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The purpose of the standards

This document outlines quality standards in the education of deaf children across the UK. It aims to set a benchmark for provision of services nationally and outline good practice which professionals can follow and parents increasingly come to expect from their local services.

Our aim is that the publication and adoption of these standards will mark a step towards improved services nationwide and increased equality of access to high quality services, which meet children's needs.

These standards are designed to be a flexible tool for use by professionals who are aiming to provide high quality services for the parents they support.

It is hoped that reference to the recommendations contained in this document will help professionals, including: Local Education Officers with responsibility for Special needs, (such as heads of service), Special Education Needs Co-ordinators, Head teachers, Teachers of the Deaf, Health Visitors, Social Workers and Educational Psychologists, to identify gaps in local services and support. An audit can often provide the impetus for the development of a plan to increase support and target resources more effectively to meet the needs of children and families.

These standards will also be used in a national context to monitor the development of services nationally and provide feedback on expected levels of service to Central Government.

The standards have been drawn up under the auspices of the National Deaf Children's Society by a group of key professionals managing schools and services for deaf children across the UK and the parents they support. They have been the subject of widespread consultation and discussion in the field of education of deaf children.

The authors of the standards would welcome feedback about the application of these standards in a local context. Please do contact us and join in this initiative to raise standards for deaf children and their families nationwide.

Deaf children – definition and needs

Deafness in itself is not a learning difficulty. However, it may be associated with unique difficulties in accessing the learning environment. The earliest possible intervention is required for deaf children in order to establish a language base which will enable them to learn age-appropriately.

Like any other children, deaf children span the entire ability range. A significant number of deaf children have educational needs in addition to those associated with deafness. The main difficulties facing deaf children can include poor acoustic conditions, difficulties in language acquisition and development and poorer access to informal learning opportunities, all of which can affect a child's social and emotional development.

Throughout this document the authors have used the term deaf to include all types of childhood hearing loss. Any hearing loss can have significant implications for communication and language acquisition, particularly in the early years. We have, therefore, included all deaf children in these standards whether their deafness is sensori-neural, conductive, temporary or permanent. These standards are based on the principle of informed choice on communication. The aim of the standards is to improve educational standards for deaf children regardless of the communication approach which they follow.

Some of the standards will apply more to children with severe or profound hearing loss. Some apply more to children with Statements of Special Educational Needs. Parents and professionals will need to work together to apply these standards in a sensitive way depending on the needs of the child.

The standards are targeted at professionals within the field of deafness and parents of deaf children themselves. They assume a working knowledge of provision for deaf children and their families and the issues facing them in an educational context. For more general information on the needs of deaf children and the services available to them, please contact the National Deaf Children's Society. Contact addresses are given at the end of this booklet.

Section I

Quality Standards in Working with Parents

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Introduction

This document on quality standards in working with parents is in response to the UK Government Green Paper “Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational needs”¹ and the subsequent Programme of Action². One of the main aims of the Green Paper is to improve support to parents and encourage their participation in decision making. The Programme of Action refers to several initiatives designed to do this. Parent partnership services, independent parental supporters and local conciliation arrangements are seen as key elements in strengthening parental involvement and avoiding conflict. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on creating the conditions for successful partnerships and securing accountability.

Respecting Family Differences

When working with parents of deaf children, it is vital that all service providers (including independent or voluntary sector organisations) are aware of differences between families. All family circumstances are unique. It is important when assessing or making provision that this remains a primary consideration.

All professionals working with deaf children or families or contributing to a child’s assessment, will need training to recognise and respond to the needs of:

- people whose first language is not English; this should include deaf families who use British Sign Language and take into account the role played by extended families
- families in rural or isolated areas
- parents on low incomes or in challenging circumstances
- parents with low literacy levels or those who simply feel under-confident about their ability to contribute to decision making

Key Recommendation

- All service providers should take into account different family backgrounds and will need appropriate training.



Ensuring Equal Partnership

Professionals, especially in education and health, should develop a partnership with parents as early as possible after diagnosis (including very early diagnosis). A multi-agency approach is essential.

Professionals working with parents of deaf children have a responsibility to foster and support partnership and empower parents to achieve their aspirations for their child.

Teachers of the deaf in particular have a key role to play in promoting partnership. Not only can they help by directly influencing development of a child’s language and social skills at home or school, but they can also support the involvement of families.

Factors influencing the help needed

The greater a child’s deafness, the more likely they are to need direct or one-to-one input from a teacher of

the deaf. However, their degree of deafness is not the only factor which determines the level and kind of help a pupil should receive. This may also depend on the factors within the school and child's general circumstances such as:

- family situation
- staff skills, experience and knowledge
- the presence of additional needs
- the impact of the deafness on the child's ability to access the learning environment

We recommend that all families, no matter how mild their child's deafness, should have opportunities to meet with a teacher of the deaf at regular intervals to review progress.

The role of teachers of deaf pupils in supporting parents

Teachers of deaf children can take specific steps to involve parents by:

- informing parents of their legal rights to education and other statutory services and making referrals to appropriate agencies
- increasing parents' knowledge of the educational, developmental and social effects of deafness at different times in the child's life, from the point of diagnosis and at key transition points
- informing parents of local education and other agency resources to support the child's development and family well-being
- promoting deaf awareness and communication between the deaf child and parents and siblings
- making sure that parents understand the consequences of complex audiological and psychological information
- advising on hearing aids, other information and communication technology
- empowering parents to make an independent choice on a communication method that is right for their child
- putting parents in touch with other families and sources of independent help, locally and nationally

Family needs

In order to participate fully in decision making, families will need:

- clear, timely and accessible information in plain English or in alternative formats, like British Sign Language or subtitled videos
- unbiased information on the full range of communication and placement options from which they can begin to make informed decisions
- a clear understanding of the roles of the various professionals who contribute to their child's education and how to contact them if needed
- access to the professionals responsible for making key decisions, through meetings and personal contact if necessary

Parents will need different levels of help according to circumstances and their confidence in dealing with complex procedures. Particular care needs to be taken, especially with families of children who are recently diagnosed. However confident the parents, recent diagnosis may not be the best time to take in complex information about the implications of deafness and education procedures.

Professionals need to check parental understanding and be available for families as an ongoing resource. It is important that where required, parents are given access to counselling.

Professionals need to be aware that parents of deaf children may need support and information over and above that needed for hearing children. They may feel that their parenting skills have deserted them after diagnosis and that they need support to build their confidence and expertise.

The need for clear information

Where a deaf child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs, their parents have a right in law to express a preference for a school. It is important that this should be an informed choice. Parents will need 'jargon-free' information on the *full* range of options, including those schools which act as a national or regional resource.

Local education authorities should provide parents with access to the Department for Education and Employment lists of schools⁴ which include:

- local maintained schools
- maintained schools across county/borough boundaries, mainstream and special schools
- non-maintained and independent schools for deaf children
- non-maintained and independent schools for children with special educational needs

It is important that these are provided at the earliest possible opportunity so that parents have sufficient time to consider the type of school or placement they prefer, consult with Named Persons, relevant voluntary organisations or independent professionals, and arrange and make visits to schools.

We recommend that parents should have the above information:

- at the point of the statutory 10 week timescale for assessment by professionals. This gives parents 12 weeks in which to consider their preference in time for production of a proposed Statement of Special Educational Needs.
- a term before attending pre-school placement or transfer from nursery to reception class
- in the case of children transferring to secondary or further education, at least twelve weeks before the annual review date.

The Code of Practice⁵ recommends that at transitional points, annual reviews need to be completed by the start of the final (Spring) term. This would allow parents time to appeal and receive a decision before the start of the next school year. The same principles should apply at any transitional stage, for example from middle to upper school.

Local education authorities should ensure that parents have professionals' reports at least two weeks before the annual review meeting takes place. This would allow parents time to consult with Named Persons and make a full, informed and considered contribution to the review meeting.

Discussing concerns and resolving disputes

Parents can misunderstand how to raise their concerns. It is vital that local education authorities provide information about the various routes and procedures

and in particular information on how to:

- discuss concerns with school staff if the child is at Stages 1–3 of the school-based stages of assessment
- discuss concerns about refusal to carry out an assessment, refusal to draw up a Statement, a proposal to cease a Statement, a Note in Lieu of a Statement, contents of Parts 2, 3 and 4 of a Statement and the right to appeal to a Special Educational Needs Tribunal if agreement cannot be reached locally. Under the Government's Programme of Action, local education authorities are expected to establish arrangements, with an independent element, for resolving disputes with parents. Such arrangements would be part of the menu of options available under the Parent Partnership Service
- appeal under Section 497 of the Education Act 1996⁶ where parents believe that the terms of part III of a Statement are not being met

Key recommendations

- All parents should have access to a teacher of the deaf, regardless of their child's degree of deafness.
- Families should have clear, timely and accessible information on all aspects of assessment and statementing, professionals' roles and the educational, developmental and social effects of deafness, including unbiased information on the full range of communication and placement options.
- Families should be told about help available from local and national voluntary organisations who can offer independent help and advice.
- All who have input into assessment and provision should be trained to be knowledgeable about the educational, social and developmental implications of deafness.



Building Parental Skills & Involvement

As well as information on choices, rights and procedures, parents need to develop skills to put these into practice. Although some parents will be able to take advantage of opportunities to advocate for themselves, few, if any, are ready prepared with all of the skills and knowledge needed.

In order to develop the required skills and knowledge parents may need access to:

- courses to help them understand their rights and responsibilities, like an explanation of the Code of Practice⁷ and how to use this to maximum advantage
- sign language and communication skills courses to be provided locally at low-cost or no-cost
- courses on deaf awareness with a particular education focus. Parents could be invited to take part in school or service training or referred to independent organisations who run events which may help parents understand the educational, social and developmental implications of deafness
- opportunities to meet regularly with appropriately skilled and trained deaf adults. This could be part of informal home-school liaison or formally incorporated into an educational programme designed to meet the child's needs

Key Recommendations

Parents need training which empowers them to become full partners in their child's education. In particular they may need support to:

- understand their rights and responsibilities
- improve their communication skills
- increase their deaf awareness

Developing Professional Skills

To meet the needs of deaf children and effectively support their parents, it is vital that professionals possess a range of skills, knowledge and attributes.

These should include:

- skills in supporting parents to give their views in both informal and formal settings
- ongoing deaf awareness which enables service and school staff to keep up to date with issues and developments
- awareness of the educational, social and developmental implications of deafness and other additional needs
- communication skills, the level of which will differ according to role and level of input. Those having a significant or direct input into the education of deaf children using sign language or a sign system should have, or be working towards, at least Stage 2 CACDP
- relevant awareness of the range of tests and assessment methods, how to apply them, draw inferences correctly and clearly explain any findings to parents in plain language
- negotiation skills and awareness of how to support children to express their wishes and opinions.

Key Recommendations

- All who have an input into assessment and provision or who need to communicate with deaf children and their families will need deaf awareness and an appropriate level of communication skills. They may also need developed negotiation skills and the ability to support deaf children to express themselves.
- All who have an input into a deaf child's education should be aware of a range of appropriate assessment methods, how to apply them and draw the right inferences.

Consultation and accountability to parents and pupils

Key elements in any initiative to fulfil parent partnerships are consultation with, and accountability to, parents, both as individuals and as local citizens with an interest in broader policy changes in education.

In order to achieve this:

- meetings with professionals should be honest and open with a genuine commitment to preventing or resolving conflict when necessary. Early, clear and unbiased information, with a promise to investigate a parental concern or preference, may help defuse the potential for disagreement and create a climate of trust from the start.
- Education Officers and other relevant professional staff should be encouraged and funded to attend courses to improve their skills in negotiation and resolution of conflict.
- parents should be given clear information about outcomes from any meetings with school or local educational authority staff about what will happen, by when and who is responsible, including a statement of the parents' own responsibilities, for example to arrange visits to schools or independent professionals.
- parents should be informed about their potential to be involved in local political structures such as Early Years Development Fora, local Special Educational Needs fora, Education Development Plans etc. Schools should circulate consultation documents to all parents and let them know about public consultation meetings.
- pupils will need to be prepared gradually and from an early age, to participate in meetings about their

future. In the early years, children may be asked to point to icons or symbols to indicate satisfaction with the help they are receiving. Later they could be asked to contribute specific pieces of work or make a statement expressing their views.

It needs to be remembered that each child is different and professionals and

parents may need to arrive at an agreement about the child or young person's capacity to be involved.

Local education authorities should demonstrate a genuine commitment to providing a continuum of provision. They should also investigate the full relative costs of different placements and make this information available to parents on request in a way that is easy to understand.

Key Recommendations

- Parents should have clear, accessible information about any outcomes from key meetings and agreements reached. Pupils should be encouraged as appropriate from an early age to be involved in decision making.
- Parents should be given opportunities to be involved in local consultation processes. Parents who are difficult to reach need to be given opportunities to be involved and some may need communication support.



Monitoring progress and achievements

Parents should have the right to expect high quality and comprehensive assessment of needs by professionals fully conversant with the educational, social and developmental effects of deafness. All staff who have an input into assessment should be equipped with an understanding of the pupil's communication needs. Professionals should demonstrate an awareness of appropriate assessment tools and a recognition that a child's educational and other needs are inter-related.

There should be quantitative and value-added information on the academic attainments and personal achievements of deaf children. This information should be available from schools and local education authorities and in a format which is clear to families. Feeding back this information to parents will enable them to support their child's progress.

Such data would enable parents and professionals to identify areas for development in deaf education within the local education authorities and allow the appropriate targeting of resources. The net result would be to enable parents and professionals to work together to improve standards.

Key Recommendations

- All involved in assessment should understand the educational, developmental and social effects of deafness and the child's communication needs, and know how to use appropriate assessment tools.
- Local education authorities should collect statistics on deaf children's attainments in National Curriculum tests and public examinations.
- Schools should compare deaf children's attainments in external examinations and the results of teachers' own tests (including those administered by teachers of the deaf and Educational Psychologists) in order to identify any mismatch in attainments and assessed abilities.
- Local education authorities and schools should monitor deaf children's personal achievements in such areas as personal development and self-esteem, social skills and independence.



References

1. **Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs.** Department for Education and Employment, 1997.
2. **Meeting Special Educational Needs: a Programme of Action.** Department for Education and Employment, 1998.
3. **The Future's Theirs: Education and Your Deaf Child** (video with accompanying booklet explaining parental rights and options). National Deaf Children's Society, 1998.
4. **Non-maintained and Independent Schools Approved for Admission for Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs.** Department for Education and Employment. (updated yearly).
5. **Code of Practice on the Identification of Special Educational Needs.** Department for Education, 1994.
6. **Education Act 1996.** Stationery Office.
7. **Education Act 1996.** Stationery Office.

Section II

Quality Standards in Early Years Services and Provision

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Introduction

This document on quality standards in early years services and provision is a response to the UK Government Green Paper, “Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs”¹ and the subsequent Programme of Action². One of the main aims of the Green Paper is to include the improvement of early identification and the inclusion of parental support and participation in the early years process and planning. The Programme of Action refers to several initiatives aimed at early years provision, including support for parents and carers. Parent partnership services, independent parental supporters and local conciliation arrangements are seen to be key elements in strengthening support for parents and avoiding conflict in the early years and beyond.

Various other generic initiatives by the Government have either omitted or only touched upon early years education for children with special education needs. The purpose of this document is to provide distinct guidance on assessment, early intervention and supporting parents. Parents and professionals should use this guidance to ensure that local arrangements and initiatives can work effectively and that parents have the information and knowledge to be full participants in the vital early years.



Definition of Early Years Provision

The term early years provision is used here to describe any structured provision which happens on a regular basis, as part of an agreed programme between parents and professionals to further the child’s development. Provision in this context can be made whether the child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or not and can take place in a variety of settings ranging from the home to a formal nursery.

Education for deaf children should start from the point of diagnosis. Pre school education ranges from home support with peripatetic teachers, through portage schemes and play groups, to more formal nursery education.

Placement of children

In the very early years, provision may be a mixture of family support, care and education and may be home-based. A teacher of the deaf employed by the local authority is likely to adopt the role of key worker and be the central link between the family and other relevant professionals.

As children grow older the pattern of provision is likely to shift to more structured settings with preparation for formal education. Here the emphasis may be on acquiring skills outside of the home in a nursery or play group.

Placement decisions need to be taken with the needs of the child and family in mind. In practical terms, this means deaf children receiving support in a variety of settings. Outside of the home, young deaf children may be placed in:

- nurseries attached to mainstream schools
- a nursery attached to a school for deaf children, whether maintained by a local education authority or not
- a nursery in a special school (where the child’s deafness may be one of several special educational needs)

- early years centres
- local education authority, social or health service, private or voluntary play groups, opportunity groups or parent and toddler groups
- a registered childminder

Although registered childminders are not thought of as a traditional 'placement', they can and do provide many informal opportunities for children to learn. It is therefore recommended that local authorities should address the issue of childminders in their Children's Service Plans and seek to provide them with the communication skills and deaf awareness that they will need when caring for a deaf child.

Aims of early years provision

Early years provision for deaf children has a number of different and complementary aims focused not on the child alone but on the family as a whole. Different families may also have differing goals and aims for their children's early years education.

Local authorities and support services should develop and publish aims for provision which are clear to parents whose children are receiving support.

Such aims may include the following:

- to lay the basis for receptive and expressive language
- to lay the basis for social skills, independence and positive self-esteem
- to provide parents with an understanding of the educational, developmental and social effects of deafness
- to help parents, siblings and deaf children to communicate effectively with each other
- to prepare deaf children for entry to reception class and the requirements of Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum
- to give professionals opportunities to observe the child's strengths and limitations and build-up information towards future assessments

Early Intervention

The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs³ emphasises the importance of the earliest possible identification and action to avoid difficulties in future years. The effects of late diagnosis can be that deaf children miss out on many early opportunities for language, communication and the development of social skills.

Deaf children should be diagnosed as soon as possible after birth to ensure the earliest possible intervention from health and education professionals.

In advance of universal neonatal screening, it is likely that parental concern will continue to be one of the key signs which indicate a potential hearing loss in babies or young children. In the light of this, all expressions of parental concern about possible deafness in babies and young children should be investigated and treated seriously.

The need of parents for full and balanced information

Parents and carers of deaf children should be given full and balanced information about childhood deafness and its implications from the point of diagnosis. They should be encouraged to become full partners in their child's development so they can begin to make informed choices about their child's future education and support.



The need for effective liaison between agencies

There should be effective and timely liaison between health and education professionals from the point of diagnosis onwards to ensure that children and parents receive an effective service which meets the needs of the whole family. There should be clear information about the role of different professionals and the expectations that parents can have of them.

Deaf children under the age of two

For deaf children early provision will be critical. Current legislation means local education authorities can draw up a Statement of Special Educational Needs for children before the age of two, but does not require them to do so. We recommend that deaf children under two should receive on-going and frequent support from a teacher of the deaf to develop early language, social and independence skills. This is likely to take the form of a peripatetic home visiting service in the early years and these services should be effectively resourced to provide a high level of support. Teachers working in these roles should have the right skills and experience to meet the needs of deaf babies and young children.

The Early Years Development Plan

Local authorities should outline their approach to early support for deaf children in their Special Education Needs appendix to the Early Years Development Plan. This should illustrate the range and remit of specialist early years services, including access to Early Excellence Centres where these are available.

The frequency and nature of early support for individual deaf children should be agreed between parents and local professionals and reviewed every six months.

Key Recommendations

- Deaf Children should be diagnosed as soon as possible after birth to ensure the earliest possible intervention from education professionals. All expressions of parental concern about possible deafness in babies and young children should be fully investigated.
- Families of deaf children under two should receive on-going and frequent support from a teacher of the deaf to develop early language, social and independence skills.

- Parents and carers of deaf children should be given full and balanced information about childhood deafness and its implications from the point of diagnosis. They should be enabled to become full partners in their child's development so that they can begin to make informed choices.

Ensuring a Range of Provision

Local education authorities should make sure that there is a range of services to meet the variety of needs of deaf children within their area. Services need to be flexible and responsive, taking into account, for example, different communication approaches.

All young deaf children should have their needs fully assessed by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. The team should include staff from education, health and social services departments. Parents should also be involved in assessing the needs of their child.

Local authorities need to include a section on meeting the needs of deaf children in their Early Years Development Plans. They should be clear about any policies they may have relating to the development of language and communication for deaf children.

Any range of provision should aim to include the following key features:

- regular home visits after diagnosis by a teacher of deaf children as often as they are needed by the child and their family
- priority access for deaf children to local nursery provision, on a full or part-time basis
- a well resourced placement in nursery or play group to ensure additional support can be provided. This may take the form of funding for a teacher of the deaf, learning or a communication support worker
- specialist services, such as play groups for deaf children and their families, provided wherever possible with parents supported to access these provisions

- additional support provided for deaf children in private or voluntary play group or pre-school provision where this is the best or only provision available
- access to trained and skilled deaf adult role models for deaf children and their families
- opportunities to meet a range of families with deaf children

Since the needs of young deaf children change over time, parents should be encouraged to think about the whole range of options available throughout their child's pre-school years. An appropriate package of provision may call for a mixture of services and support to meet the needs of the child. It is likely, for example, that some children may benefit from a part-time mainstream nursery placement, with specialist input from a dedicated service at other times of the week. Local professionals should remain flexible and open in their approach to different packages of support.

Key Recommendations

- Families of pre-school deaf children should be offered regular home visits from a teacher of deaf children with the frequency determined by the needs of the child and their family.
- Local education authorities should provide access to a range of local provision including placement in a nursery or play group, which should be properly resourced for deaf children.
- Specialist services, such as play groups for deaf children and their families, should be provided wherever possible and parents should be supported to access these provisions and be encouraged to meet a range of other families and deaf adults.
- Local education authorities should provide resources for additional support for deaf children in private or voluntary pre-school provision where this will meet needs or is the only provision available.

Supporting Parents and Carers

Government departments, professionals and parents recognise that the impact of early years support is diminished if parents are not involved as full partners supporting their child's progress. Professionals have a responsibility to encourage parents to take an active role.

Parents and carers should be supported to achieve their aims for their child and encouraged to take part in decisions about their child's education. They have important information to impart which will inform the process of assessment and provision.

Access to Information

If parents are to be full partners in their child's education, they need to be given access to information which empowers them to achieve their aims for their child. As soon as possible after diagnosis, parents need to be informed of their rights and responsibilities and understand the options available for their child's early development and education. In particular they need:

- full, unbiased information about options including communication choice and placement should be given to parents by local professionals. This should include information on relevant services and choices outside of the home area.
- full, accessible information about the process of early years assessment and statementing and their role within it. They need to understand their rights and responsibilities.

Parents need to be informed about the nature and impact of childhood deafness and early help available from peripatetic teachers of deaf children. They need to be informed of the likely outcomes from early support and the role that they can play to assist with their child's development.

Service providers should be taking steps to meet the needs of all families with deaf children. As an example, deaf parents and those for whom English is a second

language will need material available in accessible formats. Families with low literacy levels may need support to read written material and may need more personal contact.

Parents should be encouraged to attend relevant training and support events which will provide them with information about childhood deafness, its implications and the services available. Families on low incomes should be supported financially to attend events where travel or registration costs may be high.

Mechanisms for Partnership

Parent partnership services have made an important contribution in some parts of the UK, moving principle to practice. They have often played a valuable part in preventing or defusing conflict. They are not yet available to all families and need to be expanded and developed. In particular, services should have an approach which meets the needs of deaf children and be staffed by people who are aware of the educational, developmental and social implications of deafness.

Alongside decisions about their own child, parents and carers should be consulted on changes to policy and practice which will affect local provision for deaf children. This may include issues such as school policy, changes to health or education services or documents such as Early Years Development Plans. Parents and carers of young deaf children should be given every opportunity to contribute to local consultation processes surrounding the production of these plans. Consultation should take place individually and collectively through self-help or representative organisations.

In order to become full partners in their child's development from an early age parents will need:

- clear, timely and accessible information about communication and placement options, assessment and statementing
- a knowledge of the educational and social implications of deafness
- a knowledge of the various professionals and their roles, including health and social services staff
- a knowledge of their legal rights
- a knowledge of the procedures for expressing dissatisfaction with plans or current arrangements for their child

- information about independent support organisations
- support to communicate with their child. This may include access to low or no cost sign language classes where necessary

Further information on working with parents as partners can be found in Section I of this document.

Key Recommendations

- Parents and carers should be supported to achieve their aims for their child and encouraged to take a key part in decisions about their child's educational future.
- Full, unbiased information about options including communication choices and placements should be given to parents by local professionals and they should be given support to understand their rights and responsibilities.
- Deaf parents and those for whom English is a second language will need material available in accessible formats.
- Parent partnership service staff should be provided with training in the educational, developmental and social implications of deafness or at least be aware of the need to take advice from appropriately qualified and experienced professionals, including sensory impaired services and the National Deaf Children's Society.
- Parents and carers should be consulted on changes to policy and practice which will affect local provision for deaf children.



High Quality Assessment

Good early years provision will develop from effective and child-centred assessment. It is essential that high quality, multi-agency assessment is available shortly after diagnosis to begin the process of identifying the child's needs and the support that they and their family will need in the early years.

Parents should have the right to expect high quality and comprehensive assessment of their child's needs in the early years by professionals fully aware of the educational, social and developmental implications of deafness.

Helping parents to contribute

Professionals involved in assessing deaf children need to work closely together. Clear communication between agencies helps to reduce the number of meetings and appointments that parents have to attend. The assessment should take place as near to the family's home as possible. Every region should have access to specialist assessment centres. Where this is not possible, local services need to know where they can go for professional expertise when needed.

Parents should be fully involved in the assessment process and encouraged and supported to make their contribution. Parents may need assistance to contribute their views and should be provided with material to help them. A 'jargon-free' checklist should be provided for parents which outlines the structure and purpose of the assessment process.

Parents can then be prompted to answer a series of key questions about their child and their own wishes and feelings. Many examples of this sort of material are available for those services yet to develop their own.^{4, 5}

Appropriate expertise in assessment

Assessment should be carried out by trained and skilled professionals with expertise in the implications of deafness for very young children and babies. Staff should receive ongoing training focusing on the needs of young deaf children and babies and should ensure that they

have appropriate communication skills to assess deaf children.

Professionals should take care to focus their opinions around their area of expertise. In particular, education professionals (e.g. teachers of the deaf) should be recognised as the most appropriate professional to comment on the educational needs of the child.

The aims of assessment

Effective multi-professional assessment of young deaf children has many goals. Information should be sought in a range of areas, including:

- play and early social skills development
- communication within the family
- hearing aid management
- development of language, speech and competence in communication
- development of age-appropriate behaviour
- social and emotional development
- educational placement in the early years
- family relationships and the quality of life for child and extended family

Securing quality

To achieve the goal of high quality informed assessment the following will need to be in place:

- compliance with statutory timescales (such as those defined in the Code of Practice)
- designated staff within each service to take responsibility for liaising with staff in other statutory and voluntary services
- professional awareness of the effects of deafness
- professional awareness of a range of assessment techniques, how to apply them and to draw inferences correctly
- parental access to full information about communication options, types of provision, local services and sources of independent help
- parental support from services and independent agencies to contribute written views, and help at meetings with service providers

- ‘jargon-free’ plain language reports which spell out the needs and objectives to be met

Key Recommendations

- High quality, one stop multi-agency assessment should be available shortly after diagnosis.
- Assessment should be carried out by trained and skilled professionals with expertise in the implications of deafness for very young children and babies.

Flexible and Responsive Services

In order to fully meet the needs of young deaf children and their families, services should be open, flexible and responsive.

Families often take their commitment to their child’s education very seriously and make considerable efforts to attend meetings or appointments. It may, however, be difficult for them to meet with professionals during working hours. Service providers should consider the flexibility of professional working hours to offer out of hours visits or appointments.

Alongside flexible and resourced access to a full continuum of provision, the following steps will help to build a service which responds to the needs of young children and their families.

- Statutory services need to be flexible in offering appointments and home visits outside of traditional office hours. This may include evening, weekend and school holiday services.
- Parental self-referral should be encouraged and treated with the same respect as a referral from a professional, statutory or voluntary agency.
- Parents and carers should be given an explanation of the role and responsibilities of the professionals that

will be supporting them. They should be encouraged to seek advice and guidance between scheduled visits and appointments if necessary.

Key Recommendations

- Statutory services supporting young deaf children need to be flexible in offering appointments and home visits outside of traditional office hours.
- Parental self-referral should be encouraged and treated with respect. Parents and carers should be encouraged to seek advice and guidance between scheduled visits and appointments if necessary.

Working Together to Meet Needs

All key agencies – health, education and social services – should provide an integrated approach to services and support for families from the point of diagnosis. Professionals should work hard to deliver a co-ordinated service to parents.

Information about voluntary organisations and sources of help and advice should be freely given to families at the point of diagnosis and at key stages throughout their child’s early development. Parents should be supported to make contact with other parents and organisations. Access to support groups and other parents often helps to reduce feelings of isolation for parents of newly diagnosed deaf children, enabling them to discuss their concerns and worries and to begin to develop a positive image of deafness.

In addition to professional and voluntary agencies, the involvement of deaf adults or young deaf role models can inspire parents to think positively about the future for their child. Services need to find ways to involve suitably skilled and trained deaf adults in formal and informal settings with young deaf children and their families. This contact may be support at nursery or play group or home-based services like language aide schemes.

Not only will positive deaf role models encourage parents of newly diagnosed deaf children, deaf adults can be instrumental in the development and acquisition of sign language for some children.

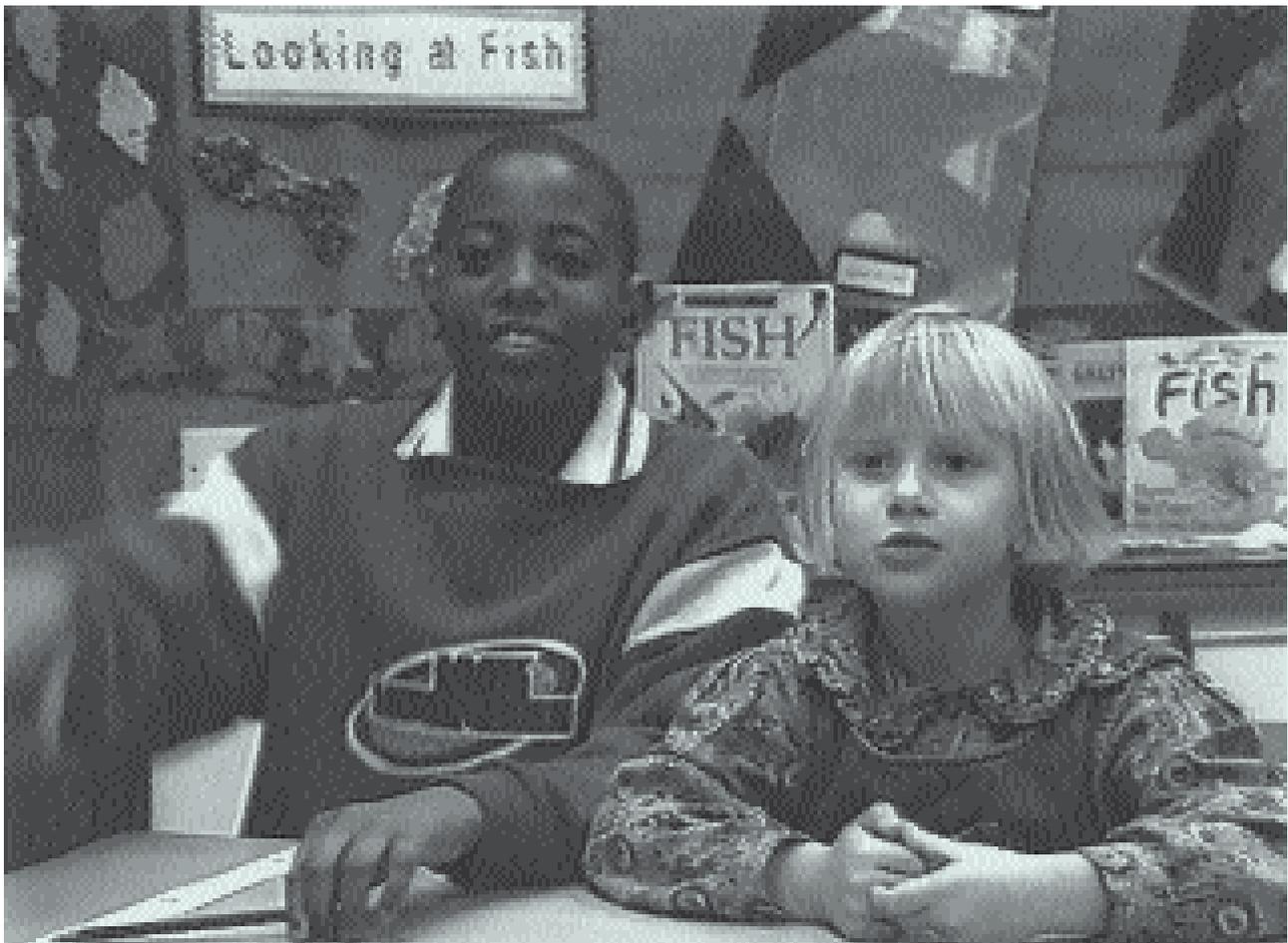
Key Recommendations

- All key agencies – health, education and social services – should ensure an integrated approach to services and support for families from the point of diagnosis.
- Information about appropriate voluntary organisations and sources of help and advice should be freely given to families at the point of diagnosis and at key stages throughout their child's early development.



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Section III

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Introduction

This document on Quality Standards in Inclusion is a response to the UK Government Green Paper “Excellence for All Children – Meeting Special Educational Needs”¹ and the accompanying Programme of Action². One of the main aims of the Green Paper is to “increase the level and quality of inclusion within mainstream schools, while protecting and enhancing specialist provision for those who need it”. The Programme of Action sets out how the Government intends to promote greater inclusion in partnership with local educational authorities and schools. The purpose of this document is to provide further guidance on the promotion of *high quality* inclusion.

Definition of inclusion

Educational integration (or desegregation) of children with special needs has been prevalent since the 1970s and was first given legal sanction in the Education Act of 1981³, which stated that pupils with special educational needs should be educated wherever possible in mainstream schools. It was still accepted, however, that provision should match a continuum of needs and should include special schools within or outside LEA boundaries. Figures produced by The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD), consistently show that over 90% of deaf children are now being educated in mainstream schools, many of which include specialist units or resource bases for deaf children.

All the forms of integration that were promoted by this early legislation were based largely on the assimilation of the disabled child into a mainstream school with a largely unchanged social environment.

The term inclusion started to appear in official reports and legislation in the 1990s. The 1997 Green Paper¹ states that inclusion is “a process, not just geographical relocation”. Despite the change of name, it appears from the literature that, for some people, ‘inclusion’ still refers

simply to the process of educating all children, including those with special educational needs, in mainstream schools. That definition of inclusion therefore differs very little from the notion of ‘integration’. Attempts to distinguish between the meaning of the two terms, for example by defining inclusion as a “whole school approach” to “individual difference”, are complicated by the fact that integration can also be defined in those terms. The two terms are clearly used differently by different people and in much of the published discussion on the subject the terms are poorly defined.

Two current definitions, however, extend the concept of inclusion. The Council for Disabled Children, of which NDCS is a member, has in its definition, the importance of inclusion for the community:

“...a philosophy which views diversity of strengths, abilities and needs as natural and desirable, bringing to any community the opportunity to respond in ways which lead to learning and growth for the whole community and giving each and every member a valued role. Inclusion requires the restructuring of schools and communities.”

The Tomlinson Report on access to Further Education⁴ tries to distinguish between inclusion and integration and states that :

“Inclusive learning is not synonymous with integration. It is a larger and prior concept. The first step is to determine the best possible learning environment, given the individual student and the learning tasks. For those with a learning difficulty, the resulting educational environment will often be in an integrated setting ...increasingly so as the skills of the teachers and capacities of the system grow. Sometimes it will be a mixture of the integrated and the discrete. And sometimes, as in the specialist residential colleges, it will be discrete provision. We envisage a system that is inclusive and that will require many mansions.”

In agreement with these two definitions, it is proposed in this document that inclusion is defined not simply in terms of educational placement. Inclusion is not principally concerned with *where* a child should be educated. It is important to move forward from the view that the aim of educating all children in mainstream schools over-rides the aim of maximising individual pupil achievement; there is no evidence to suggest that all deaf pupils would achieve their fullest educational progress in a mainstream school.

Inclusion is therefore best seen as a set of principles or a statement of values and attitudes that:

- assume that all pupils have the right to be educated in their local school

but

- promote a *whole society* approach to disability and difference that transcends concerns with schools and education in a search to create an inclusive society
- seek to maximise opportunity, independence, participation and achievement for all pupils according to individual needs and wishes

but

- recognise that, as well as concerns for the needs of individual children, there are also concerns for the needs of society and the community (including the school);
- recognise that some children's special needs might include the need to socialise with other children with the same disability/difference and language and communication method, in order to develop a strong and positive sense of identity and high self-esteem
- include parents and pupils in decision making about education placement and other matters; support the right of parents to state preferences and to have their views considered seriously
- seek to evaluate practice and to make changes in the light of this evaluation, with a reflective approach that is flexible to individual pupils' needs

Key recommendations

- Inclusive education will require restructuring of schools and communities.
- Although inclusion as a process does not equate with the physical placement of a deaf child in a particular school, some children will need discrete, or special, provision in order to have access to a high quality education in line with their needs, a full and equal access to the life and activities of a school, and an adequate preparation for living in the deaf and hearing communities.

Putting these principles into practice

For a policy of inclusion to be effective for deaf children and to lead to a high quality of education, the following indicators should be addressed. A crucial feature of these indicators is that they allow the possibility of an education in a special school, or at least outside the mainstream classroom.

High quality inclusive education requires opportunities to be educated alongside hearing pupils in a mainstream school and to interact in social contexts with hearing peers.

A range of such placements should be available to suit the needs of the child and the child's community. These will include:

- a mainstream school with extra help from the school's own resources
- a mainstream school, with or without a support or resource base for deaf children, with support from both the school's own resources and from the local education authority, as specified in a Statement of Special Educational Needs
- a mainstream placement but with support from a special school

Where a more appropriate educational environment is a special school for deaf children (see below), children should be given the opportunity to have contact with hearing children and adults, in both academic and non-academic settings.

An effective communication environment

Paragraph 21 of the UNESCO Salamanca Statement⁵, to which the British Government is a signatory, makes a commitment to providing access to education for deaf children in their indigenous sign language.

Deaf children need to be able to communicate fully with staff and pupils in their school. When placing a deaf child the LEA needs to ensure that the recommended school

can meet the particular language and communication needs of the child. Their preferred mode of communication may be sign language, speech, or a combination. If the mainstream school cannot meet this need, the child may benefit from an alternative placement. This could be:

- a special school for deaf children, maintained, non-maintained or independent, inside or outside the child's local education authority boundary
- a special school for children with multiple needs (this would apply where the child has complex needs and where deafness may not be the principal need)
- a mixture of mainstream and special school, according to needs and family preferences

Where sign language is the optimal means of communication, hearing parents and families of deaf children need to keep up with their child's language development through low cost or free sign language classes. These should help develop skills in real life communication relevant to the different stages of the child's life, rather than to the need to pass formal sign language examinations.

Access to the curriculum through a flexible response to individual need, including in many cases, opportunities for small group teaching.

The vast majority of schools which deaf children attend should be able to provide full access to the National Curriculum for all children.

Access to, and involvement in, extra-curricular activities which promote full access to the Personal and Social Education (PSE) or Citizenship curriculum.

As well as having access to the National Curriculum, it is important that deaf children have opportunities in and outside of school hours to integrate into mainstream society. Because their experience of the spoken word is different and because others around them may not fully understand their communication needs and difficulties, deaf children may miss out on the social aspects of school life such as jokes, gossip and overheard comments which may help to form and reinforce relationships. Placement in schools with special support units outside the neighbourhood often means that deaf children have difficulty in staying after school to take part in clubs or other events, including school trips.

It is essential that mainstream schools provide deaf awareness training to hearing children to encourage them to interact socially with their deaf peers. Schools should make special provision, not just for access to the curriculum, but also for access to extra-curricular activities, providing additional transport if necessary.

In addition, opportunities resulting from extra curricular activities should be built upon in the school's PSE and Citizenship curricula and deaf children should be given opportunities to be involved.

Special schools for deaf children should have a programme of activities designed to provide regular social contact with local hearing children.

Contact with deaf peers

It is desirable that all deaf children have adequate opportunities to be educated alongside a sufficiently sized deaf peer group. Children with mild or moderate hearing loss, as well as severely or profoundly deaf children, can benefit from interacting with other children with similar needs. This not only helps in the formal and informal development of language, but also helps to foster self-esteem and confidence in their abilities. A peer group also lifts feelings of isolation and frustration as pupils discuss their common experiences that are not shared by hearing people.

Where possible, placements should ensure access to at least two other deaf pupils of a similar age and with the same communication method, with opportunities to meet deaf children of other ages within the school. Where this is impossible, schools should provide deaf children with opportunities to meet with other deaf children, with structured, planned and regular video or telephone access to deaf children in other schools.



Access to Deaf culture

Deaf children should be encouraged to develop a view of themselves not as part of a disabled minority, but as members of a cultural group that has a right to respect from the community. For this to be achieved, teachers and support staff in mainstream or in special schools require opportunities for continuing professional development to understand the educational, developmental, linguistic and social implications of deafness. Either directly, or through contact with deaf adults in school (see below), staff should provide information about, and encourage pupils to take part in local activities organised by deaf groups and societies and local voluntary organisations.

Access to deaf adult role models

Children who use sign as their principal language and children who use oral/aural methods can both benefit from these provisions. In both cases, deaf adults who communicate using a range of communication methods, like spoken English and residual hearing, BSL or total communication, can act as effective role models. Schools should also organise activities for hearing children in which they are able to communicate with deaf adults.

A whole school approach to special educational needs

All schools and local education authorities should develop a well defined policy on inclusion as part of their Special Needs Policy. Local education authorities' Educational Development Plans should cover collaboration between mainstream and special schools. Policies of schools with deaf children should have a specific section on deafness. This should include an undertaking from the school to promote positive attitudes to deafness and deaf people that allow deaf pupils to feel valued as members of the community. Decisions on funding, staffing, staff training and development of other school policies should continually take account of those principles.

Deaf children should be specifically included in equal opportunities and anti-harassment or anti-bullying policies and practices, which should be drawn up in co-operation with parents and pupils. These should include positive action to prevent social and academic discrimination against deaf pupils.

Involvement of deaf pupils in decisions made about their education

The effectiveness of any provision will be enhanced by the involvement of the pupil. The Code of Practice on Special Education Needs⁶ recommends that professionals should make every effort to identify the wishes and views of the pupil. Guidance and encouragement will be needed to help pupils to participate meaningfully. Involving the pupil in setting learning goals and tracking progress in a way which acknowledges their individual language competence and age may help to promote confidence. It is important that pupils are involved in decisions as early as possible. Involvement will increase as the pupil matures, but even younger children can be asked to give their views about a proposal. Creative ways should be found to facilitate this.

Older pupils, particularly those approaching the 14+ review or beyond, should be strongly encouraged to attend the review or planning meeting in whole or part, after discussion with parents. For deaf pupils to be involved, there needs to be:

- clear explanation of the purpose of the meeting and the young person's role in it
- appropriate communication and technical support
- summaries of reports in clear English or translation by a competent BSL user
- staff who are deaf-aware (including those from Social Services and Careers Services) and who understand the social and educational implications of deafness
- staff who are trained in assisting deaf children to express their feelings
- an explanation of the outcomes of the meetings and what action will be taken in a form that the deaf pupil can understand

Involvement of parents and deaf adults in policy making

The starting point for decisions about placement for deaf children should be the family's views and wishes. All local education authorities should have a parent partnership service to provide parents with independent information and advice about special educational needs procedures, school-based provision, other support available for their child and additional sources of help

and information, like voluntary organisations and childcare information services. Parents should be informed about the local parent partnership services as soon as their child has been identified as having special educational needs and should receive help from an independent parental supporter. Parents should be involved at all reviews of the child's progress and their views should be listened to and respected.

Local education authorities should have the means, (like a consultative committee or regular communication with voluntary organisations), by which parents and deaf adults can contribute to the development of policy for the education of deaf children. Schools with deaf children should consider the co-option of parents of deaf children and deaf adults to their governing body.

Where deaf children are educated outside their local area, it is important that schools make every effort to facilitate the involvement of their parents in the life of the school, this may involve providing transport where necessary.

Key recommendations

Effective inclusion requires:

- access to education alongside hearing peers in mainstream settings
- planned contact with deaf and hearing people in curriculum-based and social settings
- an effective communication environment in line with the pupil's needs
- access to small group teaching
- all who work with deaf children to have deaf awareness
- access to deaf cultures and the deaf community
- access to appropriately skilled and experienced deaf adult role models
- a whole school approach to special educational needs, premised on a well defined inclusion policy
- involvement, as early as possible, of deaf pupils in decisions about their education and other aspects of their lives
- the involvement of parents of deaf children and deaf adults in policy making

Resourcing of a high quality inclusive education

Schools and local education authorities need to consider the resource implications of providing an inclusive education for deaf children according to the above indicators of quality. As a general guideline, the following need to be available:

General

- sufficient qualified staff, with input from qualified teachers of the deaf
- appropriate equipment, including hearing aid technology, information and communications technology and regular maintenance and support
- good acoustic conditions (as recommended in Department for Education and Science Design Notes/Building Bulletins⁷), in line with individual need
- technology to meet the safety needs of deaf children
- funded access to interpreter services where appropriate

Mainstream schools

- some input from a teacher of the deaf, appropriate to the individual's need as identified by parents and professionals; this will be specified in the child's Individual Education Plan, whether the child is statemented or not
- a staffing ratio of at least one qualified teacher of the deaf to every six pupils. At least one learning support assistant to every six pupils at primary school. At least one learning support assistant to every ten pupils at secondary level⁸
- speech and language therapy for all deaf children who have been assessed as requiring it
- deaf awareness and sign language training (where appropriate) to all staff (teaching and non-teaching) and pupils who work alongside deaf children and to hearing parents

The above should be specified according to the child's individual needs in the Individual Education Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs. Schools and local education authorities should put into practice Paragraph 4:28 of the Code of Practice⁶ which requires provision to be identified to match each learning difficulty and, where included in a Statement, to be "specific, detailed and quantified" and to be linked to the child's expected educational outcome.

Key recommendations

Resourcing for high quality inclusion needs to take full account of deaf children's individual needs for:

- staffing (quality and quantity)
- information and communications technology, including aids to hearing;
- school infrastructure, (including communication, acoustics and consideration in school policies)

Monitoring success

For inclusion to be successful, its effectiveness needs to be regularly monitored. Decisions about placement should be considered at each review of a pupil's Individual Educational Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs. Parents should be invited to discuss the success of their child's current placement according to the achievement of defined learning outcomes. Local education authorities should ensure that reviews take place regularly. They should also include the pupil, the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, an Educational Psychologist, Health and Social Services professionals and the school's class teacher, form teacher or head teacher. Local education authority representatives should attend such reviews every two years.

The reviews should also examine the child's social relationships, self-esteem and participation in the school's extra-curricular activities as well as academic achievement.

Local education authorities' Special Educational Needs policies should be monitored regularly and the success of their policy on inclusion should be assessed. Parents should be consulted, through an appropriate committee or voluntary body, on the results of the assessment.

Key recommendations

Effective monitoring requires:

- inter-agency agreement, including parents, on learning outcomes which could be specified in IEPs/Statements
- reviews of IEPs/Statements to examine the pupil's social relationships, self-esteem and participation in extra curricular activities
- parents and professionals working together to develop and implement school and LEA special educational needs policies

Conclusion

If the above indicators of inclusion, the resources to satisfy them and the procedures to monitor them are in place, then deaf children can be provided with a high quality inclusive education.

There continues to be a strong moral argument for educating all deaf children in mainstream schools and mainstream classrooms. However, it is important to emphasise the argument in this document that this is only one of many important considerations in a deaf child's education. No matter how much we want to see progress towards making ordinary schools more welcoming and effective places for deaf children to be, we must be at least equally concerned with the children's educational achievements. A high quality inclusive education for all deaf children still requires a continuing spectrum of educational provision – one that includes not only well funded provision in mainstream school classrooms, but also includes education in special classes and in special schools.

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