluation – build on the experience of others, good practice, useful evidence and data.

Cumbria County Council has established a Children and Young Person Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) which meets regularly with key representatives from the range of organisations and agencies that work with children and young people in Cumbria. The partnership will be crucial in the development of a future Children's Trust in Cumbria.

The agencies involved in working with deaf young people have a crucial role to play in informing the CYPSP and in particular how the five outcomes (Every Child Matters 2003) can be translated to support the development of young deaf people.

5.3 There are a number of agencies involved in the support of young people with hearing loss in Cumbria



Cumbria is the second largest county in the UK and is largely rural. The population of Cumbria is around 490, 000 (2004). Its rural geography and low population raise particular issues for providing a well integrated network of support for deaf young people.

Whilst there are over 60,000 people in Cumbria with a significant hearing loss many deaf young people attending mainstream schools are the only ones with a hearing impairment in that school. This means that many young people have little or no experience of others with similar hearing loss. It also means that they are even more reliant on the support networks available to them for information and help.

The study sent out questionnaires from professionals working with deaf young people and those completed and returned indicate that it is easy for youngsters and their families to access specialist services. However trying to provide an equitable service across such a large county is a challenge. For example a Teacher of the Deaf working in Cumbria can spend up to 25% of their working time travelling from one pupil to another (Questionnaire Respondent).

Most of the organisations involved in supporting deaf young people work across Cumbria with regional offices within the South, North and West of the county.

The organisations involved in supporting deaf young people came together in 2003 as the '**Transitional Years Working Group**' in order to share expertise and ideas and to drive forward developments that would improve young peoples' opportunities. This study was instigated by the working group which continues to be instrumental in raising awareness of the needs of deaf young people and informing the Children and Young Person Strategic Partnership.

6. Mentoring:

The origins of mentoring are in ancient Greece. Mentor was a faithful friend of Odysseus. Perhaps it is appropriate to think of mentoring today as a form of guidance for us too as we travel on our life journeys, arriving at our next stop a little wiser but still at the mercy of the fates and factors beyond our control, still a long way from “home”

6.1 Introduction to Mentoring

In recent years the concept of the mentor has developed from the traditional role of an advisor although the idea of ‘faithful friend’ remains at its heart. As it begins to hold a more formal footing in society its definition becomes sharper and important.

The Home Office sees mentoring as:

“ a one to one, non-judgemental relationship in which an individual voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. This is typically developed at a time of transition in a mentee’s life” (Active Community Unit, Home Office, 2005)

There are four cornerstones to the concept of mentoring within this definition.

The role of mentor is a non-judgemental one. The ability of the mentor to share their own experience emphasises an equal relationship, and is seen as very important in mentoring schemes.

1. The fact that the mentor is willing to share their time and experience is optimistic and generous and can lead to both mentor and mentee benefiting from the relationship.
2. Support and encouragement is at its core and this requires the experience to be positive for both.
3. The fact that the mentor accompanies a transitional stage in the mentee’s development, gives the process its own time frame.

From this definition we can start to see how historically mentoring relationships have come about. A traditional apprenticeship has all those features. Young people’s education experiences will invariably throw up positive role models that go beyond the role of teacher. The basic mentoring concept is tried and tested. What is new is that the concept is expanding considerably and to understand what is involved in good mentoring we have examined some recent studies and mentoring schemes.

6.2 The benefits of mentoring.

An American study of mentoring schemes examined 10 different mentoring projects and considered whether young people benefited from their participation (Child Trends 2002).

The overarching finding from this research was that mentoring programs can be effective tools for enhancing the positive development of youth. (2002, p 1)

The study found that young people were likely to have fewer absences from school and better attitudes towards school. There was a better chance of young people going on to higher education although the study was inconclusive as to whether there was an improvement in assessment grades or qualifications. There was evidence of improved attitudes and behaviour with *“youth participating in mentoring programs less likely to engage in what is described as ‘problem behaviour’ (2002 p3).*

The report also highlighted more positive attitudes towards the future, older people, and ‘helping behaviour’.

Other studies have found that benefits of mentoring include an opportunity for young people to develop meaningful relationships beyond those of their immediate family. This allowed them to explore different aspects of their identity. Young people who had been part of a mentoring relationship often expressed a desire to become a mentor themselves. ((JRF 2004)

All studies were at pains to highlight the need for a well thought out and considered approach to mentoring. A review of mentoring projects makes several recommendations to those considering establishing a mentoring project;

- Do not expect quick results
 - Do not underestimate the usefulness of volunteers
 - Do not expect mentoring to succeed on its own
- (Pawson 2004)

6.3 What makes a good mentoring scheme?

The success of any mentoring scheme will be underpinned by **values and approaches**. These are often embedded in the characteristics of mentoring relationships.

The relationship needs to be friendly and informal enough for the mentee to feel comfortable. The most likely way this will take place is if the mentor and mentee aren’t too far apart in age, and share similar experiences. An Aberdeen University study (JRF, 2004) into mentoring for vulnerable young people found that *the “ability to have a laugh”* with a mentor distinguished this relationship from others and made the necessary trust and confidence in the mentor easier to achieve.

Positive role modelling is seen as important. The National Deaf Children’s Society Peer Education/Befriending Project in Glasgow has as one of its written objectives;

*“ to introduce young deaf people to positive deaf role models who will act as befrienders”
and “to allow befrienders to share their own positive experiences with young deaf people”*
(NDCS, 2002)

In the ‘Good Practice Guidelines for Learning Mentors’ produced by the Dept for Education and Science (DfES 2001), a key skill to pinpoint when recruiting learning mentors is the ability to provide “good role models”

The results of these aspects of the mentoring relationship are highlighted in the comments from mentees in the same publication;

*“I’ve started to believe in myself”
“It helped me feel I was worthwhile”
“She’s kind and makes me feel good about myself”* (DfES, 2001)

This confidence building is referred to in the National Evaluation of the Youth Justice Board's mentoring projects;

"There were many references to improvements in such personal qualities as self-esteem and self-confidence. Mentors also reported such positive changes in their mentees."
(Youth Justice Board 2004)

In order to maximise the benefit from the mentoring relationship, continuity and regular contact are frequently mentioned. In the Aberdeen study, young people express disappointment when mentoring relationships end without preparation.

"They just dropped me as soon as I went into college and that was it. Once she is in college she will be fine"
(JRF 2004)

Careful organisational planning and commitment by mentors is therefore important. Significant defined periods of time are essential, as the relationship develops over time.

A good mentoring scheme needs the **structure** within which the key values and approaches will thrive. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) sees the establishment of clear aims and objectives as the starting point.

The four areas that the foundation lists as informing **aims and objectives** are:

1. What does the organisation seek to gain by the use of mentoring and befriending?
2. What resources, funding and time will be allocated... and will it be enough?
3. How do you think this form of support will benefit individuals?
4. How will you measure success for the individuals involved? How will you measure success from an organisational perspective?

As so much success hangs on the essential relationship between mentor and mentee, human resources are paramount. The mentee/mentor relationship must be a voluntary choice on both parts. The mentor should be selected carefully from a range of personnel to suit interests, personality etc.

Continuity, commitment and time allocation have been seen to be crucial issues, so in a large geographical area of low population density the issue of providing human resources is particularly challenging.

Recruitment and training play a major part in what makes a good mentoring service. MBF advises a range of recruitment strategies are employed. The DfES research showed that learning mentors have a wide range of backgrounds (teaching, law, Youth work, social work) and that there is a wide variety of job descriptions and working conditions across the country (DfES 2001).

In looking for individuals to become mentors in a specialist field such as working with deaf young people, recruitment strategies, training and induction will need to focus on specific awareness and communication approaches as well as personal experience and background. Beyond these essential skills for work with young deaf people, the Connexions Key Principles and details of the Personal Advisors role form a good template against which to shape a job description (Connexions 2003).

Mentors themselves across the country have stressed the need for induction training. The precise contents of such training might depend on a mentors' background but it would have components helpful to the mentor/mentee relationship. These could be negotiation skills, the establishment of boundaries, identification of specific purposes and targets etc.

Once working within the role, serving mentors would benefit from regular in-service training and supervision to develop their skills and enhance their personal and professional development. Any mentoring scheme should be supported by a professional framework with clear quality standards progression. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation offer an approved quality assurance framework that provides a national benchmark for mentoring schemes. The Approved Provider Standard (APS) is supported by the Home Office and Department for Education and Science and it aims to ensure competency and safe practice in mentoring.

In order for development planning to take a central direction of the programme, issues of resources, funding, time allocation and success criteria need to be considered. An evaluation of Mentoring Plus, a scheme for disaffected young people found that the difficulties the scheme had in engaging young people were made worse by insecure funding and high staff turnover due to poor employment opportunities (Shiner et al, 2004).

6.4 Mentoring Case Studies

The National Deaf Children's Society Peer Education and Befriending Project

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The peer education and befriending project began in 2002 with funding from NHS Greater Glasgow Health Board – Child and Youth Mental Health Promotion Projects.

The objectives of the project are:

1. To empower young deaf people with new personal and social skills for preventative mental health.
2. To provide young deaf people with skills to tackle social inclusion and transition to independence
3. To provide positive support and solutions to overcome any issues
4. To introduce young deaf people to positive deaf role models who will act as Befrienders
5. To allow Befrienders to share their own positive experiences with young deaf people
6. To bring young deaf people together for joint activities designed to boost self-confidence individually and as a peer group

Description:

The project works with deaf young people between the ages of 11-18 years that live and go to school in the Greater Glasgow area. There are 11 young people who are befriended at present and 7 befrienders. All the befrienders are deaf and their ages range from 20's through to 50's. They are employed on a sessional basis receiving £10 per hour for their work with young people. Each befriender works with one or two young people for about two to four hours per month. The recruitment of deaf befrienders has not been easy particularly male befrienders. However those befrienders that have been recruited have found that the role has been helpful to their own careers

and has given them additional valuable 'people' skills. The project believes it is very important to have positive deaf role models especially as many deaf young people in mainstream schools do not have the opportunity to meet other deaf young people or older deaf adults.

Training:

All the befrienders receive training. The project works closely with Childline who provide the training that includes relationship boundaries, deaf identity, and communication skills. The befrienders have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced check. There is a strict code of practice that all befrienders are required to comply with.

Matching:

The befriending process will begin with a referral that may come from a professional, a parent or even a young person themselves. The coordinator will meet with the prospective befriender and complete an introductory questionnaire that asks about interests, confidence, feelings about being deaf. The coordinator will match befriender and befriended based on the responses at this first meeting. The project has a leaflet that introduces the befrienders with a photo and description of interests and personality. This is useful for young people to have some idea of what befrienders are like. When a match is made an agreement is made between the young person, befriender, family and project coordinator. This will include highlighting some aims/needs that the befriending match will address.

When the match has taken place and the pair are meeting regularly the befriender is required to complete a short visit report each time they meet. The pairing will be reviewed on a regular basis. At the end of the befriending match the befriended is asked to evaluate the befriending match.

Benefits:

The coordinator believes that the befriending project has helped young people to feel more comfortable with their deafness. It contributes to the young persons development of self esteem and confidence and families have expressed appreciation of the befriending project. The coordinator cited one example of a young boy who was disruptive at school, settling down after being matched with a befriender. The befriending project collaborates with a peer education project to organise group activities that helps to break down isolation for young people in mainstream schools.

MPath Mentoring Project; Cumbria

Contact: Sue Hodkin; Project Officer at 4-6 Oxford Street, Workington Cumbria CA14 2BR Tel: 07764 655698, email: s.hodkin@btcv.org.uk

MPath Mentoring Project was set up in 2003 by Sue Hodkin with funding from Social Services, Northern Rock Foundation and the Princes Trust. There is one full-time worker based in West Cumbria and one part-time worker based in Carlisle. The project works across West Cumbria, Carlisle and Eden but not the south of the county. It is part of a national Princes Trust initiative of which there are 50 such projects across the UK.

The aim of the project is to:

strengthen the services offered to young people aged between 16 and 21 who are preparing to leave care or have already left by offering them the opportunity to engage in a one to one relationship with a volunteer mentor. (MPath mentoring project leaflet)

Description:

MPath provides support in addition to, but independent of, the support provided by social services. The project works with each individual young person, focusing on their specific needs and interests.

Young people may learn about the scheme through their personal advisor (social services) or through another agency (for example; housing). The mentoring support will often get written into the young person's 'Pathway Plan' (care plan) by social services, but it is important that the mentoring project is seen as independent. Young people who have spent time in care will often have been 'looked after' by professional carers for a much of their lives. A young person therefore values the "ordinariness" of the mentor and the fact that the mentor is a volunteer is very important in establishing a trusting friendly relationship.

A young person may be referred to MPath for all sorts of reasons. They are leaving care and may need help with the practical skills of living independently or they may initially feel lonely and isolated. The mentor and mentee will set goals that they work towards during the mentoring relationship. The goals may be related to keeping youngsters in education or training, bringing some stability into potentially chaotic lifestyles, setting up home etc.

Recruitment and Training:

Recruitment of mentors can be by word of mouth, leaflet or information evening. Cumbria Volunteer Service (CVS) and Cumbria Mentorpoint have been excellent sources of recruits in the past.

At present there are 25-30 mentors on the books with 19 matched with a young person. The minimum age for recruitment is 21. The mentors are a very mixed group of individuals coming from diverse backgrounds. This is helpful as it means that there is a bank of mentors to match young people with and offers a choice.

The recruitment and selection process is systematic and rigorous. All potential mentors complete an application form, and attend an information evening. They are all required to complete an enhanced CRB check. The mentors attend 30 hours of induction training plus a 2 day child protection course. This is vital because the young people they are working with are particularly vulnerable.

The training is also a screening process. This is made clear to the potential mentors from the start and it gives individuals an opportunity to 'screen themselves out' as the training progresses. At the end of the training there is an informal interview which may identify further training needs. MPath also has an ongoing training policy relating to issues that affect young people.

In addition to the training mentors receive monthly group supervision and three monthly individual supervision which includes a personal development training programme. The whole system is Quality Assured and the Princes Trust has received a Best Practice Award for the scheme.

Matching:

There is sometimes a gap between the matching and the training but the coordinator would rather have a mentor waiting for a match than a young person. The coordinator will meet with the young person and explain the project and find out the young persons needs and interests. She will then

attend the initial meeting with the mentor and mentee before leaving them to make their own individual arrangements.

Generally male mentees are matched with male mentors because there is often a lack of male role models in a young persons life. Sometimes female mentors are matched with male mentees but no male mentors are matched with female mentees. Mentors complete a recording sheet after every visit. They do not receive payment but can claim out pocket expenses for the activities they may do with their mentee.

The match is reviewed every 3 months. There is no 'end time' for the mentoring relationships, quite often after a year the relationship comes to a natural end. Some go on for longer and continue to be productive relationships.

Benefits:

The coordinator believes that MPath holds many benefits. She feels that young people really value the respectful relationships that are established and mentors can really move young people on in life. Young people who have spent a considerable part of their lives in care often don't have 'vision' or aspirations for the future. They may feel that they have no control over decisions about their lives. Mentors help develop and build plans for the future and offer the experience of their own lives as a positive role model.

MPath undertakes monthly monitoring and produces an annual report. There are challenges for the coordinator in having time to provide enough support for volunteers to keep motivated. Sometimes she feels like a 'plate-spinner' trying to maintain all the aspects of the project. This is an issue for many mentoring schemes that have a sole paid worker. The mentoring project can expand and outreach its capacity. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation has gone a long way to support single workers and break down the sense of isolation that coordinators may experience in their jobs. Recruitment and training of potential mentors can be difficult in Cumbria due to its low population and rurality.

6.5 A mentoring project for deaf young people in Cumbria

There are a number of issues that need to be considered in establishing a mentoring project for deaf young people in Cumbria:

- Clear aims and purpose need to be agreed and informed by the views of young people, parents and professionals surveyed in this study. Government policy and other studies will also help clarify what would be the desired outcomes of a mentoring project.
- Partnership working is already producing positive results through the Transitional Working Group. The mentoring project will need to complement and add to the range of activities and support that is presently being provided as set out in the map of support agencies.(Chapter 5)
- Responses of young people and adults indicate that there are times that are particularly challenging to them. The mentoring project may best focus on working with specific age groups.

- Mentorpoint Cumbria is well placed to provide an initial training programme for prospective mentors. They have recommended additional training specific to issues relating to deafness. Other questions that should be considered are; should the mentor be deaf or have experience of hearing loss? Should they be paid workers or volunteers? How can a mentoring project ensure that they recruit positive role models, particularly in an area that is geographically dispersed, has a low population density, and a where hearing loss is of relatively low incidence?

7. Research Findings: An important part of this study was to find out the views of people who had experience of hearing loss in Cumbria. This involved individuals who worked with deaf young people in a range of capacities and deaf young people themselves. A small number of parents were also spoken to in a focus group setting.

7.1 An overview of examination achievement for deaf children in Cumbrian Schools:

Information provided by Cumbria County Council Education Department's statistics unit enabled the study to track eighty five hearing impaired students through primary and secondary education in the county and map their attainment. This was done by assembling cohorts of year groups using names of individuals supplied by Connexions Cumbria, and measuring their attainment in Standardised Attainment Tests (SATs) in English, Maths and Science at Key Stage Two (at 11 years on exit from primary school) and at Key Stage Three (at 14 years of age).

This picture of attainment was compared with National Averages in the subjects and tests for relevant years, and the following is a summary of main findings. As with similar larger studies, the information is subject to the following issues in relation to reliability and validity:

- Small numbers means that the study cannot make definitive conclusions
- Levels of hearing loss are not known and therefore may affect individual results
- Individual students may have additional learning difficulties that can affect the results
- There may be an absence of the full picture due to the movement of individuals in and out of county, and into and out of specialist provision

Bearing this in mind, the information should only be taken as an indicator of the recent position in mainstream education, but perhaps the beginnings of a regular analysis of levels of attainment for young deaf people in Cumbria.

1. Young deaf students in Cumbrian schools appear to perform less well than their hearing counterparts in mainstream schools in England at Key Stage Two (KS2) and Key Stage Three (KS3).
2. At Key Stage Two (age 11), their combined results over the period 1997 – 2002 were averaged and compared to national averages.
Between 1997 and 2002:
 - a) In English – 49% of the sample achieved level 4 and above compared to (approx) 71% of all pupils nationally¹
 - b) In Maths – 39% of the sample achieved level 4 and above compared to (approx) 69% of all pupils nationally
 - c) In Science – 59% of the sample achieved level 4 and above compared to (approx) 80% of all pupils nationally
3. The same sample group was measured against national attainment statistics in English, Maths and Science at Key Stage Three (at age 14).
Between 2000 and 2005:
 - a) In English 48% of the sample achieved level 5 and above compared to (approx) 68% of all pupils nationally

¹ The national figures are referred to as approximate because the 1997 and 1998 national figures were unavailable

- b) In Maths 47% of the sample achieved level 5 and above as compared to (approx) 69% of all pupils nationally
- c) In Science 50% of the sample achieved level 5 and above compared to (approx) 66% of all pupils nationally

By adding the year on year KS2 and KS3 averages of the deaf young people in Cumbria from 1997 to 2002, the study created a 'virtual cohort' of 85 youngsters moving through the English education system and being subject to the government's main performance measure². However there are two important factors to take into account when attempting to measure students' attainment.

1. In order to investigate whether students fulfil their potential within an education system it is necessary to compare their current to their previous performance. It is usual to measure how much students 'add value' to their performance as they progress by comparing previous results to current ones. This is now the yardstick used to assess a school's progress, as well as that of its students. In the case of deaf students 'value added' is the means of assessing their progress against themselves.

In the sample examined, an approximate estimate of value added was obtained by comparing KS2 results at 11 with KS3 results at 14. An accepted measure of usual progress is for students to increase their performance by one level during that three year period (assuming the comparability of the two discrete sets of tests).

If a student's performance increased by more than one level in a subject then that could indicate 'added value'. If their level remained the same, or fell, during that period this could suggest a lack of progress. Without knowing precise scores it is not possible to be confident about this analysis, however in the two most recent years data, there was a net loss in value between KS2 and KS3 among the deaf students scrutinised. In the previous two years however a majority of students added value to their first performance. Whilst there is nothing conclusive about this, value added assessment is clearly useful in supporting individuals' progress in the future.

2. The second important factor to consider is the range of assessments available to inform students' progress. National tests and other examination outcomes are the product of a child's education. In order to help them achieve good results schools now use a variety of assessment tools. In the case of a deaf young person, teacher assessment is probably as reliable a tool as a test outcome. SEN departments in schools will use a series of finely graded assessments to reveal progress, and these assessments take into account the special educational need of a student, whereas national tests do not.

Deaf students may be more fairly assessed by the specialist teachers whose expertise has contributed to this report, than by a national testing system. However this does not negate the fact that deaf students appear to underachieve compared to their hearing counterparts within a system designed to meet everyone's needs. It is also usual to consider gender when assessing educational achievement. A national concern and debate about the comparative underachievement of boys, and the causes of this, has led to increased analysis of results by gender. In the case of this sample equal numbers of boys and girls were included but no gender based analysis was undertaken.

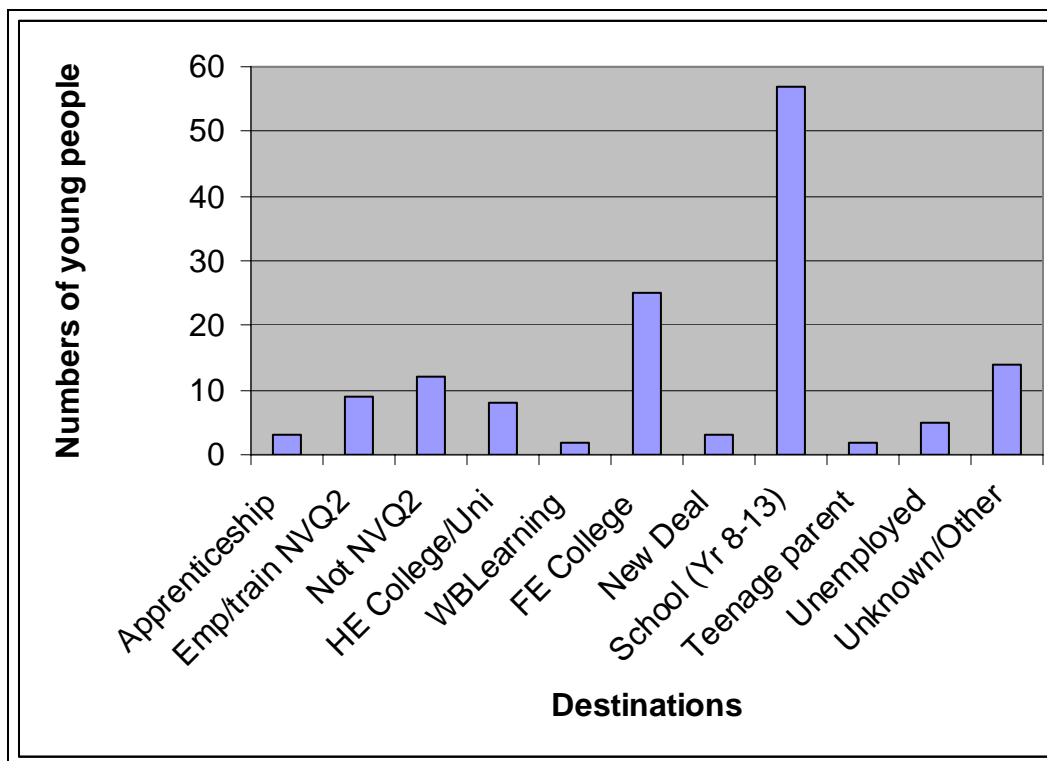
² This was necessary to compensate for the unreliability of very small samples (14 average per year group)

The GCSE results available were for nine deaf candidates in 2005. This sample is too small to extrapolate any significant and reliable information.

- Of eleven young people who took Key Stage tests in 2000, nine took GCSEs in 2005
- Five young people gained five or more GCSE A* to C grades (55%)
- Their results were close to the average results for England and Cumbria in 2005
- Based on their previous test scores (KS2 and KS3) six performed at or above expectations and three performed below expectations

7.2 The destinations of young people with hearing impairment at March 2006

These figures are based on a report given by Connexions of young people with hearing impairment (140 individuals) aged 14 to 24 years who were held on their data base at 9th March 2006. The level of hearing loss and age of students are not represented except that 57 young people are still at school (14 to 18 years).



Destinations:

- Apprenticeship with or without employment (3)
- Employment training to NVQ level 2 (9)
- Employment training not to level 2 (12)
- Higher Education and University (8)
- Workbased Learning (2)
- Further Education College (25)
- New Deal (3)
- Still at School (57)
- Teenage Parent (2)
- Unemployed (5)

- Unknown or moved away (14)

The data shows that most young people moved from school into training or further education of some kind. Apprenticeships, Employment training, Workbased Learning and New Deal will all have some element of employment which may involve a job that provides for a learning placement or alternatively a college based training course that provides a practical work placement as part of the training.

7.3 Individuals working with deaf young people

A postal questionnaire was sent to the following professional groups: (Fig 4)

Professional Groups	No of questionnaires sent	No of questionnaires received
Specialist Advisory Teachers of the Deaf	10	6
Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCO)	35	9
Further and Higher Education Learning Support Managers	13	4
Connexions Inclusion Manager and LDD Personal Advisors	6	6
Educational Audiologist	1	1
Disability Employment Advisor	1	1
Social Workers for the Deaf (were also interviewed)	3	1
Total Returns	69	28

The response rate from professionals was 41%

The questionnaire asked questions relating to:

- Number and profile of young people that professionals have worked with in the 14-25 years age range (over the past two years)
- How accessible the support provision is
- How the support is provided
- In the opinion of professional respondents what are the particular successes they have achieved in their work
- What do professionals think are the barriers to young people achieving their potential
- How do they think these barriers can be overcome
- What groups do individual professionals network with (Appendix 2)

In addition to the questionnaire that was sent to professionals who work with deaf young people, several visits and interviews were made. The following were visited and interviewed:

- Social Workers for the Deaf
- Senior Specialist Advisory Teacher for the Deaf
- Individual Specialist Advisory Teacher for the Deaf
- Disability Employment Advisor
- Teacher responsible for specialist unit for the deaf (primary school)

- Connexions Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Team
- Learning Support Managers in FE College (x 2)

A meeting of the Transitional Years Working Group (TYWG) was observed as was two meetings of the Sensory Impairment Working Group for 16+ colleges.

This is a sub group of the TYWG working with all Cumbrian colleges also UCLAN, the Institute of the Arts, St Martins College, to consider accessibility of learning and assessment for people with a sensory impairment.

Results

The low number of young people with hearing loss in Cumbria was highlighted by respondents. For example, SENCOs recorded having worked with a total of 5 young people with severe or profound hearing loss in the 14-25 year age range over the last two years. Only one SENCO recorded more than 2 children in their school with profound or severe hearing loss in this age group. There were more recordings of young people with mild and moderate hearing loss. One Further Education college recorded 24 young people who attended their college over the past two years, 15 of these had mild or moderate hearing loss.

- a) Respondents indicated that the support provision they offered was generally easily accessible. This was because all agencies have clear protocols and systems for referral and also have established links with each other. This is particularly true of audiology, specialist advisory teachers of the deaf, SENCO and Connexions. As a young person moves on to college and employment then there begins to be less reliance on agency referral and more likelihood of the young person making a personal enquiry.
- b) Connexions and schools still have an important role in highlighting the learning support available at FE and HE. Four respondents (4 out of 25) said that access to their services was difficult. The reasons given for this include; constraints of time (Specialist Teachers of the Deaf), lack of specialist skills and resources (Connexions), students being unwilling to ask for specialist support (FE/HE) and the stigma attached to referrals the social worker who may be seen as “an interfering busybody” (Social Work Team).
- c) The agencies involved in supporting deaf young people are a mix of specialist and generic services. The specialist advisory teachers for the deaf (ToD) work hard to provide a wide range of support. They are a source of expertise for SENCO and Connexions who have a more generic role supporting other students. ToD are able to offer support to young people throughout their full-time education but are little used by FE or HE colleges. This may be due to FE and HE not knowing this service is available or because when a student is over 18 then the service has to be paid for by the college. The main focus of support given by respondents was related to technical support for aiding hearing and communication, advice and information to colleagues and students, support for learning in the classroom. Only a small number of respondents mentioned moral or emotional support and confidence building as part of their remit.

d) Respondents recorded a wide range of successes and achievements:

Specialist Teacher of Deaf	SENCO	Connexions	Social Work Team	HE/FE	Disability Employment Advisor
Confident young person; "happy in their own skin"; come to terms with hearing impairment	Successful inclusion in normal school curriculum	Young person moving on from school successfully to other provision/work	Confidence building and accepting their deafness as a disability not a barrier	Many go on to higher level courses	Placing people into work through schemes mentioned
Achieve academically; Go on to university; Leave with the same qualifications as hearing counterparts	Promoting and achieving high level of independence	2 clients moved on to college with college being informed of support need		Students achieve qualifications	
Became football referee	Studying for degree	Client continued education out of county		Avoiding isolation for individual students	
Appointed Head Boy in Secondary School	Providing a course school does not normally offer	Feeling confident in their abilities about themselves		Ensuring support available immediately	
Accessed computers and cameras through DCCAP	Working with Connexions to help student move on to next stage	Providing a structure for planning ahead		Helping student to be aware of deafness and helping with coping strategies	
Student made links with CDA	Increase confidence and maturity	Developing good relationships			
Increase awareness of need to sign					
Help reduce isolation					

e) Respondents felt that the factors that contributed to students' success were complex and varied. Factors included:

- Having high expectations of students and taking a positive approach to their development
- Specialist professional expertise and experience
- An inclusive culture
- Understanding of the hidden curriculum as well as the academic curriculum
- Knowing what support is available and making use of it
- Providing specialist support adapted to the needs of individual students – person centred approaches
- Accessing and using appropriate specialist equipment
- Building good relationships with students based on being a listening ear and trust
- Getting to know and work with families
- Linking and networking with other agencies and sharing relevant information
- Providing deaf awareness training for teachers and other students
- Time and resources to work one to one with students to provide good learning support in the classroom
- A sensitive approachable and deaf aware staff
- Links with colleges and good preparation for moving to a college environment

- Lesson plans and notes provided by tutors
- Students' drive, personality and motivation

f) Respondents listed the following barriers or difficulties that may prevent young people from achieving their full potential:

Barriers to students' achievement
Lack of employer awareness
Lack of resources to provide quality training and support
Competition from overseas labour coming into the UK
Dealing with academic language
Prejudiced attitudes of other students and staff and public
Low expectation of some staff in schools
Lack of post 16 provision
Lack of awareness of services for Hearing Impairment (HI)
Lack of sign support in mainstream provision
Lack of experience/awareness of working with HI in mainstream provision
Lack of positive deaf 'role models'
Social isolation of deaf young person due to rurality and communication.
Lack of opportunity for deaf young people to meet together
Lack of experience of 'the real world of work'
Lack of motivation of student, unwillingness to accept support
Parental influence/home situation
Needing further qualification, poor levels of literacy
Poor initial assessment of support needs
Low self esteem
Technology problems with aids
Other learning difficulties
Late diagnosis

"Most deaf children are labelled as having learning difficulties. Deafness does not create learning difficulties, it is the methods used in education that create the difficulties." (Professional respondent)

g) The following list highlights respondents' views of help and support that might overcome the barriers:

7.3 The views and experiences of deaf young people

Finding out the experiences of deaf young people was a central aim of the study. There are few studies that describe experiences from a deaf young person's perspective. (Access All Areas, 2001) The main aim of this qualitative study was to try to understand the world view of the young people themselves and to focus on the meanings they give to the things that happen to them (A. Bowling, 1997).

A major challenge to listening to the views and experiences of deaf young people was trying to recruit a sufficient number over a suitable age range. This was made particularly difficult because contact had to be made through a third party (usually a professional working with young people) as the personal details of young people are kept confidential.

A leaflet and letter was designed to explain the research and invite young people to get involved. As an encouragement for young people to take part a £5 gift voucher was offered for each response. Two or three letters were enclosed with each of the questionnaires sent out to the professionals and in addition a letter was sent to young people whose details were held on the CDA database. At interviews and meetings professionals were asked to pass on letters, emphasising the importance of capturing the views and experiences of young people.

Of the 190 leaflets and letters given out the study received 19 replies. This difficulty in recruitment is not unique to this study. The study into the Achievement of Deaf Pupils in Scotland has found it difficult to collect qualitative data for their study due to problems with recruiting and setting up interviews with deaf young people (Marion Grimes 2006)

Although the numbers of respondents were small there was a good balance of male and female and ages ranged from 12 years to 46 years. All those interviewed had a severe or profound hearing loss. Most of the respondents attended mainstream schools with four attending specialist schools for the deaf (all requiring to board away from home).

Adequate resources for provision of support for HI
More time for one to one if necessary
Improve number and range of deaf role models
Use of total communication strategies in schools
Encouragement by schools and families to use aids and technology support
Youth worker or equivalent to build links for BSL users
More 'out of school' support from voluntary agencies
Regular annual awareness training for students and staff
Sign Language and lip reading training for mainstream staff, families and friends
Change of attitude from a negative perception of what HI can achieve to a positive perception of what HI can achieve
Closer co-operative working and continuity of support from school to employment
More parental support
Good initial assessment of need

Below is a profile of respondents:

Respondent Code	Male /Female	Age	Status	Education	Interview type
R1	Male	46	Unemployed	Mainstream school	One to one
R2	Female	29	Unemployed	Mainstream school	One to one
R3	Female	21	Employed	Mainstream school	One to one
R4	Male	12	Student	Mainstream school	One to one
R5	Male	16	Student	Mainstream school	One to one
R6	Female	16	Student	Mainstream school	Email
R7	Female	24	Employed	Mainstream school	One to one
R8	Female	21	Employed	Mainstream school	One to one
R9	Male	21	Employed	School for Deaf	One to one
R10	Female	34	Parent at home	School for the Deaf	One to one/email
R11	Female	26	Employed	School for the Deaf	Email
R12	Male	24	Student (Uni)	Mainstream school	Email
R13	Male	21	Student (Uni)	Mainstream school	Email
R14	Female	21	Student (FE)	School for Deaf	One to one
R15	Female	17	Student (FE)	Mainstream school	One to one
R16	Female	12	Student	Mainstream school	One to one
R17	Male	14	Student	Mainstream school	One to one
R18	Male	12	Student	Mainstream school	One to one
R19	Male	20	Student (HE)	Mainstream school	One to one

The respondents were given a choice of taking part in a one to one interview, keeping a journal, conducting an email correspondence with the researcher or taking part in a focus group. No-one chose to keep a journal and there were insufficient numbers in any particular part of Cumbria to hold focus groups.

However a small number of respondents did use email to enter into correspondence and this proved to be an effective way of communicating. Email has an informal approach which allows individuals to begin to develop a relationship. It is relatively fast and responsive thereby allowing a conversation to take place over time and enabling issues to be clarified over several emails. Writing an email, like writing a letter or a diary has a reflective quality and can be amended by the writer at any stage.

This means that the writer has ultimate control over the information given. Email was also useful for long distances. For example two of the respondents lived a considerable distance from Cumbria having gone to school in the county but now at college elsewhere.

Interviews generally took place in the respondent's home (three took place at college) and took about an hour to complete.

The questions that were asked in the one to one interviews and by email were framed in such a way as to encourage open discussion. This allowed the interviews and email conversations to move forward as part of a dynamic process giving the participants time and space to talk about issues and viewpoints that may have been difficult to express in the form of a questionnaire. The questions were grouped around the following areas:

- General questions about the respondent; age, gender, school attended, a description of their hearing loss
- School experiences; what did they remember about school, what did they enjoy doing at school, how they got on with teachers and other students
- Support at school, what sort of support they received, how their deafness effected school life, what they found difficult about school, what would have helped
- Outside school activities
- Leaving school (if relevant), what plans and ambitions they might have, what kind of advice and information they were given, what happened to help with plans - how did this feel, what they would like to have happened.

Themes arising from the interviews and email 'conversations'.

The following themes have arisen from the interviews/emails with young people:

Hearing Loss

Most respondents were informed about the type of hearing loss they had. Each particular hearing loss was unique and a significant number (9) of respondents talked about their parents having to argue with health services that there was a hearing problem. There was a strong sense that the 'story' of diagnosis had been told often within families and a number of respondents stated how difficult the early years had been for their parents.

"My mum said that everything that came about we had to fight for." (R7)

"Mum says I was laid on a beanbag - she clapped her hands and I didn't respond. She knew - the doctor took ages to agree to tests." (R3)

The majority of respondents mentioned their hearing aids as '*not bothering them*' (R4) and '*being part of me*' (R2) although three talked about having periods where they took them out or chose not to wear them. Two respondents had a cochlear implant (at 10 and 14 years) and both said it was very helpful to them. One respondent said it took a while to get used to and had made "*things very noisy*" (R14) the other said that "*it provided me with a quality of life that has far exceeded my, or my families, expectations and the best decision I ever made*". (R12)

School Experience

All the respondents talked about primary school as a good experience. Two individuals attended a primary school with a unit for deaf pupils. "*It was really good and I had lots of support*" (R9). The transition from primary to secondary school seems to have been a difficult time for a number of the respondents. Several said that it took them at least one year to settle in and several others said that they had a pretty difficult time throughout their secondary school.

Respondents used the terms 'lonely', 'depressed', 'frustrated', 'absolutely hate', 'isolated', 'annoyed', to describe how they felt at secondary school. The reasons for this were linked to:

- a) the attitude and behaviour of subject teachers
- b) keeping up with school work
- c) other students.

Teachers often did not understand the particular difficulties that the respondent had with communication in the classroom:

“I was the only deaf person....the layout of the classroom was difficult. When I went to secondary school it wasn't what I thought it would be – I was very confused” (R7)

“At secondary school it was the attitude of teachers-I couldn't believe it. At a Year 9 parents evening I was with my mum and sat right in front of the teacher – she said “can you hear me xxxxxx”. It made me feel really small” ((R3)

One respondent described his specialist teacher of the deaf arranging a deaf awareness session for teachers in the school, especially to explain how his new radio-aid worked in the classroom. Only one teacher attended the session which meant that the respondent at 12 years old had to go to each teacher and explain how the aid worked himself. He described this as very difficult to do. (R4)

Two respondents talked about low expectation from their teachers who told them that subjects weren't suitable for them because they were deaf. (R1 and R2)

Keeping up with school work presented a real source of anxiety for respondents who worried about what they were missing and found the task of looking, lip reading and listening very carefully extremely tiring.

“Learning was very hard work.....I would get very tired trying to concentrate and watching all the time to lip read” (R10)

“I do have problems at school due to this (deafness) as I find it very hard to communicate especially if the class is noisy.I like ICT, Art and Business Studies as I can keep up with the teachers. Sometimes in Science but in Maths and English it's difficult as half the class don't pay attention so I just give up trying to listen. It makes me very tired having to listen with a very noisy background” (R6)

“I was often very, very tired when I got home – I had to have a higher concentration level than other children (didn't realise it then – only what other deaf person has said now)” (R2)

Some respondents talked about the behaviour of their peers at school as being bullying and intimidating. This was particularly true of older respondents. Younger respondents who found themselves on the receiving end of bullying or name calling said that teachers were very quick to deal with it. However it is still something that deaf young people have to develop strategies to deal with:

“I had few friends and was pretty miserable. I hit rock bottom the final day of the first year when a boy wrote something about me and read it out to the class. I had to take that away for the whole of the summer” (R7)

“I was sat at the front of the class which gave the others a chance to pick on me. I would get kicked or poked in the back with comments like; ‘are you switched on yet?’ I felt like the classroom idiot. It still makes me feel frustrated thinking about it – it has had an impact on my life” (R1)

“I'm not afraid of bullies anymore - so I don't suffer from them. Nobody teases me – just a couple of times but I don't really mind. If it happens then the best thing to do is just ignore

them – at the end of the year I'll walk out with GCSE's and show them what I can do. Some kids get at me because I have to have learning support.” (R5)

A number of respondents had very good experiences at secondary school. Those who attended specialist schools for the deaf talked about feeling home sick when sent away to school, but also added that they had no trouble developing friendships as they were all in the same situation.

One student spoke about the excellent preparation involved in moving from her primary school to secondary school and how the SENCO, teacher of the deaf and year head worked together to make the move as smooth as possible. (R16) Other students talked about the smallness of their secondary school making it an approachable, friendly place to be. All the respondents really valued the specialist support they received at secondary school from the SENCO and specialist teachers of the deaf as well as the technical aids and support available to them. It was noticeable talking to respondents across the age range that support services had developed over time and that present services seem well co-ordinated and helpful.

“I benefited from invaluable support from the teacher of the deaf and also from subject teachers who, if they were not fully understanding of my hearing problem, were aware of me on a personal level. I did however attend an open day at the Mary Hare school for the deaf, but it was of little surprise that I rejected this move in order to stay in the environment that I was familiar with.” (R12)

Moving On

Moving on from school into further education or training seems to have been a mixed experience for those that are old enough to have experienced it. The support an individual receives and how prepared they are seem to be important factors in whether the experience is a positive or negative one. A couple of respondents felt unwilling to move out into a world that made them feel vulnerable. One said he was going to stay in the sixth form of the school he attended because “*college was useless*” (R5) and the other was at FE college and was “*not going to leave I shall just do another course*”.

A number of respondents commented on the shock or sense of vulnerability they felt about leaving school.

“Started going downhill – once I got my ‘A’ levels all support and advice stopped. I was left out in the open and didn't know what to do. All through school Connexions had contacted me – it was like a sharp cut off – and I wasn't prepared for this. Should be gradual, not just kick you out the door you're in the world now” (R19)

“I felt very depressed when I was 16. I told my dad that I wouldn't get anywhere, I would never get a car or a girlfriend or a job” College was a bad time.....I left school and came into the hearing world – didn't have a lot of confidence. When I went to college on my own I felt scared to speak out - people thought I was thick – not that just didn't have any confidence”. (R9)

The individuals who described this feeling are all young adults who have actually made tremendous achievements but still feel that they “*haven't got an ounce of self confidence. One side says go, the other side say no you're useless*” (R3)

Colleges seem to offer a good range of support services for young people but there is a responsibility on the individual to make sure they are making the most of what is available. This is a natural part of maturing and taking control over one's life. This again can be a difficult transition to get used to after having people provide support for you – having to deal with employing note takers or interpreters. Explaining to tutors what your particular needs are can appear daunting or just a task too far when trying to cope with the whole college experience.

"I got an apprenticeship to do precision engineering at the local college. I suffered from discrimination – all through school I had been treated the same as everyone else – at college they treated me as if I knew nothing. They kept me away from practical activities and just gave me books. The older male teachers didn't know how to behave towards me and treated me like an idiot. No-one at the college supported me or offered support. I left after two weeks" (R19)

Many students had a really good experience of college and enjoyed the independence, but nearly all mentioned the transition period as being difficult.

The world of work

A small number of respondents have experience of working and again this is mixed. Respondents found that there were difficulties with communication in some instances, and individual work colleagues make a big difference to the working environment. Many people had no experience of working with a deaf person and in some cases respondents were discriminated against. One respondent took two different companies to tribunal for discrimination:

"I've had rotten experiences of work because of discrimination. One application stated that telephone work was unsuitable for a deaf person – I thought it was a joke! The DEA said I should do something about it, so I took a prosecution out against the company. What really surprises me is that it never went to court – they agreed to settle out of court. The second time I was actually working in the office when I was phoned by someone in a different office and told my colleague couldn't work with me because my deafness was an issue and I had to leave. I was crying as I left the building – it was so underhand – I can't remember the journey home I was so hurt and angry" (R2)

Another respondent had a different experience of employment:

"I got offered an apprenticeship as an electrician. The director of the company interviewed me himself and rang my mum and told her I had the job. It gave me a chance to prove myself. There were a lot of people there I had to prove myself to – they had never been with deaf people before so had to learn. My workmates helped a lot. If it hadn't been for them I wouldn't have been an electrician." (R9)

Other respondents have taken some time to find work:

"It took me a year to find work, the JobCentre at Kendal helped me" (R10)

"I went to about 10 different interviews and didn't get a job – I felt useless" (R19)

Another aspect that made work difficult was the negative attitude towards deafness and the lack of awareness of individuals:

"I had to wait 3 months for Occupational Health to say I could start the job – it was my first job and I had to wait 3 months for adaptation. It all started so negatively, they questioned my ability to cope.....all these things are frustrating because I will have to re-educate people each time." (R7)

“Communication was very difficult as work was very busy and I had to keep up with everything – a few people understood about me being deaf, but most people didn’t” There was one woman who was horrible to me and picked on me all the time. She blamed me if things went wrong but it was her fault. When she left things didn’t go wrong” (R10)

Communication

A fundamental issue for deaf young people is communication. Only one of the respondents used sign language as their main language at home. This is because they are married to a deaf person. A minority could actually sign at all. Several respondents voiced an interest in and desire to learn sign language. However they found it difficult to access classes, especially those still at school. Here is a comment from a 16 year old about sign language:

“I would like to learn sign language because it is a fantastic skill to have. Not only deaf people benefit from it but when people get older and turn deaf after years of good hearing ...it would be hard to communicate if they haven’t mastered the basics of sign language or lip reading.”

Another respondent talked about sign language being a more ‘relaxing’ way of communicating:

“I learnt to sign when I was 16. I found it one of the most relaxing courses of all time and I wish I had done it earlier. There needs to be more recognition for the language” (R7)

In any discussion with respondents this was a common theme, that signing would be a useful way of communicating especially if others could learn it too; *“ I wish I could have used sign language it would have been much easier to communicate” (R10)*

“It was hard to pick up as an adult – I regret not having learnt as a child. I struggled through university, it wasn’t an easy ride ‘cos my English was not good and sign language was hard” (R8)

Some of the respondents spent time at college with other deaf people. They found it hard to feel part of a deaf community because they were unable to communicate effectively.

“There was a division at college on people’s view of hearing impairment and profoundly deaf. I felt discriminated against this end. Need to treat everyone equally – I was not made to feel welcome at deaf clubs at first. I kept going though – kept pushing myself” (R3)

The advancement of technological hearing aids has also helped young people, although a significant number mentioned the additional burden of needing to ensure teachers remembered to make use of radio aids. If technology didn’t work an additional problem was created. One respondent said that her school didn’t get any technological help till it was time to do GCSE’s (R3). Young people do not know what is available to them and are reliant on the advice and help of their teachers.

“If I didn’t hear anything I would get it repeated back one to one. The SENCO helped, If I missed anything she would read it back to me. I didn’t understand what I didn’t know” (R5)

Respondents commented on the difficulties the learning environment created for communication. As previously noted the noise level in the classroom can be a problem, as can teachers moving around the classroom and group work. Sitting at the front of the class can be helpful but has its disadvantages:

“In lectures I try to sit at the front which means I miss out on the chat beforehand – sometimes I feel despair/feel very depressed but I don’t really have any idea exactly how much I am missing” (R13)

“When a lot of people are around I feel lost and vulnerable. That’s when I become aware of how deaf I am – because I can’t understand. I feel like I am sat in a bubble” (R1)

The sense of vulnerability at not knowing what is happening around can only be imagined by a hearing person. It reinforces a sense of isolation and exclusion that may begin to explain the

Achievements

What is evident is that all the respondents are a source of inspiration in their determination to achieve their plans and ambitions. There were many achievements to be proud of – from managing away from home at college or university, including travelling across the country for the first time alone by rail (a massive achievement for the individual at the time), to dancing at international salsa dance conventions. Below is a list of some of the achievements that were mentioned in the interviews:

Member of drama group – a main character in school production
Grade 8 Flautist
Referee to level 5 (been told could go on to Premiership football level)
Studying for MA in English
Show Jumper (plans to be first deaf person to jump at international competition)
Staff Nurse
Trainee Science Teacher
Salsa dancer
Cambridge undergraduate (in rowing team)
Mother of two children

Many of the young adults interviewed would be excellent role models for younger individuals. They have experienced challenging and difficult situations themselves that still bring about periods of loneliness and frustration. However they also display abilities and strength of character that would be positive examples for others.

8. Discussion and Recommendations

8.1 Building partnerships:

The professional respondents gave a clear description of the barriers that deaf young people face in education, training and employment. They listed a range of potential barriers to achievement that are reflected in national studies relating to attainment and social and mental wellbeing.

Professionals working in Cumbria understand the need to provide a well coordinated approach to supporting individuals and their views on how to overcome barriers to achievement illustrate the importance of partnership working and adequate resources. The findings indicate that good practice is taking place in schools and colleges but are not necessarily documented or used as learning tools for others working in the field.

Agencies and organisations working with deaf young people are generally well thought of by young people and their families. The skills and expertise of individuals is highly valued.

The findings seem to indicate that professionals work effectively with individual young people and there is a continuity of support from primary to secondary education. The transition to college or training and employment is less well established but the processes are now in place through Connexions and FE and HE college additional support departments. The findings indicate that whilst professional teams meet together to discuss practice and strategies for working, there is rarely an opportunity for inter-agency exchange and reflection – a chance to learn from each other.

Cumbria has made a commitment to develop active partnerships that cover every aspect of a child's development and well being as part of the national strategic policy of 'Every Child Matters'. This offers professionals working with deaf young people an opportunity to work together in a more reflective and strategic way. The Transitional Years Working Group and its subgroup (Sensory Impairment Working Group 16+) have taken the opportunity to meet together to exchange knowledge information and skills that can begin to make positive changes.

Recommendation for Action:

A 'compact of joint working' would acknowledge and formalise the exchange of good practice, knowledge and skills highlighted in the research responses contained in the report. This group would be an appropriate platform for planning and developing a coordinated programme of additional peer education and mentoring support that would complement the provision already in place for deaf young people (see below).

8.2 Attainment and achievement:

International and national studies indicate that deaf students are achieving below their hearing counterparts. At present the statistical picture for deaf students is far from complete and more work is needed.

The valuable work being undertaken by the ADPS project in Scotland will be slow to emerge because of lack of funding, and in England and Wales there is no national database of deaf young people from which to build. It is a pity that in an educational environment where the measurement

of student and school improvement is increasingly dependent on banks of data there is little specialist work undertaken.

Cumbria County Council's Education Department, however, were very helpful in supplying information which has allowed a small degree of analysis to take place for the research, and this is a starting point. Although the information supplied can be clouded by the additional special needs of some young people, the specialist expertise available within schools and the county's specialist advisory service can compensate and help clarify the picture. This needs co-ordination however.

The collation of data alone will not raise the attainment and achievement of deaf young people in mainstream schools it may only reinforce what is already known – that well supported and keenly motivated young people will overcome the barriers, fulfil their potential and achieve success, where as those who are not will not. What is really needed is the sharing of expertise between primary and advisory specialists, SENCO and mainstream subject specialists in secondary schools, Connexions PAs, the voluntary sector, social services and so on, in order to discover how deaf young people learn effectively.

There are two important for the next step forward.

- The first is the management of learning for individual students. This involves considering the communication strategies that deaf young people use and the circumstances in mainstream classrooms that will help or hinder this.
- The second is using the voices and experience of deaf young people to learn how to improve things.

Recommendation for action:

Cumbria County Council and Connexions could work together to provide an annual report of deaf students' achievement and destination upon leaving school or college/training. This information would then be used to help inform members of the joint working partnership (8.1). Even though population numbers are relatively small this information, over a longer period and in conjunction with other monitoring and evaluation processes, could enable the development of a strategic approach to support services.

8.3 Experiences of Deaf Young People:

Most of the deaf young people interviewed for the report attended mainstream schools. This reflects the general practice of promoting inclusion of children into mainstream education. Deaf people are a hidden minority and there is a view that young people can successfully manage their deafness within the 'hearing world'. The testimonies contained within this report clearly illustrate the challenge of managing and the impact it can have on confidence, self esteem and mental wellbeing.

There are also testimonies of deaf young people missing from the report. There is no information about the experiences of young people with additional special needs (two individuals within the study had additional special needs) and there is a lack of information from young people attending out of county residential schools for the deaf (three respondents attended such schools). The needs of these groups of young people need to be further tracked and assessed.

Recommendation for Action:

An ongoing process of tracking the experiences of **all** deaf young people should be established in order to understand their needs and develop appropriate support provision for social and mental wellbeing. An innovative and inclusive approach could be to establish a young persons council that would provide representation of young people's voices in decision making and where young people themselves could be trained in monitoring and evaluation methods to help track the experiences of others. This will have the added value of keeping young people involved and build a body of expertise that contributes to the self esteem and confidence of individuals.

8.4 Deaf young people who took part in the research generally spoke highly of their experiences in mainstream primary schools. Many of them found the transition from primary school to secondary school difficult. This is a potentially traumatic experience for any child but deaf young people said that they were often confused or lost and talked about spending long periods of their first year of secondary school feeling lonely and depressed. For some young people this clouded their whole experience of secondary school.

The assumption is with transition that one is moving on to something. It is often forgotten that something is lost too. For deaf young people the additional requirements of good communication and understanding of their particular needs takes a long time to establish. Losing the strong support mechanisms that are well established in their primary schools and having to start again in a new and different environment is especially challenging.

There are schools that show sensitivity to their needs and spend time helping to ease the transition from primary to secondary school, in these circumstances young people found the experience less difficult. However the example of class teachers who did not attend special INSET (in-service training) sessions arranged to help raise awareness of the particular needs of their deaf student, left the student having to take responsibility for their own support needs.

Recommendations for Action:

Many schools have mentoring or buddy schemes to support Year 7 students to settle into secondary school. Schemes could be helped to support deaf students by providing additional deaf awareness training for prospective buddies/mentors and peers within the schools. Schools that provide preparation and learning support for new students could pass on their expertise to other schools through the SENCO network. Secondary teachers need to be encouraged to attend INSET on Deaf Awareness and the particular needs of their deaf students.

8.5 Total Communication:

"I learnt sign language when I was 16. It was one of the most relaxing courses of all time and I wish that I had done it earlier. There needs to be more recognition for the language" (R7)

Many of the young people who took part in the research regretted their lack of British Sign Language (BSL) skills. Hearing parents of deaf children often do not appreciate the value of teaching the whole family to sign. As a professional respondents stated in their response:

"Isolation at home is absolutely detrimental to the child. To go home and be unable to communicate with your family – the mind cannot comprehend how this must feel."

Respondents readily acknowledged the benefits of hearing aids and cochlear implants but mentioned a number of reasons why it would be helpful to learn BSL. These included:

- Oral/aural communication is very tiring to use all the time – particularly when learning new things. BSL is far less tiring to use.
- When meeting other deaf people who use BSL it helps to feel part of a community and shared culture
- When things go wrong with technology individuals can feel powerless and lose their means of effective communication
- Aural/oral communication has limitations in large groups or noisy environments

All family and friends should be encouraged to learn to sign as soon as possible after diagnosis has been made. Signing should be visible in schools and students and teachers encouraged to learn how to sign.

Recommendation for Action:

Strategies and approaches need to be considered that will encourage families of deaf children to learn BSL (Inclusive Cumbria 2003). An opportunity to meet with other families and children who use BSL may help to highlight the benefits of learning the language. A leaflet using some of the testimonies of those young people who took part in the study may help highlight the reasons for learning to sign. Schools could be encouraged to offer BSL sessions for anyone to learn as part of citizenship. The design and implementation of a BSL GCSE is not beyond the realms of possibility!

8.6 Building positive attitudes and aspirations:

The majority of people who responded in the research felt that providing positive deaf role models would be beneficial to young people. A significant majority of the young people interviewed did not know any deaf adults and very few deaf young people. They felt that they were the only ones facing the challenges of managing their hearing loss in a mainstream school. Young people's experiences in education and some work situations were characterised by periods of loneliness and loss of confidence due to their deafness.

A study mentioned in Powers research (Powers 2002) found two factors that were significantly linked to achievement; (a) 'adaptation to deafness' which involved a positive attitude towards the deaf community and an acceptance of the deaf child and (b) 'press for achievement' which involved high educational and occupational expectations.

The fact that their peers and teachers lack awareness of how hearing loss can impact on an individual reinforced the sense of loneliness for young people. Additionally some respondents mentioned that they felt some people had low expectations of their abilities which in turn made them feel unsure about the future.

The two case studies of mentoring gave an insight into the value of positive role models. An independent older person that can spend time with a young person to share experiences, to support talent and individuals' aspirations has been shown to aid self esteem and confidence. The right mentor would be some-one who is themselves deaf or has direct experience of deafness, with

positive attitudes to deafness. The mentoring relationship should be purposeful and channelled toward the needs and aspirations of the deaf young person.

Recommendation for Action:

A mentor scheme should be established that provides positive deaf role models for young people. The scheme would take a person-centred approach to the individual needs of young people but would also organise group activities that give young people a chance to meet together and share common experiences. Recruits for the mentoring scheme could come from deaf young adults who could additionally benefit by developing skills and even qualifications in mentoring.

8.7 Challenging Isolation:

The size and geography of Cumbria make it a difficult county in which to create networks and build communication between people. Also the low incidence of deafness in the authority, combined with the scattered nature of community means that deaf young people are more isolated than might be expected in other parts of the country.

Similarly schools will build their expertise when required; that is when a deaf student moves through their system. The expertise and experience gained then may remain under used for significant period of time and pockets of excellence such as the hearing impaired facility at Bransty school are themselves isolated and distant from the county as a whole.

A result of this isolation is that a specialist service of teachers for the deaf has developed, making links and building a detailed knowledge of individuals. In many cases strong relationships form between these teachers and their deaf students, helping to reduce their isolation. The Peer Education and Befriending project based in Glasgow found that by providing shared social activities for young people in an urban area it was fulfilling a need for those young people to meet, pool experience and form friendships. In rural Cumbria this exchange would prove more problematic but would be worth working towards for the benefit of isolated individuals.

Recommendation for Action:

An inter-schools conference on the impact and implications of deafness that could be planned and organised with young people would create a platform for exchange of knowledge and experience. It would raise the profile of deaf awareness in Cumbria and could be the launch for other initiatives such as a mentoring scheme.

8.8 Preparation for Employment:

The experiences of deaf young people in employment have only been touched on in the report. The respondents who talked about their experiences of work gave a picture of lack of awareness of deafness on the part of employers and colleagues. In some cases this led to discrimination and bullying, in others to communication problems and isolation within the work place. An outcome for young people stated in 'Every Child Matters' is economic wellbeing. One of the aims of schools, colleges and the Connexions service is to support young people into the world of work and it is important to check what is happening to individuals as they move into employment.

Recommendation for Action:

It would be useful to build on the information collected in the report and further track the experiences of young people as they move into employment. A programme of deaf awareness for local employers could be established with the support of Connexions and Access to Work service.

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Appendix 1

Description of Support Provision for Deaf Young People

Organisation: Specialist Teaching Service (Deaf and Hearing Impaired):

Part of Cumbria County Council Education Service and an integral part of the Access and Inclusion Department. This is a department made up of County Psychological, Educational Welfare, Special Educational Needs, EBD and Specialist Teaching Services.

Aims and Purpose: The Department states that its purpose is to:

“work in partnership with Cumbrian schools, families and other agencies to enhance the personal, social and academic opportunities available to children and young people with special and/or additional needs.”
(Cumbria County Council January 2004)

Description of Service: Teachers of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired work with:

- All hearing aid users from diagnosis until they leave school. This service is free of charge up to the age of 18. Colleges of Further Education can also make use of the specialist teacher of the deaf services for a charge (although at present this is seldom made use of in Cumbria)
- Children with persistent moderate (average over 40dB) conductive losses whose behaviour or progress in school is causing concern
- Children with a hearing loss associated with a recognised syndrome, disability or learning difficulty
- Children with mild (average in better ear 30-40dB) sensori-neural or mixed losses
- Children with a unilateral loss where the loss averages over 50dB

(Cumbria County Council January 2004)

Definitions of deafness are complex and each individual's hearing loss will be different. Teachers of the Deaf take on an advisory and support role, working with families, schools, health professionals and other agencies that support a young person through their first eighteen years.

Teachers of the deaf work closely with the Audiology Service to ensure that optimum use is made of a deaf youngster's residual hearing. It is a job which requires a wide range of skills and knowledge including; assessment skills, understanding of a deaf child's emotional and social development, knowledge of the main communication approaches and their effects, how deaf pupils learn in the classroom, and the kind of technological support available and appropriate.

In Cumbria the policy on language development for the majority of deaf children is to take an aural approach:

“Most deaf pupils, through the optimum use of their hearing aids, are capable of acquiring language and speech in the normal way, deducing the rules of the language from their communication experiences in a similar way to that of hearing children, albeit at a slower pace.” (Cumbria Education Service July 2001)

In addition the **Educational Audiologist** is also part of the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service. The role of the audiologist is to provide audiological support to children with hearing impairment, through audiology clinics, specialist teachers, parents, professional and others.

Referral process: Referrals come through the health service (often as babies or toddlers) and can also be received from schools. There are standard referral procedures that include a medical diagnosis of hearing loss.

As a Teacher of the Deaf said: *“We are a well known service and largely (I think) well regarded. We have no waiting list. Referrals are a matter of writing a letter and filling in a form available in all schools.”*
(Questionnaire respondent)

Contact: Rose Foster, Senior Advisory Teacher, Deaf and Hearing Impaired. Specialist Advisory Teaching

Organisation: Cumbria Connexions was established in 2001 to provide support, advice and information to young people aged 13-19 or young people with learning difficulties/disabilities up to the age of 25. They work in partnership with a range of partners including schools and colleges, social services, health and housing, training providers, employment and benefits services, probation and local voluntary organisations. (Connexions Cumbria 2004)

Aims and Purpose: Connexions Key Principles are:

- Raising aspirations and setting high expectations of every individual
- Meeting individual need and overcoming barriers to learning
- Taking account of the views of young people individually and collectively
- Inclusion; keeping young people in mainstream education and training and preventing them from moving to the margins of their community
- Partnership collaborating with agencies to achieve more for young people, parents and communities than agencies working in isolation
- Community Involvement and neighbourhood renewal – through involvement of community mentors and through personal advisors brokering access to local welfare, health, arts, sports and guidance networks
- Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity by raising participation and achievement levels for all young people. Influencing the availability, suitability and quality of provision and raising awareness of opportunities
- Evidence based practice that ensures new interventions are based on rigorous research and evaluation into what works.

(Protocol; CDA, Connexions, Specialist Advisory Teaching Service March 2005)

Description: A Personal Advisor is allocated to each young person in Year 9 of their secondary education (age 14). The Personal Advisor ensures that each young person receives advice, information and support that will help them to make decisions about education, training or work opportunities.

They can work directly with the young person giving careers advice and guidance, supporting them to try different activities to broaden their experience and personal development. They can arrange interviews and visits, help with worries and concerns and help a young person understand things that they need to know about future life decisions. The Personal Advisors will also work with other agencies to encourage the development of resources and services that support the needs of young people.

A young person who has been receiving extra help at school and has a Statement of Special Educational Needs will have a **Transition Review**. This is a meeting between people who have an interest in an individual young person's future. This obviously involves the young person and also might include parents or carers, teachers, specialist teacher of the deaf, personal advisor and others who may be involved in supporting the young person. The aim of the Transition Review is to help the young person get the most benefit from their education and to help them plan for the future. A **Transition Plan** will note what was agreed at the Transition Review and this will be sent to all involved to ensure that plans are taken forward. Each year the personal advisor will check that the Transition Plan is being followed. Just before a young person leaves school the Personal Advisor will help them identify in more detail what they would like to do, where they might go next and what kind of additional support they might need. This is called a Section 140 assessment. There is a team of Personal Advisors working specifically with young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The ongoing contact between a Connexions Personal Advisor and the young person is vital in establishing a

trusting relationship and enabling the young person to develop and make plans for the future with confidence.

In addition to individual support through a personal advisor Connexions has a comprehensive website that covers all aspects of moving from school to independence. It can be found on www.connexionscumbria.co.uk

Referral Process: *“Personal Advisors work in schools and community settings. All young people are allocated a Personal Advisor and given information on how to access them. Pas are proactive in making contact. We also have local Connexions Centres.*

Contact: There are centres in Carlisle, Penrith, Whitehaven, Barrow, Maryport, Ulverston, Workington, Kendal and Millom. Freephone contact number: 0800 435709, or email :info@connexionscumbria.co.uk
Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Inclusion Co-ordinator: Hilary Cowley 01946 518864

Organisation: Jobcentre Plus is a business within the Department for Work and Pensions. In April 2002 Jobcentre Plus replaced the Employment Service and those parts of the Benefits Agency which provided services to people of working age through social security offices. Access to Work provides help for people with disabilities to tackle some of the practical obstacles that they may meet at work.

Aims and Purpose: To remove barriers to employment for disabled working age adults (18+) by providing practical support for those who have a job to start, are in work or are self employed. It works in a flexible way with employers and employees tailoring the support to the needs of the individual in a particular job.

Description: Access to Work is part of the government’s WorkPath scheme. It works with both employers and disabled employees by providing grants of up to 100% for a new employee and up to 80% for a person who is already employed.

A **Disability Employment Advisor (DEA)** and an **Access to Work Advisor** will meet with the employee and the employer and discuss the particular needs of the job and any support or adaptations to the work environment that are needed. For example they can help provide communicators/interpreters for people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, they can provide special equipment, make alterations to the work environment and provide a support worker if necessary to provide practical help. The Disability Employment Advisor (DEA) can also advise on:

- how to find the most suitable jobs and training
- The Job Introduction Scheme which offers a chance to try out a job for an introductory period
- Work Preparation, including job trials, with an employer
- Training to update and gain new skills and
- Work opportunities in WORKSTEP

(“Access to Work ; Information for disabled people” Jobcentre Plus Ref: DS4JCP Sept 2003)

Referral Process: Through Jobcentre Plus offices and Disability Employment Advisor. The DEA will liaise with Connexions who can provide support to young people with learning difficulties or disabilities up to the age of 25.

Contact: Jobcentre Plus offices are located in the larger Cumbrian Towns. Disability Employment Officer for Carlisle: Aidan Quigley Tel: 01228 605000 Fax:01228 605055 Minicom: 01228 605066 or check the website at: www.jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk

Organisation: AimHigher is a national project established in 2003 to continue through until 2008

Aims and Purpose:

- To help widen participation in UK higher education – particularly among students from non traditional backgrounds, minority groups and disabled people.
- To provide information about higher education institutions and courses
- To provide information about financial matters to students entering higher education, particularly information about financial support and advice(AimHigher website 2006)

Description: AimHigher has officers working in West Cumbria, Carlisle and Eden, South Lakes and Barrow. AimHigher focuses on providing experiences for young people that will help to raise their aspirations and encourage them to think about going on to college. The project has funding to use to promote these aims in a variety of ways. Some examples of activities that AimHigher in Cumbria has funded include:

- Education evenings for young people and their families to find out more about higher education.
- Student ambassadors; graduates that will meet one to one with young people to talk about their experiences of college or university (one graduate was funded for 60 hours to meet with young people in West Cumbria).
- Visits to universities for individuals or groups. This was a residential experience to see at first hand what a university is like.
- Artists in Residence and Drama workshops to consider the issues and barriers that might be preventing a young person going on to higher education.
- Graduate working in a West Cumbrian school to promote science studies.
- Supporting study skills activities to help a young person raise their attainment.

AimHigher normally funds groups but will consider individual applications especially if it is sponsored by an organisation or school. They are very happy to give presentations to schools and organisations involved in working with young people.

Referral Process: It is possible to contact the officers directly or go through school or college

Contact: AimHigher Leader for West Cumbria: Sue Donnelly Tel: 01946 839300

AimHigher website: www.aimhigher.ac.uk

Organisation: Colleges of Further Education (FE Colleges); Learning Support

Aims and Purpose: Each FE College publishes its own aims for learning support. However the overarching aim is to

- Ensure that there is equality of access for people to study at FE College
- Support a student to make the most of their learning experience at FE College
- Enable a student to effectively participate in all areas of college life

Description: Further Education Colleges provide additional learning support to students with hearing loss in a range of ways. The learning support manager/coordinator will make an assessment with a prospective student of their particular needs. This may be provision of interpreters or note takers, communication support workers and/or appropriate communications equipment and study aids. Learning support teams work hard to overcome the challenges of limited resources and complicated course time-tables and it is important for support to be negotiated before a student starts their course in order to give the team time to arrange appropriate provision.

Learning support managers from FE colleges in Cumbria attend a Sensory Impairment Working group for young people aged 16+ on a regular basis to promote a co-ordinated approach to supporting students with sensory impairment in Cumbria. The group are mapping what equipment is available county wide for communication support and a co-ordinated approach to assessment of student needs is under discussion.

Referral Process: Direct contact with FE Colleges

Contact: A list of college contact details is under Cumbria on the following website: www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo/felsth.html

Organisation: **Cumbria Secondary Schools; Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO)** are based in all Cumbrian Schools and are responsible for co-ordinating learning support provision for all students with special educational needs in school.

Aims and Purpose: *“The SENCO’s fundamental task is to support the headteacher in ensuring that all staff recognise the importance of planning their lessons in ways that will encourage the participation and learning of all pupils”* (National Standards for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, 1998)

Description: The SENCO works with headteacher, staff, parents and other agencies to co-ordinate the provision of special educational needs (SEN) support to pupils on a day to day basis. Their role is vital and complex within the school. They support staff in understanding the learning needs of pupils with (SEN) and co-ordinate the effective use of resources for pupils including one to one learning support. The SENCO has an important role in promoting a positive ethos within the school and contributing to maximising a young person’s achievement and independence. They will often be the central liaison for parents and other agencies that can support a young person. SENCO work with all areas of SEN including hearing impairment and will work with others who have expertise in particular fields such as the specialist teacher of the deaf or the learning difficulties and disabilities connexions advisor.

Referral Process: Pupils may have a statement of educational need from a previous school, parents request an assessment of their child’s educational need, a staff may refer a child to the SENCO.

Contact: Via individual schools or:

- If you live in **North Cumbria** ring
Kathy Linfoot-Smith - Senior Education Officer
Tel. Carlisle 01228 606840
- If you live in **South Cumbria** ring
Alan Holmes - Senior Education Officer
Tel. Barrow in Furness 01229 894400
- If you live in **West Cumbria** ring
David Henderson - Senior Education Officer
Tel. Whitehaven 01946 852700
- The **Parent Partnership Service**, can also give support and advice to you about your special educational needs - South Area (01229) 894439, West Area (01946) 852890, East Area (01228) 606832.

Organisation: *“Cumbria Deaf Association (CDA) is the local voluntary organisation providing services for people who are deaf in Cumbria. Its range of services reflect the complex nature of deafness, communication and the profound effect that deafness has on the individual”.* (Cumbria Deaf Association Leaflet)

Aims and Purpose: CDA works to support all those who are deaf to achieve their full potential in education, employment and leisure.

Description: CDA works across Cumbria and provides a wide range of services that support deaf people and the parents of deaf children. They provide the following services:

- British Sign Language (BSL) courses across Cumbria. The courses are open to all and are led by a tutor who is profoundly deaf
- The Care Package Service is a domiciliary service that helps people to be independent in the community. It can provide a care service from a few hours per week to intensive support.
- The Children’s Project works in partnership with Eden and Carlisle Deaf children’s Society to provide networking opportunities for deaf children and their parents.
- The Communication Service provides BSL interpreters, lip speakers and note takers to support communication between deaf and hearing people.
- Deaf Awareness helps promote an understanding of deafness and the service offers training and practical guidance to organisations that work with deaf people, as well as employers, family and friends.

- CDA have four learning centres across Cumbria that provides deaf people with online training facilities. There is specialist software and trained staff available.
- Technical Equipment Service aims to promote independent living at home by providing advice on suitable equipment. There is also a loan service available.

In addition to the above services CDA provides the **Social Work Service for Deaf and deafened Children and Adults** on behalf of Cumbria County Council.

“The social work team carry out needs assessment and care management for an individual and/or carer and agree a care plan with the service user “ (Protocol CDA with Connexions, 2005)

The service works with all ages from new born or newly diagnosed through to elderly people. Their aim is to enable people to remain living in their own homes and communities as long as they are able to do so. Social workers play a vital role in providing information and support with communication so that individuals can make informed choices about services they receive. They make assessments of a deaf person’s needs that can lead to support services and they also support carers.

Referral Process: Any one can make contact with CDA directly. Referrals are also made through other agencies and specialist services. CDA has developed a referral and collaborative working protocol with Connexions and the Specialist Advisory Teaching Service.

Referrals are made to the social work service through CDA and other health and social care agencies.

Contact: CDA Registered Office: 3 Compton Street, Carlisle CA1 1HT. Tel: 01228 606434

Email: office@cumbriadeaf.co.uk