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.

As a service user, the proposed single point of access for integrated seems to be reasonable and efficient way of handling a person's case.

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

You have already included the GP as one of the links in the flowchart. This is paramount. GPs play a major role especially that most often a person with sensory impairment may suffer other underlying conditions. E.g. in my case, I suffer both vision and hearing loss due to an underlying degenerative condition that causes other health problems that involve dealing with various medical practitioners and affect the quality of life. Perhaps a person in the GP surgery as a point of contact handling the affairs of the sensory impaired within their practice, would be also good to have as they may be able coordinate resources efficiently in the instance of having various users with the same needs. It would be also helpful to equip the surgery with an in house counsellor as it will make the service integration easier.

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

NOT APPLICABLE

(d) How will you make these changes?

NOT APPLICABLE

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 the listed factors are important. However, three of them, in my opinion based on my own experience, standout:

“It is important that referral routes into support services are clear to those undertaking diagnoses, and that information is available in appropriate formats to the individuals themselves. For the majority of people, the point of diagnosis will be undertaken primarily through NHS Audiologists, ophthalmologists, optometrists or independent optometry practitioners. Others will first become engaged through their GP”

The above is fairly important as it will ensure that the service user will receive the required assistance in a reasonable timely fashion.

“A commitment to a single point of access wherever possible, including for ongoing contact. This places a responsibility on services and agencies to work together effectively and reduce duplication and confusion for the individual;”

I can not emphasise the importance of the above especially one the user suffers more than one impairment. When one loses more than one sense as an adult, daily life becomes extremely hard to handle. As such cutting the layers involved to get the service needed is vital.

“A commitment to awareness raising training for front line staff who may have to deal with people with sensory impairments”

Building on what I wrote above regarding how hard daily life can get, there is nothing worse than showing up in a place that is supposed to help but end up wounding instead. I refer here to attitudes and words unintentionally used by front staff who for no fault of their own may not have had training or exposure to people with sensory impairments. Well-trained front staff leaves a positive impact on the service user and encourages them to get engaged with life not to avoid it.

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

“A commitment to a single point of access wherever possible, including for ongoing contact. This places a responsibility on services and agencies to work together effectively and reduce duplication and confusion for the individual;”

The above may prove to be the hardest given the level of coordination and resources involved but not inconceivable to achieve if a phased-approach to implementation is used.

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

No. The cited factors are comprehensive.

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?

Data Collection – must ensure that the data are ‘valid, correct’ especially when it is obtained from various sources and privacy checks and balances are in place.

Barriers to Everyday life – not everyone is born with a family that would lend support to an individual when s/he faced with the challenges of disability. This category of the sensory-impaired face the toughest challenges on how they can pick themselves up to be part of life and not to be forgotten.

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

Barriers to Everyday life – As it will have a good impact in empowering the service users to engage with life and not to feel isolated and invalid.

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

More attention ought to be given to the ‘mental health’ of the sensory-impaired. Feeling good mentally can make a world of difference in coping with the physical impact of a disability.

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.

I found the coordination between Ophthalmology at Nine Wells and organisations for the Blind to be of excellent standard. Dundee Blind and Partially Sighted Society provides excellent services.

The difficulty lies when one suffers from more than one sensory-impairment as well as an underlying degenerative condition. A better coordination is needed in such situations.

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

It will improve my quality of life.

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?

I can not comment as I am not familiar with the Doran review.

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?

As the government struggles with funding shortages, it is sensible to encourage, from the onset, cooperation and interaction with private voluntary organisations that are currently helping the Blind, Deaf, or both. As they may play a role as part of the overall Sensory Impairment Strategy without added costs to the government and the taxpayers.