

# Achievements of Deaf Pupils

Readers will recall that Dr Mary Brennan of the Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC) was recently awarded a major grant from the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED).

The project is now up and running with Mary Brennan as Project Director. Mary is also Senior Lecturer in Deaf Education at the University of Edinburgh with an internationally respected background in related research.

The Research Associate is Marian Grimes. Marian is a qualified Teacher of the Deaf with over 10 years' experience in Deaf Education, mostly within further and higher education.

Emily Healy is the Administrator with experience within university research settings; her previous post was within the Department of Public Health Sciences.

Dr Ernst Thoutenhoofd, as Database Developer, completes the Team. Ernst was previously a Senior Lecturer/Researcher at the University of Durham and of Central Lancashire. Background includes work on multimedia database development.

## Initial progress

So far we have concentrated on establishing efficient office systems overviewing relevant literature, policy and legislation, consulting with key individuals and groups and producing a draft questionnaire for the statistical survey. Setting the scene has been surprisingly time-consuming in three main areas:

- The amount of relevant initiatives and policies to digest within both mainstream and special education is somewhat challenging. The sight of Emily bearing large piles of Scottish Executive documents towards my desk has become a regular feature. The assistance from specialist colleagues within the University in ensuring no stones are left



untuned has been particularly appreciated. We are in the process of producing a flow-chart which could, you never know, form the basis of an interesting board game as a future fund-raising opportunity!

- As most people will be aware, the assessment and qualification system within Scottish schools is going through major changes, for example the introduction of new National Qualifications (the 'Higher Still' initiative). We found it helpful to produce a summary of key features of the array of current assessments and qualifications for internal reference. However this has proved to be popular with visitors to the project already, so may also have a wider market!
- The main source of information about deaf pupils is, of course, the local authority 'Hearing Impaired Service' or equivalent. For various reasons there have been a number of changes to these services over the past few years. Ensuring that we have accurate up-to-date information about each local authority's service has been, and continues to be, another interesting challenge.

As was described in the last edition of the SSC Newsletter, the broad aim of the project is to provide hard statistical evidence of the attainments of deaf pupils as well as to set up a 'profile database' of for individual pupils which will be accessible to parents (and pupils when-ever appropriate) as well as professionals. We

# in Scotland

also hope to provide teachers with tools for delivering selected key assessments to deaf pupils in whichever communication mode is most appropriate. At present there is little information about how tests are delivered, which is crucial.

## Future Action

Future action falls into 3 broad areas as follows:

### 1. Setting up a Scotland-wide statistical database

We intend to distribute a questionnaire to all heads of services as soon as possible. We are aware that heads of services have recently been asked to provide detailed data for other projects, so we hope to find ways of avoiding the duplication of information already collected. We expect that we will provide the questionnaire in a disc form if possible, so that the service will be able to keep the original and send a copy to the project for collation.

### 2. Providing means of delivering assessments to suit communication preferences

As part of the DEMAQS consortium, our project has strong links with the Curriculum, Evaluation and Management (CEM) Centre in Durham University. DEMAQS produces guidelines and resources to enable CEM mainstream assessments in core areas to be delivered by whatever communication mode suits the individual deaf/hearing impaired pupil. We hope that the Achievements of Deaf Pupils in Scotland Project will act as the main Scottish contact for the DEMAQS resources. In the short term, the intention is to distribute, collate and disseminate results of a group of relevant CEM/DEMAQS assessments to at least one age group within Scotland at the beginning of autumn term 2001. Normally there is a minimum charge to the local authority, but we hope that the costs will be found for this

initial trial so that the assessments and detailed feedback will be free of charge to services.

### 3. Establishing a pilot 'profile database' of individual deaf pupils

We intend that the anonymous information collected from services will form the basis of the 'profile database'. Initially this will be piloted in one area with the co-operation of all the key people and organisations involved. As with the VI Scotland project, the information will only be collected if mandated by parents. The aim is that the database will meet the needs already identified by parents and professionals alike for a comprehensive and accessible source of assessment information.

There are lots of issues to be resolved about the profile database, which the team will be working on over the next few months. Watch this space!

If you would like to comment or query any aspect of the project, do get in touch with us.

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