

Involving parents and deaf young people in CHSWGs

The National Deaf Children's Society is the leading charity for deaf children and young people. We can support you to encourage parents and deaf young people to play a key role in your Children's Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG).

This guide sets out tips for encouraging parents and deaf young people to get involved in helping to improve services through your CHSWG. As a group you may also have lots of other ideas and experience of recruiting and retaining parent and deaf young people representatives, which we would really appreciate you sharing with us.

Please note: Within this guide the term 'parents' refers to both parents and carers.

Why involve parents and deaf young people in CHSWGs?

Ensuring that deaf young people and their parents are fully involved and engaged in CHSWGs can be challenging. However, the participation of parents and deaf young people can provide many benefits including:

- They communicate first-hand experience of the challenges deafness can bring.
 - As service users, they provide feedback to services represented at the CHSWG.
 - They are an integral voice within CHSWGs in improving standards and effectiveness.
 - They bring key information from other parents and deaf young people.
 - They have a unique overview of all of the services.
 - They can undertake key roles and responsibilities, such as Chair.
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How can parents and deaf young people be involved in CHSWGs?

There are a variety of ways parents and deaf young people can be involved in CHSWGs including:

- **Attending CHSWG meetings**
With CHSWG meetings now being held remotely, this gives more opportunity for parents and deaf young people to join meetings and actively participate.
 - **Polls, surveys and questionnaires**
These are a great way to gather the views of parents and deaf young people and ensure discussions within CHSWGs are relevant. [Doodle Poll](#) and [Survey Monkey](#) can be used to create these to be shared easily via email or social media such as Facebook.
 - **Action plan**
Sharing this with parents and deaf young people via email creates an opportunity to input into the action plan outside of meetings, ensuring they are aware of ongoing actions. It is a transparent approach that identifies the plans moving forward in the CHSWG for parents and deaf young people.
 - **Subgroups**
There may be specific topics or areas of work where a subgroup involving parents or deaf young people is appropriate to work outside of the CHSWG to move an action forward between meetings.
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Top tips for involving parents and deaf young people

- **Setting**
Online meetings have increased attendance from both professionals, parents, and deaf young people across CHSWGs. Meeting on [Zoom](#), [Teams](#), [StarLeaf](#) etc has removed previous barriers including travel, childcare and venue booking. It is important to ensure everyone has access to the platform being used.
- **Location**
If you decide to have annual in person meetings, choose an accessible location with parking and public transport links. If your CHSWG prefers to meet in person, ensure there is still a virtual option so that it is inclusive for everyone to attend. If you take this hybrid approach, you will need to make sure that remote participants are not left out of the conversation.
- **Timing of meetings**
It is best to discuss dates and times as a group. It is usually best to avoid meeting at key times in the day, such as school drop off and pick up time. Consider the possibility of parents and deaf young people attending in their lunch break or in the evening.
- **Make your group accessible**
Ensure any communication needs are addressed prior to the meeting. Have clear information about other ways that parents and deaf young people can get involved in your group without having to attend a meeting. This could be via professionals or a parent/deaf young people CHSWG representative who collects feedback through surveys, email or WhatsApp groups.
- **Have a relevant agenda**
Ensure parents and deaf young people are included in the agenda. The group should be strategic and make a difference, but avoid having an agenda that only covers operational functions of health services. Parents and deaf young people should be equal partners of the group.
- **Make your group visible**
The National Deaf Children's Society has a template flyer that can be adapted to advertise your CHSWG to parents, which local Teachers of the Deaf and Audiologists could hand out. Use your Local Offer, parent carer forums and service web pages, social media and newsletters to highlight the existence of your group. Share your action plan, minutes and CHSWG contact information.
- **Get local input**
Link with deaf clubs, [local deaf children's societies](#) and other charities working with deaf children. Consult with local groups of deaf children via education settings/social groups. Local input is key to feed into CHSWG decision making. If you have produced a flyer, this can help to explain what CHSWGs do.
- **Plan meetings in advance**
Ensure that dates and plans for meetings are agreed well in advance. Send out a timely reminder ahead of the meeting date, so that parents and deaf young people can plan meetings into their schedule. Ensure members are involved with setting agendas and that they are provided in advance.

- **Action plan and minutes**

Send out the action plan and minutes within an agreed time frame, setting out clear action points, who is responsible for them, and when they should be completed. Be realistic when expecting parents or deaf young people to take on board tasks as they may have many other responsibilities.

- **Impact**

Highlighting the impact of your group and monitoring outcomes from your action plan will show parents and deaf young people how their input is making a difference for deaf children. This will be further highlighted by ensuring parents and deaf young people input into your CHSWG Annual Report.

- **Acknowledge contributions**

You could email parents and deaf young people to let them know how their comments have impacted on services. You could also have updates on the Local Offer or an agreed website (health/local authority) with a section on the contribution parents and deaf young people have made. They will appreciate acknowledgment that their contribution is valued and a worthwhile investment.

- **Have clear terms of reference and glossaries**

Terms of reference should be in clear language so they can be understood by all, setting out clear expectations so parents and deaf young people know what it is they are signing up to. Avoid jargon in meetings – the [CHSWG guidance \(2019\)](#) has a glossary that you can distribute in advance which can help. Make very clear to parents and deaf young people that there is a standard of confidentiality within the group. This should be included in your terms of reference and highlighted in meetings.

For any further information and support please contact Local Engagement:
localengagement@ndcs.org.uk.