

## CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. The strategy outlines a care pathway (page 10).

(a) If you are a service user and/or carer, please tell us what difference you believe the implementation of the pathway will make to the services you experience.

Service users complain about busy eye clinics and waiting times. The eye clinic at Ayr Hospital is accessible to those living in the local town but with a growing number of elderly people with visual impairment living within rural communities consideration needs to be given to the provision of locally accessible clinics. People with hearing impairment are also able to access Audiology at Ayr Hospital but the main Audiology Department is within Crosshouse Hospital and this is not as accessible for people in South Ayrshire rural communities.

(b) How can we best ensure that services and support meet your needs?

The South Ayrshire Sensory Impairment Team operates a duty system for appointments –

Monday 09:30 – 12:30

Wednesday 09:30 – 12:30

Friday 13:30 – 16:00

The service operates a duty phone and text system for deaf clients to facilitate contact at other times.

In addition there is a small disability resource centre where service users can view equipment and test out, with support, equipment that may best meet their needs. Correspondence for South Ayrshire Council service users can be produced in a variety of accessible formats including large print emails, text messages and Braille transcription on request.

(c) If you are a care provider, what changes will you need to make to implement the pathway?

As a local authority we will need to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure gaps in services can be highlighted and addressed and resources developed to meet emerging needs.

We are currently engaged on a Pan Ayrshire basis with our partner authorities and specialist providers to develop a Pan Ayrshire strategy and local action plans.

(d) How will you make these changes?

Within Ayrshire there are plans to develop a Pan Ayrshire Strategy, across the 3 Local Authorities, Ayrshire & Arran Health Board, RNIB Scotland and Action on Hearing Loss.

There are plans to develop a pathway between services which will allow people to be able to access the same level of service within Ayrshire regardless of their post code. It is recognised that there are good links already established between the different organisations working with people with sensory needs including Audiology, Optometry, Ophthalmology, education and voluntary organisations within South Ayrshire.

The pathway will serve to strengthen these links and develop good practice throughout Ayrshire. Local sensory impairment teams have been meeting regularly to share good practice and ensure continuity of service delivery.

2. The strategy identifies key factors that need to be in place to ensure the pathway is successful (Page 11 para 6.7).

(a) Which of the key factors are most important for a successful pathway?

All parties involved including professionals, service users, carers, and voluntary agencies must have a clear understanding of the pathway.

The pathway should be outcome focussed for it to be successful and meaningful to service users.

Clear referral routes are key for a successful pathway. It is hoped that the "See Hear" document will ensure good practice throughout Scotland and that pathways are regularly reviewed and updated. South Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire & Arran, have pathways that could be improved upon.

Good statistical information is essential in planning future service and being aware of service demands and demographic changes. A data base already exists for those registered blind/partially sighted. However, there is no data base kept for clients who have a hearing impairment or are profoundly deaf (we try to keep a local register of referrals received from Audiology) it is important we collate statistics in order to be able to plan and deliver services in an appropriate manner.

Service users should have equal access to information about services in accessible formats throughout Scotland to enable them to start their journey on the pathway. South Ayrshire Council's Sensory Impairment Team's dedicated duty system allows service users to contact the service in a variety of formats including telephone, text, email and office visits. We also have staff trained in BSL to aid communication. We produce correspondence in a variety of formats such as large print and Braille on request; however, I am aware that provision varies throughout Scotland.

Standardising services across the statutory agencies is a key factor in developing a successful pathway. This would ensure that no matter where service users live in Scotland they would receive a quality service which would meet their needs. As South Ayrshire Council is planning on a Pan Ayrshire basis we are heading towards this goal within Ayrshire.

Sensory awareness training is vital if the needs of service users are to be recognised by staff members out with the field of sensory impairment and that service users are referred to appropriate services. Within Ayrshire the Bridge to Vision service provides information and training to staff working within the Learning Disability Team. This will be widened to those working with individuals who have suffered sensory impairment as a result of a stroke or dementia.

(b) Which are the most challenging to put in place?

Raising the standards of service throughout Scotland whilst facing reduced financial resources will present a challenge. We must ensure we continue to provide quality services within the current financial challenges.

Partnership working will flag up challenges, in particular IT systems, sharing of information and confidentiality.

Although we welcome the recommendation of Sensory Screening Identification this will have resource implications for anyone providing services to people with sensory loss. Following the screening, partner in NHS should commit to make referrals to sensory services or signpost people to appropriate services.

(c) Do you think that any key factors have been missed?

One of the key factors missing is recognising that British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own right and BSL training should be delivered to all front line staff. This would require funding commitment from organisations but is essential particularly within statutory services.

BSL training should be accessible to all parents and carers of children and adults who use this form of communication and should be provided free of charge.

3. The strategy identifies areas for action that should be addressed going forward (Page 13-16)

(a) Which of the areas for action will be the most challenging to implement?

Carrying out an audit for all spending on sensory impairment across Scotland will require scoping to identify all services. As part of the Joint Sensory Strategy within Ayrshire a scoping exercise has been undertaken and is in progress. The exercise seeks to identify the financial cost of services particularly within local authorities.

Sharing information between agencies could prove challenging with issues around confidentiality, appropriate consent to share protocols need to be developed.

Sensory Impairment Awareness training to front line staff across the care sector is essential. If staff are trained to screen and identify clients as part of the assessment process this will ensure their needs are recognised and they can be referred on to the necessary agencies at an early stage. The vision 20/20 report highlighted that many eye conditions are treatable if they are diagnosed early. Early detection and treatment would help prevent avoidable blindness. Early intervention from a specialist sensory impairment worker i.e. Habilitation and Rehabilitation worker would reduce the need for dependency on other services and maximise the individual's independence. Service and support should be outcome focussed with the service user at the centre of all planning.

(b) Which of the areas for action will make the biggest difference and why?

- Clear referral pathways.
- Consistency in service provision across Scotland
- Partnership working
- Outcome focussed services directed by service users.

(c) Are there any other areas for action that you would like to see included within the strategy?

It is important that the "See Hear" document is referenced to the "See It My Way" document which identifies clear outcomes for people with a visual impairment. The needs of children who lose their vision or hearing is different to that of adults who lose their vision or hearing in later life, this needs to be properly defined in the document. Also clear definition of habilitation and rehabilitation should be outlined and the difference in the 2 approaches. The significant importance of individuals receiving rehabilitation and habilitation at an early stage should also be highlighted. Children who are defined as having significant visual impairment by medical staff may not be registered for a variety of reasons and may not be referred on to appropriate services. They also may not be registered through the registration process until they are much older. To ensure they receive early intervention a notification system should be introduced between Health, Local Authorities, Education and Voluntary Agencies to meet and address the views of the group at an early stage.

4. Please comment on the current provision of sensory impairment services as either a service provider or service user. If you have any experience of sensory impairment services, please let us know what you think of them: this should include any experience of one-stop shops.

At present South Ayrshire Council's Sensory Impairment Team consists of

Team Leader X 1  
Social Worker X 2  
Social Work Assistants X 1.5  
Rehabilitation Worker X 25 hr post

The Social Work Assistants are trained in BSL to Level 3, in addition there is access to interpreting services if required. Children with sensory impairment are now managed by the Children with Special Needs Team however service users access specialist services from the adult Sensory Impairment Team for mobility training, aids to daily living and deaf/blind communication.

There is a transparent, accessible referral system whereby other departments, agencies and service users can refer to the service direct. We also provide support and advice as part of the duty system. Clients and carers can see a duty officer Monday, Wednesday or Friday, appointments are not always necessary, carers and service users can drop in on these days. This is particularly helpful to our profoundly deaf community to ensure they have equal access to other services and departments within the council. Our current service remit includes carrying out assessments, outcome focussed care planning and BPI registration. We also maximise income as part of the assessment process, provide aids and adaptations to aid daily living and provide communication support to deaf/blind service users and provide information, advice and support to carers and families, other agencies and other staff groups. We can assist service users to apply for grants for funding from charities.

The staff team works closely with other agencies such as Guide Dogs for the blind, Visibility, Deaf Blind Scotland, Sense Scotland, Sign Language Interactions, RNIB and Action for Hearing Loss. Local groups are supported by the team who attend their meetings and provide information about service developments.

All staff within the team are dedicated and aim to keep abreast of changes within the field of sensory impairment and care sectors while ensuring they are involved in re-shaping care for older people, they attend relevant exhibitions, conferences and training.

5. What difference will the implementation of the strategy make to your life?

If an increased sensory programme is implemented to identify sensory loss this could increase the referral rates to sensory services. All current research indicates that sensory loss is on the increase particularly with an ageing population.

6. Does this strategy properly reflect the current climate and developments in policy and practice for children and young people particularly in relation to the Getting it Right for Every Child approach and the Doran Review?

Yes the Local Authority agrees the strategy reflects developments in Children's Services and highlights the rights of children to assessment and appropriate services.

7. Do you have anything you wish to add to the Sensory Impairment Strategy or any other general comments that have not been covered by the questions?

No