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.

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

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

NHS Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire Council welcome the development of See Hear: A strategic framework for meeting the needs of people with a sensory impairment in Scotland. We support the recommendation of a pathway that clearly identifies the process of support that both statutory and third sector organisations should develop. We would however suggest that any pathway should not restrict the development of a wider agenda that promotes the inclusion of all citizens and that the duty to ensure that people with a sensory impairment is a shared one across all aspects of society.

The identified pathway reflects a number of discussions and areas of work that are already taking place in Lanarkshire. As a response to the framework these will be developed into a strengthened structure promoting local partnership working and information sharing which will establish the pathway.

Areas of work will include: mapping existing provision and further developing joint working; the development of a clear information framework that assists people with a sensory impairment to access support as and when required and the provision of a wide range of information and training to front line staff which will allow them to advise people about the breadth of support available.

We will ensure that this work will also establish a strategic placement that links with existing developments including those around early years and reshaping care for older people initiatives.

(d) How will you make these changes?

The implementation of the pathway will require the further development of existing networks to enhance the multi disciplinary practice which has been established at all levels throughout North Lanarkshire building on the existing locality based structure. This will link with the well established existing partnership structures including the Disability Partnership Board and Health and Care Partnership which have the oversight of support to people with sensory impairment.

We would look to establish a working group that would include members from NHS Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire Council, voluntary organisations and service user and care representatives to develop the pathway.

The discussions of this group would include how we improve the accessibility of information, further promote choice, ensure effective provision of and access to support including guided self assessment, access to on line services and fast track appointments to speed up assessment and provision processes.

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?

It is essential that the pathway is developed with an asset based focus and the key aim of meeting individuals identified outcomes to be embedded throughout all aspects of the pathway.

All aspects of the proposed framework are important; good quality information in a range of mediums is crucial, a clear referral process and for all staff to have a knowledge of what support is available across the spectrum of agencies is also key. The development of wider assessment to ensure that people are not experiencing a sensory impairment that creates or adds to additional difficulties is of increasing relevance.

At all levels of the pathway it is important that it is based on early intervention that enables greater independence and supports people to achieve the long term goals of inclusion in society, further education and employment.

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

It is important that information, sign posting and advice is easily available and accessible within the local community. If we are truly embracing a human rights perspective to sensory impairment it is important that solutions do not further marginalise people. It should be clear that a single point of access is about knowledge and information being readily available from any point of contact and should not be seen as the development of a physical building or specialist unit.

Another area that may prove challenging is the need to ensure that staff teams that change on a regular basis are kept up to date with accurate information.

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

There may be some merit in looking at the development of a set of Quality Indicators to support the framework.

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?

Reccomendation1
An audit should be undertaken of all current spend on sensory impairment, including that relating to carers, across statutory Health and Social Care and third sector agencies, in relation to specialist provision and also to those elements of other service provision that impact on people with a sensory impairment. In the light of the findings, consideration should be given to options for realignment of spend as appropriate

We believe there may be some difficulty in identifying the specific amounts of money spent on sensory impairment as budgets within statutory agencies do not necessarily make this type of distinction; in particular social work services support people whose sensory impairment may only be an aspect of their life. Some consideration should be given to how helpful this recommendation is; for example we know that local authority social work services spend the most on BSL interpreters, not because people with sensory impairment need more social work intervention than any other service but because there is not sufficient awareness, structures and support available in mainstream society, therefore much of the true cost of providing support is hidden. It may be more effective for all agencies and organisations to clarify what their respective funding areas and responsibilities are in the field of sensory impairment. It would appear reasonable to assume that there is not much overlap or double spend due to the current climate of financial constraint.

Recommendation 2
Local partnerships should consider options for the introduction of basic sensory screening, for example, for people of a certain age, and at agreed times in their care pathway.

Greater clarity about who and where this would be carried out is needed, whilst the overall aim is desirable, it is not always the case that someone will be in a “care pathway” and a sensory impairment may begin to have an impact long before someone comes into contact with services and may indeed result in the assumption that someone requires a higher level of support than they actually do.
If the intention is for a basic screening to take place at a particular age the commitment to carry this out by primary care staff will have to be established.

Recommendation 5
There should be robust systems for maintaining information locally, and sharing this between agencies, in relation to people who have received a diagnosis of a sensory impairment at any time from birth onwards.

Whilst maintaining good quality information about the number of people with a sensory impairment assists in predicting demand and planning, it is important that this does not have such an emphasis placed on it, that it becomes the focus of work rather than the development of outcomes for individual people.

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

Recommendation 4
Local partnerships (in this instance local statutory social and health care agencies, and third sector agencies) should be able to evidence that their

service planning reflects the need in their area.
They should develop care pathways for people with a sensory impairment, which confirm the component parts of the individual's journey. In so doing they should assess performance against the care pathway and the key factors for effective pathways outlined earlier, and use this as the basis for service improvement, and identify the relevant responsibilities across agencies for the delivery of this.
Accessible local information strategies should be developed to include preventative measures and good self care in retaining sensory health, but also providing information on how to access services

The development of focused joint partnerships with representation from local authority, health, third sector agencies and people who use services will result in a enhanced and strengthened support that will provide greater opportunities for people with sensory impairment to achieve the outcomes that are meaningful to them.

The further development of this work within mainstream services has the potential to greatly improve the accessibility of our communities as a whole. However this is not without cost implications particularly if it is to be done well and it is important that the funding of this area is supported by Scottish Government in a practical and proactive manner.

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

It would be useful to emphasise the importance of early interventions that support and sustain people for longer, maximising the skills and abilities than each individual has.

An additional emphasis on the duties of mainstream services to make themselves accessible to all members of their community would further strengthen the framework. This should include a reference to the need for better community planning to respond to the needs of people with a sensory impairment including transport planning and the design of public spaces to facilitate people being enabled to be more involved in the social activities and networks of their choice.

Some mention should be made of the importance of mental health, wellbeing and the negative effect of poverty upon people's life experience and their collective impact on opportunities for participation and inclusion. The framework could be improved by the inclusion of a statement highlighting the importance of all staff and agencies being aware of responsibility to promote uptake of disability benefits and links to other forms of support that can make a difference in people's lives.

We believe that there should be some mention of the use of assistive technology and how this can be used to provide innovative, creative and cost effective solutions for people with a sensory impairment. An example of this from North Lanarkshire is how net books have been use to provide people with a hearing loss access to an interpreter on-line rather than needing to have someone accompany them thus supporting them in a less invasive and independent way.

Whilst the strategy reflects the climate and developments in policy for young people it would also be useful that it is as clearly rooted in the ongoing work around Self Directed Support, Reshaping Care for Older People and Self management and Self

care. In particular it should link with the recommendations of the Allied Health Professionals National Development Plan and ensure that any work undertaken via the NDP dovetails with sensory impairment pathways and embeds the focus of transforming support from “fixing” to “enabling”.

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.

Considerable work has taken place in Lanarkshire to develop a range of support to people in our communities:

NHSL has established services for people with a Visual Impairment which link into those provided by North Lanarkshire. Children’s services include a Low Vision and a Functional Vision service which is based on Tayside’s CVISTA model (considered a best practice model), and a paediatric ophthalmology assessment of children with Hearing Impairment. Adult Low Vision assessment and provision of LV aids is provided by community optometrists throughout Lanarkshire, making the service geographically accessible.
Within the Audiology service, patients with a hearing aid have an individual management plan which is updated on each visit and they can have a copy of their care plan if they wish. Information about the service is available on the NHS Lanarkshire website.

North Lanarkshire Council has established an on line information and self assessment web site, Making Life Easier and are currently working to increase it’s accessibility to people with sensory impairment. This work has been undertaken with staff from NHS Lanarkshire, RNIB and Action on Hearing Loss.
We have six sensory impairment and rehabilitation officers based in our key localities who work with people with both sight and hearing loss across all ages and disabilities. These staff work closely with colleagues from education at pre school, primary and secondary schools levels to support the transition between these and in combination with transition workers support young people to make the shift on to adult life opportunities. We are now looking to develop integrated fast track “clinics” with our colleagues from Audiology to provide a joint approach to support with a focus on self management and developing improved links with the community.
We have also provided training for our Home Support workforce on effective communication strategies for people experiencing sensory loss as a result of stroke, dementia and other conditions and this training is included in our induction training for all new workers. Our reablement service has at its core an outcomes focused approach which is based on people’s strengths and abilities and encourages self management and self-efficacy.

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

Not applicable

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?

The strategy is compatible with Getting it Right for Every Child and the Doran Review, both of which emphasise the right help being available at the right time for children and young people who require additional support, and the need for an integrated approach. GIRFEC has been formally launched within North Lanarkshire, and considerable work has been undertaken across all services, including the third sector, to embed an outcomes focused approach with the child at the centre of planning. A review of the locally developed care pathways, as outlined about, with the development of a robust information framework to ensure that the right support is available for children with a sensory impairment easily and quickly, and in a manner which is responsive to changing need, would serve to strengthen the GIRFEC approach. Similarly, a scoping of the need for training and agreement of target groups would enhance the awareness of key staff, such as those in Early Years, and would help to promote the inclusion of children and young people within society, helping them to achieve good personal outcomes.

It is important that a care pathway helps to inform and support the planning for each child and young person to achieve their own personal outcomes, with a recognition that every child is unique and that the support required will vary for every child. Services and support should serve to enhance the child's life within the family, school and community rather than sit separately, ensuring that additional support is responsive to the changing and evolving needs of each young person.

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