
Deaf children and Research: a model of good practice and participation

October 2008

A good practice agreement coordinated by The Deafness and Cognition Language Research Centre (DCAL) and The Sign Bilingual Consortium.

Background

This document resulted from a request from the Sign Bilingual Consortium for more collaboration between Universities and School regarding research participation. Previous consultation has shown that both schools and University researchers are keen to improve and formalise the cooperative relationship and that there is a shared desire to ensure good practice in the carrying out of research into deaf children's development. This agreement was originally drawn up between coordinating partners based in London at DCAL and Frank Barnes School for the Deaf but the principles contained in this document are applicable to all educational settings for deaf children.

The university and school services partners who collaborated to draw up this agreement include:

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Michael Siegal (University of Sheffield)
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Karen Simpson, Catherine Drew (Frank Barnes School, London)
Ann Stokes (Wakefield Service for the Deaf and HI Children)
Karen Turner, Sally Holmes (DAHIT Service, Leeds LEA)
Babs Day (Longwill School for Deaf Children, Birmingham)
Ros Way, (Elmfield School, Bristol)
Sarah McClay, (Blanche Neville School, London)
Peter Plant (Shropshire)
Cheryl Ford (Royal School for the Deaf Derby)

The aims of this agreement are:

1. To ensure good practice in the carrying out and reporting of research with deaf children.
2. To ensure research projects follow a set of Good Practice Requirements aimed at achieving a positive impact on the educational attainment of deaf children.
3. To set up formal procedures for recruitment and testing of deaf children so as to maximise the efficiency of research and cause the least disruption to deaf children's education as possible.
4. To set up formal ways by which researcher's liaise with schools to inform and provide feedback of the findings of research through a central GPA website, regular workshops, talks and newsletters.

The University perspective

Research is carried out on language, cognition, literacy and development in deaf children. This can be formal, externally funded research projects (UK wide) or small scale pilot projects which are for developing ideas in order to apply for a research grant. This research may require the participation of different aspects of the school community including deaf children and their parents, teachers and other professionals.

School perspective

Schools and services are keen to be involved in research projects with deaf children that are relevant, that support schools to improve their practice and best support the learning of their pupils. Also, schools and services receive many requests to be involved with research projects and they wish to have procedures to assist them to be selective about which projects are the most beneficial and add most value to the education of their pupils. Schools and services would welcome avenues of support and advice for evaluating potential research applications against criteria agreed by the sign bilingual consortium with input from the Head teachers and Head of Services concerned.

Schools and services also have to balance their time requirements and would require allocated research slots through the school year of any research projects alongside access to the Foundation Stage and National Curriculum. They anticipate that they would normally have the capacity to support 3 research projects per year unless there are outstanding circumstances. They also wish to be provided with effective and timely feedback of the research findings in order to implement them and also to be provided with any necessary staff training to ensure consolidation of any new processes.

Suggested Criteria for assessment of the research proposals are that the proposed research:

- Is relevant to the educational needs of deaf children and the school priorities
- Involves initial consultation with schools and services about their research priorities
- Includes a reasonable period of developing public relations
- States clear aims of the involvement of the community and protocols
- Includes an negotiated time scale to fit in with school priorities
- Contributes to raising the achievements of deaf children
- Supports improvements classroom practice
- Supports the learning needs of deaf children
- Includes regular reports and updates to the school/service in question
- Includes outcomes that are publishable, disseminated and made accessible to the school community

Procedures for schools and services considering a research request from University groups

1. All schools services assess the research proposal against the agreed criteria
2. Schools or services forward a copy of the Good Practice Agreement (page 4) for completion by the proposers.
3. Schools or services seek specific research advice from relevant academics as appropriate on the research validity and reliability. The choice of advisor will depend on the research topic and issues and conflict of interest issues
4. If the proposal meets the aims of the Good Practice Agreement the schools or services will confirm in writing their agreement to participate in the research.
5. The schools and researchers will plan the timetable of research activity and the dissemination of results in accordance with the schools or services calendar.
6. On completion of the research Universities should produce a summary of the findings aimed at users of the research to be on the BATOD website.

The Good Practice Agreement Requirements

Following the evaluation of the proposal against the above criteria, partners wishing to sign up to the GPA agree to the following:

1. All research fulfils ethical guidelines at University and/or COREC standards.
2. Researchers plan in consultation with schools a definite and achievable set of plans for implementing the findings of the research e.g. INSET training days, workshops, talks etc.
3. All research takes into consideration the language and communication abilities of deaf children as participants. Researchers must discuss tests with teachers before testing and if necessary researchers must be sign language fluent.
4. Schools agree for their pupils to participate in research projects within the specified limit of normally 3 per year at negotiable times of the year.
5. Schools assist researchers in coordinating parental consent and if necessary provide background information on children (e.g. language and non-verbal IQ tests).
6. Researchers provide feedback during and following completion of the research project within an agreed timescale, to schools and also on the GPA website.
7. Feedback to schools attempts to relate findings to the school's activities and outlines future related research plans.

Agreement to be signed by both partners:

Title of project and main objectives:: _____

University/Research Organisation: _____

Signed: _____ **Date**

School/ Service Organisation: _____

Signed: _____ **Date**

SCHOOL SERVICE RESPONSE:

Title of project:

Research Proposer /organisation:

Dates received **Date replied**

Assessment of the proposal:

The proposed project (delete as appropriate):

Is relevant to the educational needs of deaf children and the school priorities **YES/NO**

Involves initial consultation with schools/services about their research priorities **YES/NO**

Includes a reasonable period of developing public relations **YES/NO**

States clear aims of the involvement of the community and protocols **YES/NO**

Includes an negotiated time scale to fit in with our school/service priorities **YES/NO**

Contributes to raising the achievements of deaf children **YES/NO**

Supports improvements classroom practice **YES/NO**

Supports the learning needs of deaf children **YES/NO**

Includes regular reports and updates to the school/service in question **YES/NO**

Includes outcomes that are publishable, disseminated and made accessible to the school community **YES/NO**

Summary:

We have evaluated the proposal against the above criteria and taken academic advice as appropriate and have decided:

We would be interested in collaborating with your research and would be pleased for you to contact us about this.

We are sorry that this project does not currently dovetail with our development priorities but we would be happy to pass your details to other schools and services within the consortium.

Signed **School/service**

Contact details (if appropriate)