

mental health



A Scottish Council on Deafness
Position Statement





introduction

When we use the term 'deaf' we mean it to include all people on the spectrum of deafness: Deaf Sign Language users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people

One of the many challenges facing mental health services today is the effective communication of essential information concerning services and care plans with deaf people.

Planners and providers of mental health services need to recognise their responsibilities and the rights of deaf people to have full information and access to services available to the community as a whole.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA), it is unlawful for a service provider to discriminate against a deaf person by offering a lower standard of service.

we recommend the following:

The NHS in Scotland should provide good quality services and facilities appropriate for treating deaf people with mental health problems, in both primary and secondary care.

Health services should improve accessibility to deaf people, particularly with regard to telecommunications for appointments and enquiries.

Health services should consider the needs of *outpatients* who are deaf, for example, in the waiting areas: loop systems, visual systems, amplified payphones, textphones.

Health services should consider the needs of *inpatients* who are deaf, for example, in the wards: amplified payphones, textphones and televisions equipped to display subtitles.

Health services should be responsible for the provision of and payment for appropriately trained and registered communication service providers in hospitals and in primary care, for example: Sign Language Interpreters, Lipspeakers, Notetakers, Deafblind Communicators.

Health services should consider the use of videophone technology enabling Deaf Sign Language users access to appropriately trained and registered Sign Language Interpreters at all times when in contact with health services.

Health service personnel should receive deaf and deafblind awareness training, both in pre-service and in-service training on an ongoing basis.



Jane Smith to Dr Brown's surgery



Deaf people with mental health problems should receive the same standards of health promotion, assessment, treatment, care and rehabilitation as hearing people.

The health service must therefore make provision for the special needs of those with hearing loss.

There are currently no reliable statistics on the incidence of mental health associated with sensory loss. This warrants further research.

While deaf people may have the same range of mental health problems as hearing people, the incidence amongst deaf people is estimated to be about

four times greater than in the general population.

It must be recognised that deafness may present special challenges in the diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems.

Deaf people with mental health problems may find their problems unrecognised, undiagnosed and thus untreated, due to poor communication between themselves and professionals.



Information on mental health and related subjects should be produced in appropriate languages and with illustrations, taking into account the culture, identity and language of deaf people.

Professionals in the mental health field should be aware of the communication needs of deaf people and of their need to improve communication and understanding.

Where communication support services are used, the provider should have the necessary training for working in the field of mental health and deafness.

Each health board should have full-time staff (such as CPNs) with knowledge and experience of working with deaf people, i.e. people who have a thorough understanding of deaf issues and who are trained to communicate with deaf people.



Health service personnel should be fully aware of the Disability Discrimination Act and other relevant legislation.

Deaf people should have full and real involvement in the planning, priority setting, provision and monitoring of mental health services.

Mental health services should employ deaf people to facilitate service use by deaf people.

Staff in mental health services should also be fully aware of our position statement on Access to Health Services which should be read in conjunction with this document.





further reading

A Sign of the Times: Modernising Mental Health Services for People who are Deaf, Department of Health, July 2002

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***Mental Health Services for Deaf People: Are they appropriate*, Sign, 1998**

***Mental Health Services: forging new channels*, British Society for Mental Health & Deafness, 1998**

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SCoD works tirelessly to improve the lives of deaf and deafblind people in Scotland, to help promote their rights as individuals and to reduce their sense of exclusion.

We make a real difference to the lives of deaf people but need your help to continue doing so.

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- Give a one-off donation
- Raise sponsorship on our behalf
- Give a gift in kind
- Become a volunteer
- Leave us a legacy

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