

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.

Implementation of the pathway in its entirety could potentially make a very significant impact on the quality of the health services received by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) communities in Scotland. These represent the majority of the members of Deaf Connections.

While we recognise the importance of a sensory loss strategy within an expanding aged population, we also note that the target group for the See Hear strategy is from “cradle to grave”.

With regard to Deaf and HoH people, the pathway is applicable to both those who have suffered a hearing loss later in life and for parents of Deaf children. We wholeheartedly agree with the first highlighted factor in the pathway schematic as being “Appropriate forms of communication”.

However, with regard to appropriate communication, which is paramount to the Scottish Deaf Community, we are concerned that the related Recommendation 3 is only to be targeted for older people’s services in the first instance. This does not meet the needs of members of the Deaf community who were born profoundly Deaf or who lost their hearing at an early stage of their lives.

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

Regular consultation, including updates on health policy, are critical to keeping Deaf and HoH people well informed. As mentioned above, adequate communication is paramount for these groups. As a service provider for the Deaf community in Scotland, Deaf Connections cannot stress this point too highly.

(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 of the key factors are important. However, from the perspective of the Deaf Connections members, we would prioritise the following two:

- *Information is available in appropriate formats to the individuals themselves.*
- *A commitment to awareness raising training for front line staff who may have to deal with people with sensory impairments.*

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

For the two factors mentioned above in 2 (a), we believe that both present considerable challenges with regard to implementation. We note that the first, appropriate information formats, also falls under the auspices of the Scottish Government's BSL Bill. The second, a commitment to awareness training, is particularly

challenging if this training is to be mandatory and not elective. We note that the former is the aim of the See Hear strategy as covered by Recommendation 3, and this is discussed below.

Given the 10 year time span of the programme, Deaf Connections hopes that the training will be updated and reinforced to keep the ongoing momentum of the project. We also hope that this training will be prioritised to concentrated population areas, where the majority of Deaf and HoH people will be facing barriers to accessing health services.

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

We, at Deaf Connections, consider the key factors as outlined within the See Hear strategy to be comprehensive and potentially far-reaching if implemented in their entirety.

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?

We, at Deaf Connections, consider that Recommendation 3, *mandatory* training for staff in health and social care in sensory awareness, and Recommendation 4, service agencies should be able to evidence that their planning strategies reflects local needs, will be particularly challenging to implement.

In a sense, successful implementation of the previous recommendations should make Recommendation 6, compliance with the Equality Act 2010, more straightforward.

In order to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and promote parity in the ability of different groups to access health services, it is crucial that these recommendations are implemented in full.

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

We, at Deaf Connections, consider that Recommendation 3, *mandatory* training for staff in health and social care in sensory awareness, or from our perspective Deaf Awareness Training (DAT), could potentially make the biggest difference to our members.

This assertion is based on several previous studies, which have shown that the main issues facing Deaf individuals in accessing primary care services in their local area were lack of deaf awareness, difficulty in booking appointments via the telephone and difficulty in communicating with health professionals.

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

We, at Deaf Connections, consider the areas of action outlined within the See Hear strategy to be comprehensive.

However, as the project is scheduled to run over a 10 year time span, we feel that it is critical that the Deaf Community is kept updated on any policy changes arising as a result of the strategy and that further consultations are sought at regular intervals. This would allow for the consideration of changes in life circumstances over this relatively long period for the individuals that the strategy aims to support.

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.

As mentioned above, many previous studies have confirmed that the

major barrier facing Deaf individuals being able to effectively access health services is lack of communication support and information in an appropriate format. It is to be hoped that the See Hear strategy will go some way in breaking down these barriers.

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

Implementation of the strategy in its entirety could potentially make a very significant impact on the lives of the service users of Deaf Connections. The most pertinent components of the strategy for the Scottish Deaf Community are discussed above and these relate to this group being able to access health services on an equal basis as hearing people.

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?

Deaf Connections is a charity whose focus is adult Deaf services and so we are unable to comment on this area.

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?

To reiterate some of the points raised by the questions above:

- We believe that the See Hear Strategy offers a comprehensive range of recommendations that, if implemented fully, could potentially make a significant

positive impact on the lives of Deaf and HoH people within our society.

- We are concerned that some of the crucial recommendations relating to appropriate communication may be targeted exclusively to older people's services and that this will undermine the strategy's commitment to target those with sensory impairment from "cradle to grave".
- We would argue that the 10 years time span of the strategy necessitates future consultation of the target population.
- We suggest that there should be mention of minority ethnic and other minority groups with sensory impairment problems within the strategy. From our experience, these minority groups within an already marginalised community face even greater barriers in accessing front line health services.
- Deaf Connections is excited and strongly favours the sensory impairment strategy. However, we are concerned that the disparate funding bodies comprising the NHS, local health boards, different city councils and local authorities will struggle to coordinate and deliver the actions within this important and timely strategy.