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CRIDE: The survey you love to hate ...

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Many of you will have been involved in completing the CRIDE Survey over the past three years. Some of you will have done so with enthusiasm – thank you! some with reluctance - sorry! and some may even have declined to participate, followed by a Freedom of Information Act application being applied – we really needed the information!

We are genuinely appreciative of all the time and effort you have taken to send in your CRIDE surveys.

A bit of background ...

It's worth remembering how the current survey evolved. In previous years, BATOD sent out a paper questionnaire to find out about educational provision for deaf children. This gave useful data on the size of the population, placements and professional caseloads. However, by early 2000's, the return rate for this paper exercise had dwindled. As a consequence, the information obtained was unreliable in identifying trends and also, the relevance of some questions asked had diminished. The importance of getting the information remained however: we need to keep track of the size of the population of deaf children and to know how, where and by whom they are being educated. Clearly a more contemporary vehicle - an online survey - was needed to get the data, to analyse it and to make it widely available. A steering group comprising representatives from BATOD, schools, local authorities, universities and voluntary organisations got together and eventually CRIDE (the Consortium for Research in Deaf Education) was born. A new online survey was developed and the NDCS took on the task of distributing it and analysing the results.

Where we are now...

The third survey for 2013 has now been completed and the results are being analysed as we write. The participation rate has grown steadily and this year increased from 95% to effectively 100%. This is a fantastic outcome – thank you all again - it means that statistics and trends can be trusted and therefore cited with confidence. Admittedly, some of the responses were elicited through FOI requests, but these were far fewer than in previous

years. We'd like to avoid making any of these in future if possible, so we are taking note of the reasons given that deter people from responding. The most common are:

- The time needed to complete the survey
- Not having easy access to the relevant information
- The survey is issued too frequently
- Other surveys request the same or similar information so there shouldn't be a need to replicate the exercise.

We appreciate that that the cycle seems to come around quickly, especially when you are being asked for similar data for other projects. To alleviate the burden, we are currently working to simplify and shorten the survey. We recently agreed that the full survey would only be undertaken bi-annually, with a shorter, themed survey on particular issues in the intervening years. We are collaborating with other bodies (like NatSIP) to see where information can be shared or accessed from other sources. We're hoping that once the data has been located and submitted the first time, the task will be less onerous on subsequent occasions.

It's worth remembering how important the findings from the survey are...

The final reports from CRIDE surveys for England, Scotland and Wales and a summative document for the UK are available on the websites for BATOD

<http://www.batod.org.uk/index.php?id=/resources/survey> and the NDCS

http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/national_data/uk_education_.html. This makes the findings easily available to all users: yourselves as professionals, and also researchers, deaf people and parents of deaf children. Have you felt inclined to read the reports and have you made any direct use of the findings yourself? We think that users can take advantage of uniquely current data in many different ways. Heads of schools and services for deaf children can draw on comparable demographic findings when preparing for internal and external audits of local provision. Having access to annual data can assist in ensuring that deaf children are identified and provided for effectively. For managers, the data set can reliably inform strategic planning relating to staffing and staff training matters - trends can be identified that inform these concerns. Researchers into deaf education who contribute to evidence-based practice will have access to relevant, useful information about the population being studied. Deaf people and parents of deaf children will find the report interesting and informative about national provision for deaf children.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that even when people have been initially reluctant to complete the survey, there have been benefits to their setting. Here are some general points made from feedback we have received from Heads of Services:

- The process has enabled them to become familiar with data in their own local area
- They have been able to recognise gaps in records or shortcomings in data collection and storage in their setting
- They have been able to use the data as bargaining tool for provision and re-structuring of services
- The information has helped prepare for Ofsted or other inspections.

And here's what some Heads of Services and managers have actually said:

'Filling in the CRIDE survey may take some time but the use of the data goes beyond its National uses. I have used the data produced to explain to LA Directors about the extent of the caseload of the service.'

'The data, once assembled, can be used to demonstrate magnitude of need in budget bidding processes.'

'The year on year CRIDE data gives a good idea of level of need for our Service and can be used to predict future demands.'

We also understand from the National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP) that the data is used by officials within the Department for Education to aid their own understanding of deaf children in England.

So, what's next?

- The results of the 2013 survey will be available from January 2014.
- We are modifying the bi-annual survey to ensure its relevance to those working in the field and to be sympathetic to their workloads.
- To this end, the Steering Group membership has been broadened to include more local authority representatives (see note below for a list of members).
- The 2014 survey will be short, asking only for some essential core information plus questions of the first of our biennial 'themes' which this time is about language and modality use.

- We are working on ways to provide you with opportunities for feedback on the survey process so that we can act on your comments (but we don't want to overload you with more questions!)

We are hoping that the changes for 2014 will secure another 100% return, without recourse to FOI requests. We certainly appreciate the time and effort respondents give to the process and hope that it is clear that it is far from an empty exercise. Thank you all again!