

Patient Experience Report:



Blind and Deaf / Deaf and Visually Impaired Residents



April 2015

Updated February 2016



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Summary

Healthwatch Trafford visited the Trafford Blind and Deaf Group in April 2015 to listen to the views and experiences of group members regarding health and social care services. 11 group members attended and ranged from people who are blind-deaf, Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) users, blind, visually impaired and hearing impaired people and their partners / carers.

Many positive comments were recorded regarding GPs, hospitals, patient transport and Social Services. However, the following barriers to accessing and using these services were recorded:

- inaccessible procedures for making appointments at GP and hospital services
- poor communication with blind, Deaf and hard of hearing patients in hospital
- inaccessible signage and infrastructure
- lack of continuity of care from GPs
- Lack of continuity of care from Social Services care staff and infrequent contact from Social Services
- requests for home visits for elderly patients denied by GP Practices
- long waiting times for pick up after appointments by Arriva Patient transport services

The experiences recorded here relating to inaccessibility and communication issues in GP and hospital services echo those outlined in the Healthwatch Trafford report based on the patient experiences of 36 Deaf (BSL users) residents, (Getting it Right for Deaf People in Trafford, 2015).



“When I get a letter, [from the hospital] I take it to my bank and they will ring for me.”
Deaf member of Trafford Blind and Deaf Group

The Equality Act, 2010 protects people from various forms of discrimination relating to disability and outlines the duty placed on service providers to ensure their service is accessible by making reasonable adjustments. The NHS England Accessible Information Standards, 2015 must also be followed by health and social care services. ¹ Some of the patient experiences recorded here, evidence that some services are not meeting these legislative requirements.

¹ The NHS England, Accessible Information Standard was passed in June 2015. By 31 July 2016, by law, all health & social care services must ensure that disabled patients receive information in formats that they can understand and receive appropriate support to help them to communicate.

Recommendations

- Hospitals and GP Practices to follow recommendations outlined in Healthwatch Trafford report, Getting it Right for Deaf People, 2015 (appendix 1).
- Hospital and GP Practices to self-assess the extent to which they currently meet the Accessible Information Standards and address any gaps to ensure they meet legal obligations to comply by July 31st 2016.

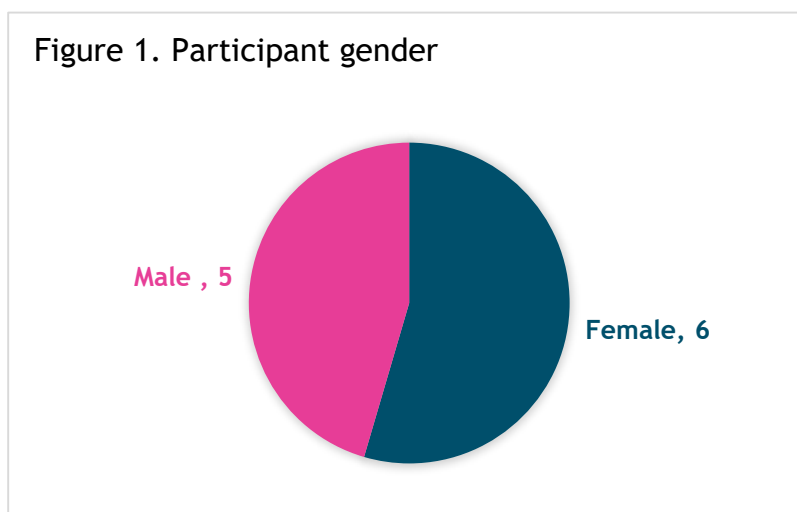
Background

Healthwatch Trafford is a local consumer champion in health and social care. Through a variety of mechanisms, people's experiences of using health and social care services are gathered by Healthwatch and shared with service providers / commissioners to give them a picture of what is working well and where improvements can be made. There is a duty placed on all local Healthwatch to engage with members of local communities who are less likely to be heard by services, including people with disabilities, health conditions or impairments. Significant statutory powers given to Healthwatch help to ensure people's voices are strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and social care services.

The Assistant Secretary at the Trafford Blind & Deaf Group contacted Healthwatch Trafford via the website after hearing about the consultation work previously undertaken by Healthwatch regarding barriers to health services for local Deaf residents.

Quantitative Data Summary

Demographics of group members in attendance during the Healthwatch Trafford visit can be found in the charts below:



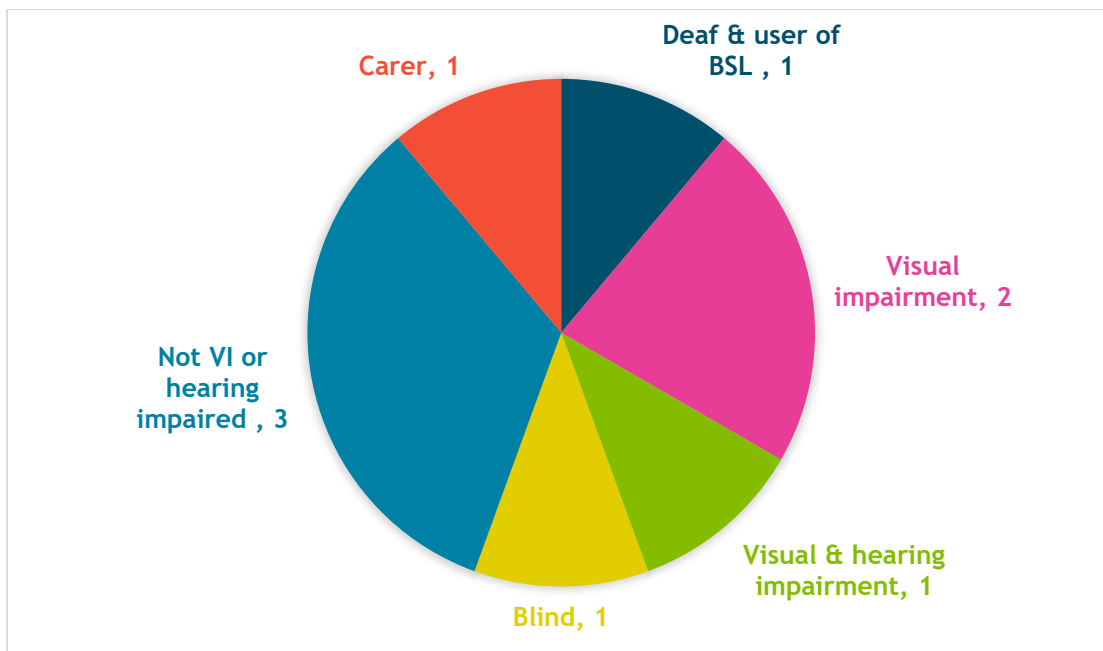


Figure 2. Diversity of disabilities / impairments within the group

Background

A brief introduction to Healthwatch Trafford was given to the group and an informal discussion took place around their experiences of using health & social care services. These can be found below.

14 comments made regarding GP services:

29% of these comments were positive, in particular regarding accessible communication used in waiting rooms to alert the patient of their appointment.

43% of comments were negative, revealing lack of continuity of care (seeing the same GP) and difficulty obtaining home visits for elderly patients. Lack of accessibility to make an appointment coupled with unsafe practice in using a family member as an interpreter during medical appointments for a British Sign Language user highlights poor practice in one service.²

28% of comments were neutral.



“I think it’s better to see the same GP for continuity”

(Partner of blind resident)

² Draft NHS England Standards for Quality Translation and Interpreting Services, (2015), outline best practice stating that qualified BSL interpreters must be used in medical appointments for adult Deaf patients. For safeguarding reasons, family members should not be used.



9 comments were made about hospital services:

34% of comments relating to hospitals were generally positive.

55% of total comments relating to hospitals were negative. 37% of these highlighted lack of accessibility in: making hospital appointments; signage and infrastructure inside hospital buildings and communication methods used with blind and / or Deaf patients and / or hearing impaired patients.



“Last year I asked Wythenshawe Hospital for put a letter in braille for me. I was told they don’t do braille... You can get gas bills in braille, why not hospital letters? ”

11% were neutral comments.

4 comments related to patient transport (Arriva):

75% of comments were negative, focussing on long waiting times for pick-up from health services.

25% of comments were neutral.

5 comments focussed on social care services

80% of comments related to Local Authority Adult Social Care Services and included praise for the professionalism of staff while highlighting a lack of regular contact from professionals or lack of any contact at all for people registered as blind.

10% related to lack of continuity of carers from a local care service provider.

10% of comments were neutral.

2 comments were made regarding other health services

1 positive comment was made regarding Phoenix Futures and 1 negative comment about dental and telephone charges from a Dentist.



Qualitative Patient Experiences

Positive experiences of using GP services

“I just walk into my surgery and say to reception can we [patient and their partner] see a GP and they make me an appointment for that day.”

- Washway Road Medical Centre (patient is blind)

“When I go to my GP surgery they call your name in the waiting room if they know you’re blind.”

- Delamere Medical Centre, Stretford

“The Doctor calls out for my appointment. No problems there.”

- Dr Caplan’s Practice, Timperley Health Centre

“The Doctor comes out and tells me when he’s ready to see me. I can get a blood test now at my surgery. I used to have to go to Altrincham Hospital.”

- Washway Rd Medical Centre

Negative experiences of using GP services

“My surgery are slow at filling in prescriptions, up to several days wait and sometimes it’s not turned up.”

- St Johns Medical Centre, Altrincham

“Home visits from GP’s for the elderly are becoming harder and harder to get. You have to go to them.”

“Doctors don’t know you like they used to.”

“If you’re older they [Doctors] don’t seem to listen to you.”

“I think it’s better to see the same GP for continuity.”

- Carer for blind person

Neutral comments on using GP services

“You get braille on prescription packets” (in Grade 1 and Grade 2)

1 attendee who is Deaf and a BSL sign user asks his sister to make the appointment and she is his interpreter during the appointment.

When asked if they felt they had sufficient time with medical professionals during their GP service appointment, 3 people stated that 10 minutes for a GP appointment is fine.



Hospital Services

Positive comments of using Hospital services

“Wythenshawe Hospital are spot on”

Negative comments of using Hospital services

“When I get a letter I take it to my bank and they will ring for me.”

- Timperley resident

“Last year I asked Wythenshawe Hospital to put a letter in braille for me. I was told they don’t do braille. I asked why not and they said they would look into it. That was about October 2014 and I’ve not heard anything since. You can get gas bills in braille, why not hospital letters?”

“My wife had cancer. She has 3 monthly appointments. They missed one and I had to phone McMillan. We go to Wythenshawe. The Doctors have been pretty good at giving appointments. I’m not keen on one of the Doctors but I can’t really complain.”

“The Eye Hospital is badly designed. I’m visually impaired and the signage is too high up, posters are too high up and the text is too small to read. It’s too noisy when it hails because of the glass ceiling and when the sun comes out it’s really dazzling, especially if you’ve just had an eye operation. Sometimes they put blinds up but it’s not much better. There’s a café in the foyer but it doesn’t say café on the door. I’ve mentioned these things to the Customer Manager. Nothing has happened. They should have consulted with patients before they designed it.”

“My elderly neighbour had to stay in Wythenshawe for two weeks. I stayed with him for those two weeks. He wasn’t safe to be left on his own; he kept falling. ”

Neutral comments on using Hospital services

“At the Eye Hospital the porter takes you round.”

- Manchester Eye Hospital





Patient Transport

Negative comments on using Patient Transport

“I pay for my own taxi there and back. I pay for it myself out of my mobility allowance. It takes too long to wait for an ambulance and they don’t run after 6pm.”

- Manchester Eye Hospital

“I volunteer at Manchester Eye Hospital and I notice people come early for their appointment and are often waiting a long time for their transport home.”

Social Care

Positive comments on Social Care services

“My neighbour has Bluebird Care. There’s no continuity of carers, it’s different staff every time they visit.”

- Altrincham resident

“If you’re registered blind you used to get a visit from Trafford Social Services. Unless you request it this doesn’t happen anymore. I do think it’s important that they do go out and visit.”

- Partner of blind resident

“There is a high level of professionalism [in Social Services] but I do think people need regular contact.”

Neutral comments on Social Care services

“I haven’t had a visit from Social Services in a while.”

“I haven’t had support from Social Services but I cope ok. If I was newly diagnosed I would want it but I’ve been blind all my life.”

Other services


“Phoenix Futures are brilliant. If there is alcoholism in the family they can help. Now they’ve got Caring for Carers. They’re doing a job that Social Workers should be doing.”

“2 years ago I had trouble with my dentist (Smile Creator, Norris Rd). They wanted to charge me £350 for a root canal so I wanted to change my dentist. I rang the NHS and was charged £17 for the phone call. I was told I didn’t have to pay for the dentist work because I’m on pension credit. Now I’m with Altrincham Dental.”






Trafford Blind and Deaf Group recommendations and actions taken by Healthwatch

-  **Recommendation:** Healthwatch Trafford to listen to the patient / service user experiences of other visually impaired and or Deaf people. Drop-ins at Manchester Royal Eye Hospital were suggested.

Action: Healthwatch Trafford worked collaboratively with Healthwatch Manchester to carry out 4 drop-ins at Manchester Royal Eye Hospital in August 2015. A report outlining our findings was presented and shared with Central Manchester Foundation Trust. We are awaiting a response to our recommendations (February 2016).

-  **Recommendation:** the group recommended that Healthwatch Trafford publish it's newsletter in braille.

Action: Healthwatch Trafford will look into making future publications available in braille upon request.

-  **Recommendation:** a return visit to the Trafford Blind and Deaf Group from Healthwatch Trafford Engagement Worker would be welcomed by members in 3 - 6 months time.

Actions: regular contact with the group secretary has been maintained between May and October 2015. A return to the group was offered in November 2015.



References

Healthwatch Trafford, Getting it Right for Deaf People in Trafford. May 2015.
<http://healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/about-us/our-reports/>

NHS England, Accessible Information Standard, 2015
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/patients/accessibleinfo-2/>

NHS England, Draft Standards for Quality Standards in Interpreting and Translation Services, 2015.

The Equality Act, 2010. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
[16/11/15]



APPENDIX 1

Recommendations from Getting it Right for Deaf People 2015

- ALL services to offer SMS text messaging service for Deaf patients to book appointments & collect test results
- ALL services to provide Deaf Awareness training for medical and administrative staff, provided by a local Deaf charity with expertise and knowledge of the local Deaf community, such as Genie Networks
- ALL services to send patients confirmation of BSL Interpreter booking with name of the interpreter booked, health service name, appointment time and date before the appointment
- ALL services to discuss communication needs of individual Deaf patients (i.e. BSL, SSE or Deaf Blind Interpreter required), including preferred choice of interpreter and preferred gender
- ALL services to flag up patient's communication needs on patient records to ensure all communication with them by medical, administrative staff and Interpreters is appropriate and effective
- ALL service commissioners to liaise with Trafford Deaf Partnership or Genie Networks before commissioning BSL Interpreter services and take their recommendations into account
- ALL services to build accessible complaints processes for BSL Interpreter Services into commissioning process
- ALL services to use plain English in letters and information sent out to Deaf patients
- ALL services to offer on-line BSL Interpreter Services in emergency situations or short notice appointments e.g Sign Translate.
- ALL services to raise staff awareness around the impact of appointment delays on BSL interpreter availability (Interpreter may have to leave before the patient is seen) and put processes into place to ensure Deaf patients are seen on time
- Hospital Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) processes to be reviewed to ensure accessibility for Deaf people and that information & promotional materials are available in plain English format
- All health services should promote and raise awareness of the emergency SMS text service to Deaf patients

The report has been updated with responses from the services - March 2016









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