

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.

n/a

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

n/a

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

n/a

(d) How will you make these changes?

n/a

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?

“A clearly developed set of local sensory impairment pathways that are agreed by key stakeholders and understood by all clinicians, assessors, service providers, and most importantly, the person themselves.” (page 12)

- Hearing Link agrees that the person with a sensory loss is a key stakeholder. For a care pathway to (i) best meet the needs of each individual and (ii) help each individual, as far as possible, to manage their sensory loss throughout their lifetime, each individual’s comprehension of as well as choice and control over what happens to them is imperative.

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

“A clearly developed set of local sensory impairment pathways that are agreed by key stakeholders and understood by all clinicians, assessors, service providers, and most importantly, the person themselves.” (page 12)

- Groupings originating from the sensory impairment matrix proposed by this strategy are: those with a recognised sensory impairment; those at risk of sensory loss; those likely to have a hidden or untreated sensory loss. In addition sensory impairment covers hearing loss, sight loss, deafblindness, and dual sensory loss. These terms are accurate descriptions only in the very broadest sense of the conditions many thousands of people either live with

from birth or acquire at any age.

- Hearing Link supports the view that each individual deserves to be helped to build their own capacity, as far as possible, to manage their hearing loss. Effective care pathways can help to achieve this and they will be most effective where they respond to the diverse needs and varying degrees of complexity and intensity of need for each individual, rather than for broad groupings. Engaging with people affected by all types of sensory impairment in the development of and in real-time progression through new care pathways, is a complex but vital task.
- Evidence gathered by the Link Centre for Deafened People and University of Greenwich (*Hidden Lives: The psychological and social impact of becoming deafened in adult life, September 2005*) demonstrated how deafened people perceive a troubling lack of understanding and empathy by medical professionals. This serves as an example of how meaningful engagement with service users uncovers the persistent inadequacies in current service provision which future strategies and pathways ought to address.

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

“Meeting the communication needs of people with sensory impairment is fundamental to ensuring that they can engage with the care pathway, and is an essential element in their everyday lives as part of the care pathway.” (See Hear page 11 para 6.5)

- The consultation identifies the items covered in paragraph 6.7 pages 11-12 as the “key factors” to a successful pathway.
- Hearing Link believes that ensuring effective communication is fundamental, as identified by the strategy in paragraph 6.5 on page 11, and therefore that it should be included in the list of key factors for a successful pathway.

The care pathway model on page 10 references access to services through easily accessible information, accessible assessment and diagnosis and single points of access where possible for integrated care.

- How the physical environment (i.e. secure entry systems) and operational systems (i.e. appointment booking systems/processes) can affect a person’s access to services is not referenced in this strategy. They are key factors affecting the ease of access and quality of experience for service users with a sensory impairment. Again, Hearing Link supports the active involvement of people with hearing loss in the development of local services and care pathways so that these and other key issues are brought to light and are taken into account.

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?

n/a

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

Area for action 4 has the potential to make the biggest difference in the short and medium term, particularly if it results in sustainable partnership work beyond the initial two years.

If the aims of area for action 4 are achieved in the designated timescale it will bring tangible benefits reasonably quickly to people living with hearing loss in Scotland.

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

There are a number of other areas for action that Hearing Link would support in this strategy or as part of subsequent implementation planning:

- Prioritisation for rehabilitative services that help people who acquire a hearing loss to adjust to and manage their particular circumstances, and for programmes to include the immediate families of those with hearing loss, as they too are deeply affected by the changes brought on by a sudden or progressive hearing loss.
- Awareness training for key staff in health care settings which addresses not only the different needs of people with sensory impairment, but also the psychological and social effects of deafness and how to mitigate the higher risks it poses for unemployment, social isolation, anxiety and depression.
- Awareness-raising amongst employers (i) of their obligations under the Equality Act and (ii) of the support available to employers to make reasonable adjustments that ensures a workplace and/or working practices are fit for purpose for all employees.

Hearing Link would welcome contact from the Scottish Government to expand further and answer any questions on the points listed here.

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.

n/a

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

n/a

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?

n/a

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?

Hearing Link is a UK hearing loss charity. It provides information, community support, and specialist services for people with hearing loss and their families. People who contact us and use our services are predominantly adults, with different types of hearing loss, for whom English is a first language and lip reading is a primary method of communication. We have encouraged people with hearing loss to contribute to this consultation process, by attending consultation events and by submitting individual consultation responses to the See Hear strategy.

General comments on the strategy are listed below:

- For the majority of people sensory loss will occur later in life, and as more people live longer the numbers affected by age-onset hearing loss will increase. However, acquired causes of hearing loss can occur at any age and therefore services must be accessible to and appropriate for people of all ages.
- The strategy aims to be a lever for change, “promoting the seamless provision of assessment, care and support to people with sensory impairment.” Whilst a new care pathway for sensory impairment represents progress - if it proves effective - it sets out standards and expectations for services to people with sensory impairment, for sensory impairment. The efficacy of care pathways and other approaches in promoting equal access to all health and social care services to people with a sensory impairment is a broader, and no less vital challenge.