

Report



Title **NDCS Education Survey – Briefing Paper 1: Ratio of deaf children to peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf in England**

Prepared by National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2009, NDCS conducted a short survey on education provision for deaf children. The survey asked local authorities to provide information on the number and qualifications of each Teacher of the Deaf¹, the number of deaf children living in their area, where they attended school, levels of support provided for deaf children, use of eligibility criteria, budgets, delegation and academies.
- 1.2 133 hearing or sensory support services responded to the questionnaire. Some of these services support more than one local authority; therefore responses were received from 144 local authorities out of the 150 in England. In some cases, the services supporting more than one local authority did not disaggregate the data for each local authority it serves. This means that individual local authority information may not be available for authorities working in a consortium.
- 1.3 This is the first in a series of briefing papers that analyses the results from the survey. It describes the variation in the number of deaf children supported per peripatetic Teacher.

2. Background

- 2.1 The ratio of children aged 0-19 years per peripatetic Teacher² for each service was calculated by dividing the number of children supported by hearing support services (who were not attending specialist provision for deaf pupils) by the number of Teachers in the service.

3. Results for England

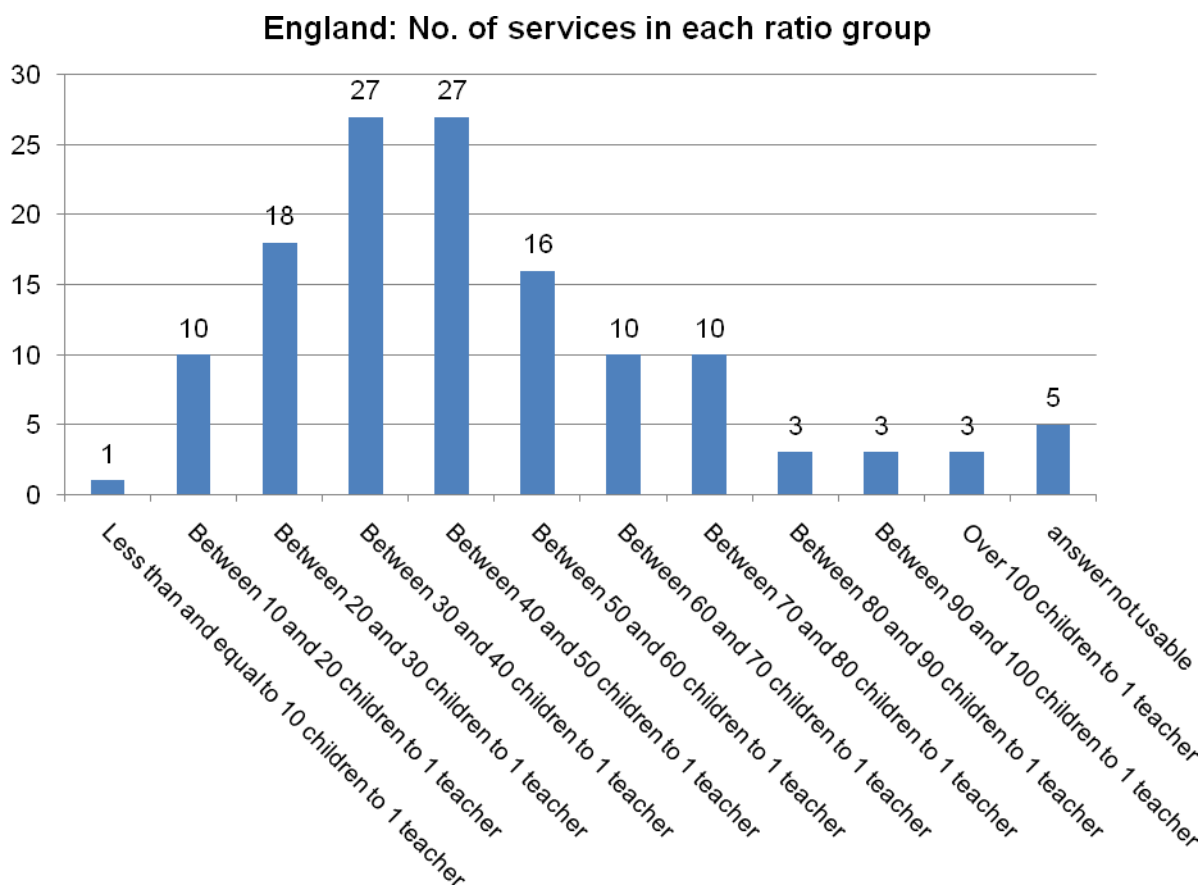
- 3.1 Out of 133 responses from services, 128 made returns that could be used to calculate ratios for the peripatetic service. The 128 returns covered 139 of the 150 local authorities in England.

¹ In this note, references to Teachers (with a capital T) should be taken to refer to Teachers of the Deaf, who hold an additional qualification in teaching deaf children. The word is capitalised to distinguish from mainstream teachers.

² In a small number of cases, services are structured so that they have a 'central pool' of staff that work for both peripatetic services and resource centres in mainstream schools. This pool of staff is deployed flexibly making an apportionment to each function difficult.

- 3.2 The average (mean) ratio was 42.3³ deaf children per Teacher of the Deaf. Given the variation in the ratios between services (as illustrated in diagram 1 below), the median was also calculated. The median was 43 deaf children per Teacher of the Deaf⁴.
- 3.3 The lowest ratio was 5.8 children per Teacher. The highest ratio was 142.0 pupils per Teacher.
- 3.4 Services in the highest quartile had a ratio of 57.4 or more children to one peripatetic Teacher.
- 3.5 Services in the lowest quartile had a ratio of 31.0 or fewer children to one peripatetic Teacher.
- 3.6 Diagram 1 shows the distribution of ratios and the considerable variation throughout England:

Diagram 1: Distribution of child-Teacher ratio in England 2009



³ It should be noted that the analysis excludes the small number of pupils belonging to a local authority (LA) who attend out of authority mainstream schools. This is appropriate for analysis at LA level as they may be supported by the host LA rather than the LA where they live. However, it does depress the mean ratio for England slightly. A very marginal difference is made to all regions but in London, where there more cross boarder movement, the inclusion of these pupils increases the ratio from 47.4 to 49.9

⁴ The mean or average for England is calculated by taking the number of children aged 0-19 years not attending specialist educational establishments for the deaf and dividing this by the number of peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf. The median of a set of data values is the middle value. Thus a median ratio of 43 suggests that 50% of LAs had a ratio above this value and 50% below this value. The mean is best used when the distribution of the data is symmetrical. However, the median is best used when the data is skewed.

4. The results by region

4.1 Table 1 confirms that there is considerable variation in the ratios between regions. It also shows that in some regions there is a significant difference between the mean and median values. This indicates that in those regions there are a small number of services with ratios at the extremes of the range that are distorting the mean value for their region. In such cases, use of the median may be a better measure for benchmarking within a region. For national benchmarking, the median and mean values are much closer.

Table 1: Ratio of children aged 0-19 years (not attending specialist education provision for the deaf) per peripatetic Teacher of the Deaf by region. Mean and median values

Region	No. of Services with usable answers	Ratio of children per peripatetic Teacher			
		Mean ratio	Median ratio	Lowest ratio	Highest ratio
England	128	42.3 to 1⁵	43.0 to 1	5.8 to 1	142.0 to 1
North East	9	37.4 to 1	37.5 to 1	18.5 to 1	62.0 to 1
North West	21	31.0 to 1	31.7 to 1	13.2 to 1	71.0 to 1
Yorkshire and Humberside	13	49.3 to 1	41.9 to 1	26.2 to 1	91.6 to 1
East Midlands	7	39.5 to 1	49.6 to 1	16.3 to 1	77.9 to 1
West Midlands	13	39.7 to 1	33.8 to 1	23.9 to 1	67.2 to 1
East	8	49.9 to 1	51.3 to 1	28.9 to 1	72.5 to 1
South East	18	52.7 to 1	43.4 to 1	21.8 to 1	114.5 to 1
London	28	47.4 to 1 ⁶	43.3 to 1	5.8 to 1	142.0 to 1
South West	11	40.0 to 1	56.7 to 1	19.3 to 1	96.3 to 1

4.2 Table 2 shows how the mean and median ratios in each region differ from the mean and median ratio for England. The difference is expressed as a percentage. A negative percentage indicates a more favourable ratio in that region.

Table 2: How the mean and median ratios in each region differ from the mean and median ratio for England

Region	Difference from the England mean and median ratios	
	Mean ratio	Median ratio
England	0.0%	0.0%
North East	-11.6%	-12.8%
North West	-27.0%	-26.3%
Yorkshire and Humberside	16.5%	-2.6%
East Midlands	-6.6%	15.3%
West Midlands	-6.1%	-21.4%
East	18.0%	19.3%
South East	24.6%	0.9%
London	12.1%	0.7%
South West	-5.4%	31.9%

⁵ See footnote 2 above

⁶ See footnote 2 above

- 4.3 The differences in mean and median ratios by region make comparative analysis difficult. The East has a higher ratio than England on both median and mean measures. However, it is interesting to note that the East region also has the highest percentage of pupils attending specialist provision for deaf pupils and has reported a significantly lower number of deaf children per thousand population than other regions (see briefing note 2 on the number of deaf children).
- 4.4 A higher proportion of deaf post 16 students in the South East (see Briefing Note 2) may partly explain the higher median ratio in this region.
- 4.5 The North West has the most favourable ratio of children to Teachers of the Deaf on both median and mean measures, followed by the North East. It is interesting to note that it is these two regions that have the lowest gap in attainment between the percentage of deaf pupils attaining 5 A*-C GCSEs (including English and Maths) and all pupils⁷ over the 3 year period 2007-09. However, the data from the education survey falls short of being able to show whether there is a significant link between the child to Teacher ratios and attainment. To do this would require access to a level of data not yet available, including data on the progression of all deaf children between each Key Stage.

5. Rural and urban areas

- 5.1 An analysis has been undertaken to see whether there was a difference between urban and rural areas. Rural areas were defined as shire counties and local authorities that were once part of shire authorities who are predominantly rural in character. All other things being equal, one would expect the ratio of children to Teachers to be lower in rural areas because of the greater travel time involved in visiting schools and families over a wider geographic area, and perhaps because there is a lower proportion of children in specialist provision. However, urban areas are likely to support more deaf children where English is an additional language or in families on low incomes.
- 5.2 Table 3 shows the median for rural and urban services. The ratio of children to Teachers is 5% lower than the national average in rural areas and 1% higher than the national average in urban areas.

Table 3: Child-Teacher ratios in rural and urban services

Region	No. of services	Ratio of children per peripatetic Teacher		
		Median	Lowest ratio	Highest ratio
England	128	43 to 1 Teacher	5.8 to 1 Teacher	142 to 1 Teacher
'Rural' services	42	40.7 to 1 Teacher	18.5 to 1 Teacher	77.9 to 1 Teacher
'Urban' services	91	43.5 to 1 Teacher	5.8 to 1 Teacher	142 to 1 Teacher

6. Commentary

- 6.1 The wide variation in ratios is consistent with the conclusions of RNID's research *At the Heart of Inclusion*⁸, which was based on a smaller sample of local authorities. The figures suggest that the level of support a deaf child receives is dependent on where they live, rather than their level of need.

⁷ Figures taken from Government data on attainment of deaf children. This data includes children where hearing impairment is the primary type of special educational need, and where the child has been placed at School Action Plus or who have a statement. See www.ndcs.org.uk/data for more information.

⁸ RNID (2006) *At the heart of inclusion: the role of specialist support for deaf pupils*

- 6.2 The figures need to be treated with a degree of caution. The ratios of children to Teachers will reflect the level of investment in hearing support services. However, they may also reflect how a service counts and/or supports children. For example, a service with a seemingly “better” ratio may have excluded children with a unilateral loss or glue ear, who may receive an occasional monitoring visit. Such children may have been included by other services. However, the number of children identified in this survey overall is much higher compared to comparable studies, suggesting that most local authorities have included children with a temporary and/or unilateral loss. Another possible issue is that in London, a local authority that supports a high proportion of deaf children in mainstream schools who live outside the area, will have a higher ratio than that reported. However, for London as a whole, the number of cross border pupils is only 4% of the total.
- 6.3 The figures also do not reflect other peripatetic staff in the service, such as specialist communication support workers, and therefore do not fully reflect a local authority’s investment in specialist support.
- 6.4 For the 2011 survey of provision planned by the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE), consideration will need to be given to whether there is scope for adding to the length of the questionnaire to provide greater consistency in the returns made by services.
- 6.5 Nevertheless, on the basis of the 2009 survey, it appears there is level of variation in service provision which would not be tolerated in other services (e.g. class sizes), supporting the view that there needs to be a national core offer.