

One of the problems facing the Scottish Government, NHS Boards and Scottish Councils is that of communicating essential information about their services and plans effectively where deaf people are concerned.

Deaf people have the same right to be involved in the consultation process as other people. Planners and providers have a responsibility to make this happen.

The right to be consulted is written into the Human Rights Act 1998. Deaf people who use English as a second language often find it difficult to access information, follow proceedings in meetings, or react quickly to information presented in English.

Deafblind people are at a particular disadvantage in this way especially when meetings are conducted at speed and are not well ordered. The result is that this group can be under-represented in the planning of services that affect them.



good practice

The Scottish Council on Deafness recommends that the following good practice be implemented:

A range of consultation methods should be used. People should always be asked what form of consultation suits them best: public or face-to-face meetings, questions in plain English, online questionnaires, formal meetings or forums.

For consultation to be meaningful, sufficient time must be allowed.

Consultation must take full account of people's communication needs and stated preferences.

If public meetings are being held they should be appropriately publicised through deaf organisations, in the local press and on deaf media networks.

Documents should be sent out at least two weeks in advance of any meeting, be available in large print (font Arial, 18 point) and other preferred formats (braille, moon, tape, electronic, BSL etc). Material must be written in plain English with no jargon. If the document contains technical or legal information, then this should be simplified in an appendix.

Consultation should involve as many people as possible who are affected by a decision including more hard to reach people. It is not appropriate to simply consult with deaf organisations or a small group of deaf people as this will not be representative of the diversity of the deaf community.

The Scottish Government has produced guidance on how to ensure that equalities groups are included in consultation exercises: Good Practice Guidance Consultation with Equalities Groups. This guidance contains information on 'preparing for consultation' and 'carrying out consultation' and includes how to make the consultation process inclusive for deaf people: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/46729/0025644.pdf>

If this good practice is followed, consultations will be inclusive for deaf people.

Produced by

Scottish Council on Deafness
Central Chambers Suite 62
93 Hope Street Glasgow G2 6LD

Web: www.scod.org.uk
Email: admin@scod.org.uk

Tel (v): 0141 248 2474
Tel (v/t): 0141 248 2477 & 1854
Fax: 0141 248 2479



defining deafness

When we use the term 'deaf', we mean it to include people on the full spectrum of deafness: Deaf sign language users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people.

People who are deafblind

Deafblindness is sometimes called dual sensory impairment. This is because deafblind people will have some degree of both deafness and blindness.

A person can be born deafblind (congenital deafblindness) or lose their hearing and their sight in later life. Some people who are born with deafblindness may also have physical and/or learning disabilities.

A person born deaf who later loses their sight will most likely be a sign language user. Other deafblind people may be born blind and lose their hearing in later life. These people will most likely use a spoken language and may also use braille for written documents. It is important to remember that many deafblind people may not be totally deaf and totally blind.

Professionals should always find out exactly what form of communication support the person needs. It could be the person needs a guide/communicator, or has to have written information in braille. The person may have more complex support needs that will need to be addressed.

Deaf sign language users

These are people whose preferred or only language is British Sign Language (BSL).

Typically, they will have been born deaf or have become deaf early in life.

People with this level of deafness are often described as being profoundly deaf.

Deaf BSL users usually see themselves as part of a linguistic and cultural minority known as the Deaf Community.

A hearing professional not proficient in BSL must book a BSL/English interpreter for meetings and appointments with a Deaf sign language user in order to communicate effectively with the person.

People who are hard of hearing

This is a term used to describe people with a mild to moderate hearing loss. People who are hard of hearing will, in general, lose their hearing gradually and the majority of hard of hearing people become so in later life. A person with a mild hearing loss might wear a hearing aid and have some difficulty following conversations in noisy situations. A person with a moderate hearing loss might have one or two hearing aids and will have difficulty following normal speech without the aid.

If the person coming to a meeting or appointment uses a hearing aid, then a loop system will enable them to take part.

People who are deafened

People who were born hearing and became severely or profoundly deaf after learning to speak are often described as deafened. People who have had full hearing and become deaf may be described as having Acquired Profound Hearing Loss (APHL). This hearing loss may be due to disease or illness or there may not be an identified reason for the hearing loss. Deafened people may rely on lipreading to follow a conversation or need to have things written down for them.

If arranging a meeting or appointment with a person who is deafened, you must find out what support they need, for example, an electronic notetaker.