

Under the Equality Act 2010¹ it is unlawful for a service provider to discriminate by offering a lower standard of service to deaf people. Audiology services must therefore make sure deaf people have full information and access.

Scottish Council on Deafness recommends the following:

1. An Equality Impact Assessment² should be carried out to ensure that the needs of deaf people and deaf people with complex needs are taken into account by the service.
2. Deaf people should be involved in the planning and monitoring of Audiology Services in Scotland.
3. Audiology services should have patient feedback and outcome quality measurements systems in place to ensure that deaf people are receiving the service they need.
4. When people are offered health checks, they should also be offered the chance to have their hearing screened.
5. Audiology Services should ensure the smooth and timeous transition of all deaf school leavers from school based audiology support to adult audiology services.
6. Audiologists and reception staff should be encouraged to learn BSL (British Sign Language) so that they can communicate directly with Deaf and deafblind BSL users.³
7. SCoD recognises and supports the rights of deaf people to have the most appropriate and up-to-date hearing aids which meet their individual needs.
8. Binaural hearing aids should be routinely offered, unless there is a clinical reason that this would be inappropriate.
9. People with hearing aids should be offered regular follow-up checks on their hearing aids to ensure they are continuing to function correctly.
10. People recently diagnosed with hearing loss should have access to appropriate rehabilitation such as counselling, lipreading classes, assistive devices and peer support. Audiology Services should provide information on these topics as a matter of course.

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Position Statement

11. All staff in Audiology Services should receive accredited deaf awareness training and communication skills training; this should be provided during induction and offered regularly as part of the mandatory Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for audiologists and on an annual basis for all other staff.
12. All staff in Audiology Services should have an understanding of Deaf culture and the different types of deafness.⁴
13. Information material should be produced in a range of accessible formats.⁵ NHS Boards will ensure that investment in Audiology services is such that the waiting times for hearing tests and for the fitting of hearing aids meet waiting times targets set by the Scottish Government.
14. Audiology Services will make sure their services are accessible to deaf people when making initial contact, future appointments and also patient call systems in waiting areas.
15. Care staff and others (including GPs) who suspect someone they are caring for has a hearing loss should be encouraged to refer that person to Audiology.
16. Patient communication support needs should be identified at the point of referral; communication support should be routinely offered by audiology services and provided for clinic attendances, while ensuring that there are no additional delays for deaf patients compared to their hearing counterparts.

¹ For more about this Act, see our Information Sheet entitled Equality Act 2010

² See our Information Sheet on Terminology

³ More in our Information Sheet on Deaf Awareness Training

⁴ The different types of deafness are explained in our Information Sheet: Definitions of Deafness

⁵ More details in our Information Sheet on Accessible Information

