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.

In reality this should streamline support for sensory impaired people. It is hoped this will give deafblind people automatic access to communication and mobility support and ensure that they receive support to access information in a format which is appropriate to them, be that alternative formats or human aids to communication. In practice, ensuring deafblind people are signposted and have access to all services and support appropriate to their needs will be challenging due to the difficulties they experience with accessing information.

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

Ensuring staff receive the necessary training to meet the needs of those with a sensory impairment and in particular dual sensory impaired individuals. Each individual with deafblindness is unique and staff should have the correct skills and awareness to support appropriately.

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

There will be a need for workforce development, to recruit and train more staff who are appropriately skilled to support deafblind people in a person centred and inclusive manner. Thus ensuring deafblind people can have quality lives, feel safe; have things to do; are able to meet people; to stay as well as they can; to live where they would like; and not to have to deal with discrimination.

(d) How will you make these changes?

Through robust recruitment and selection of individuals who are skilled in British sign language. New recruits will also undergo specialist training in deafblind communication and guiding skills. Workforce development is essential.

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?

1. Appropriate communication support which takes into account the preferences of the individual.
2. Taking full account of Sensory Impairment in all assessments.
3. Screening for Sensory Impairment in particular dual sensory loss.
4. Deafblindness/dual sensory impairment is recognised as a discrete disability and recognition given that specialist support is needed for individuals to lead fulfilling lives, not an add on to existing services.
5. Ensuring that any differentiations between deafblindness and dual sensory loss are clarified, they are the same like many conditions it has varying degrees of loss or severity and the impact differs greatly depending on which sensory loss came first.

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

Ensuing appropriate communication will be challenging due to the shortage of skilled workers and a lack of funding to finance the specialist communication support.

Ensuring deafblind people are able to access the Strategy will be hugely challenging for those who are fully deafblind and rely on human aids to communication will be time consuming.

Ensuring staff are skilled and have full knowledge of all services available to individuals in order they are supported appropriately.

Ensuring that true partnership working is evidenced and that the person is at the centre of and fully involved in decisions and choices regarding the services they receive.

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

Post diagnosis support and sign posting for those newly diagnosed with sensory impairment appear to be a vital but missing aspect of the strategy. Mandatory training and workforce development particularly in the specialist area of dual sensory impairment.

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?

Implementing a “register” of hearing loss and dual sensory loss could be challenging, many Deaf people may not want to be included on a register.

A distinct register for VI, HI and DSI would be useful.

In order to make information accessible to those who have a dual sensory loss often requires human aids to communication on a one to one basis, each deafblind person’s needs are unique, a one size fit all approach cannot and does not work.

Screening for dual sensory loss is challenging, often one impairment can overshadow the other, this can depend on which one came first.

Sharing of information and data across agencies will be challenging particularly with various data recording systems in place.

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

Appropriate person centred communication support will ensure equality for all those with a sensory impairment particularly dual sensory impairment. If people can engage fully and receive the appropriate support from agencies and services they need they are more in control of their life. With the correct support people with a dual sensory impairment can lead fulfilling lives', this can improve their overall sense of wellbeing and better place them to cope with the daily challenges of their condition and any future changes/deterioration. It also ensures that for those who need to adapt their communication methods due to deteriorating condition that they are supported appropriately through this transition in addition to the emotional and psychological changes e.g. a British Sign Language user whose sight deteriorates and they can no longer see signs may need to learn to use Deafblind Manual communication or Hands On Signing.

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

Strategy gives suggestions about what should be actions should be put in place but nothing about how this will happen. There needs to be more specific, measurable, targets and clear lines of accountability to ensure implementation of recommendations in a structured way for all partners involved.

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.

Current services within One stop shops include specialist organisations in single sensory impairment, no dedicated provision is available to support those with a dual sensory impairment within these settings.

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

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?

Mention is made at point 6.7 – both sensory impairments. No recognition of deafblindness/dual sensory loss as a separate discrete disability Two separate description paragraphs of deafblindness and dual sensory impairment does this mean they are being considered as two separate disabilities?