

22 March 2021

Our Ref: RFI 36977

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Information in relation to Support provided to Deaf Children and Young People in Care

I am writing to confirm that the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) has now completed its search for information relating to above which you requested on 14 December 2020. Please accept our sincere apologies for the delay in responding to you. Thank you for your patience.

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Children's Services & Social Work Directorate and is attached in Appendix A.

If you are unhappy as to how this request has been handled, you have the right to seek a review within the Trust in the first instance. You should write to the Information Governance Department, Lough House, Ards Community Hospital (informationgovernance@setrust.hscni.net) within two months of the date of this response and your complaint will be considered and a response provided, within 20 working days of receipt.

If, after receiving a response, you remain unhappy, you can refer your complaint to the Information Commissioner at The Information Commissioner's Office –Northern Ireland, 3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place, Belfast, BT7 2JB. It is important to note that if you refer any matter to the Information Commissioner, you will need to show evidence of having gone through the Trust's internal review procedure to try to resolve the matter with the Trust in the first instance.

If you have any queries about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Manning
Information Governance Assistant

Section A: Looked After deaf children and young people

Q1. How many looked after children and young people during the year were recorded as having a disability of deafness/hearing impairment in each of the last three years?

A1. Please see Table 1.

Table 1

Dates	Number of deaf children and young people
01 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 (year 1)	<5
01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 (year 2)	<5
01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (year 3)	Over 18+ no longer a Looked After Child.

Q2. Of the numbers shown in the table above, how many children and young people were known to communicate through British Sign Language (BSL) or Irish Sign Language (ISL)?

A2. Please see Table 2.

Table 2

Dates	Number of deaf children and young people
01 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 (year 1)	<5
01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 (year 2)	<5
01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (year 3)	Over 18+ no longer a Looked After Child.

Q3. What were the main types of placement for looked after deaf children? Children may be recorded more than once if they had multiple placements over the year.

A3. Please see Table 3.

Relevant Year period	Numbers of deaf children and young people by placement type					
	Any type of 'respite' short break placement *	Foster placement to Adopt	Foster placement long term	Foster with a relative or friend	Children's home	Residential school or college
01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (year 3)	NONE as was removed from LAC: over 18+					

*respite short breaks subject under Children Northern Ireland Order 1995 or Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978

Q4. Are looked after deaf children and young people offered deaf-specific support or provision? (for example, access to deaf role models, Deaf Advocacy, BSL/ISL translated materials, BSL/ISL interpreters, etc.)

A4. Yes.

If yes, please outline what this is:

They had been previously referred to deaf role model through a local deaf voluntary organisation, which continued during LAC time. They were encouraged to reconnect with local deaf organisations for deaf peer/social contact.

A BSL interpreter was booked when staff needed to discuss concerns. Sensory support social worker provided support.

Personalised information was shared on how to communicate for staff. E.g. on this occasion a report from the speech and language therapist.

Written information made simple, extra time with staff to ensure understanding. Pictorial form also provided when relevant.

The service user had their own phone for communication, however if there was an issue staff were able to provide support, e.g. make a phone call on their behalf.

Equipment was discussed for health and safety.

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Appendix A

Q5. Is there any additional information you wish to add in relation to Section A?

A5. Whilst in placement the young people were offered deaf awareness and sign language training, to facilitate communication which they refused.

Section B: Deaf Care leavers

Q6. How many relevant care leavers were recorded as having a disability of deafness/hearing impairment in each of the last three year periods? (Numbers will equate to individual children and young people)

A6. Please see Table 4.

Table 4

Dates	Number of deaf children and young people
01 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 (year 1)	N/A (was not a care leaver)
01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 (year 2)	N/A (was not a care leaver)
01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (year 3)	<5

Q7. Of the numbers shown in the table above, how many children and young people were known to communicate through British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language?

A7. Please see Table 5.

Table 5

Dates	Number of deaf children and young people
01 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 (year 1)	N/A (was not a care leaver)
01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 (year 2)	N/A (was not a care leaver)
01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (year 3)	<5

Q8. What were the main destinations of deaf young people at the time they left care?

A8. Please see Table 6.

Table 6

	In Education	In Training or Employment	Not in Education, employment or Training	Not Known
No of deaf young care leavers who left care between 01 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 (year one)				
No of deaf young care leavers who left care between 01 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 (year two)				
No of deaf young care leavers who left care between 01 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (year three)	<5			

NB. You will note that for Questions 1, 2, 6, 7 & 8 some of the numbers have been masked and this is due to small numbers within a small geographical area.

Q9. Are deaf care leavers offered deaf-specific support or provision? (for example, access to deaf role models, Deaf Advocacy, BSL/ISL translated materials, BSL/ISL interpreters, etc.)

A9. Yes.

Q10. If yes, please outline what that is:

A10. A deaf role model was ongoing.

They were encouraged to mix with deaf organisations to promote language/culture/positive peer contact/ appropriate courses.
There was Support of sensory support social worker.
There was a BSL interpreter used to discuss issues.

Q11. Is there any additional information you wish to add in relation to Section B?

A11. Whilst in college they had access to a BSL interpreter on days they attended a college course.

Information was made simple for understanding.
There was extra time allowed to go through issues.
They had a deaf peer in the same class whilst in college.
I do not know if information was translated in to BSL also.

Section C: Foster carers

Q12. Do you provide any of the following training and support to foster carers of deaf children?

A12. Please see Table 7.

Table 7

	Yes	No
Deaf Awareness Training	Yes	
Opportunities to learn British sign language or Irish sign language	Yes	

Q13. Please specify below if any other training or support on deafness is provided to foster carers of deaf children and young people.

A13. The family involved with this service user were offered free deaf awareness and basic BSL training. This was for 3 people and was for 6 weeks.

The young person was also encouraged to sign with the family when they were there to help them practice and build up a relationship.
The family were offered extra BSL sessions.

Q14.

A. Do you keep a record of foster carers who knowledge of experience of supporting deaf children and young people?

B. Do you keep a record of foster carers who can communicate through British Sign Language or Irish Sign Language?

A14.

A. Yes.

B. No.

Q15. Have any steps been taken to recruit deaf adults to become foster carers or to promote fostering as an option among the Deaf community?

A15. No, this would be general fostering recruitment.

Q16. Is there any additional information you wish to add in relation to Section C?

A16. In general the Trust would provide/offer free deaf awareness and basic BSL training to support non- deaf relevant organisations involved with deaf young people.

This is provided by local experienced deaf people who also represent a positive role model for deaf people.

The deaf service user is encouraged to join in the deaf training, who refused on this occasion.

In relation to this one person, there were 4 staff who completed training in one organisation for 6 weeks; 2 staff in another for 6 weeks; 12 staff for 6 weeks in another voluntary setting.

Although this is not relevant with the dates, post Covid-19, we are now offering zoom deaf awareness and BSL training, to ensure continuity to support the deaf young person and staff.