



# Access to Healthcare for Hearing Impaired and Deaf People

December 2022

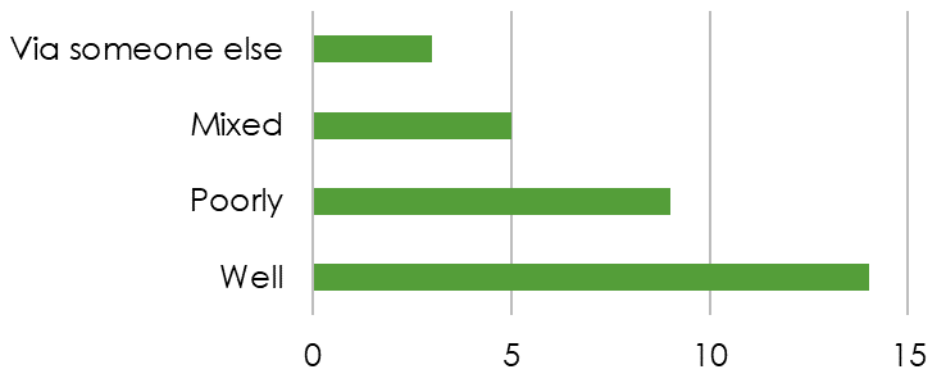
# Access to Healthcare for Hearing Impaired and Deaf People

- Since September 2021 we have been working with people who are Deaf or hearing impaired to research any difficulties they may face when accessing health and care.
- We shared a survey with the residents of Warwickshire and held a feedback event for people to share their views with us alongside a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter and a Personal Assistant (PA).
- **We had 31 responses to our survey.**
- **Six people attended our feedback event (plus HWW staff, a BSL interpreter and a PA).**

# Findings from the survey

Most respondents find it difficult (45%) or have mixed experiences (29%) when trying to make initial GP, dentist, or hospital appointments.

How well does the health service (GP, dentist or hospital) communicate with you around follow up appointments?



When asked about follow-up appointments, 45% of respondents felt that services communicated 'well', and 29% felt that services communicated 'poorly', with them.



**We asked those who need a sign language interpreter for appointments, (32% of respondents) whether they are booked, and what happens as a result if they are not.**

They told us:

*'I ask my neighbour to come to appointments with me if possible.'*

*'Not always. I have to chase them sometimes for interpreter bookings.'*

*'Sometimes and if not then I try to use pen and paper. Audiology worst as they talk without looking at me.'*

*'Prior to Covid, there was very little issue with booking an interpreter but during Covid, it has been extremely difficult to get an interpreter.'*

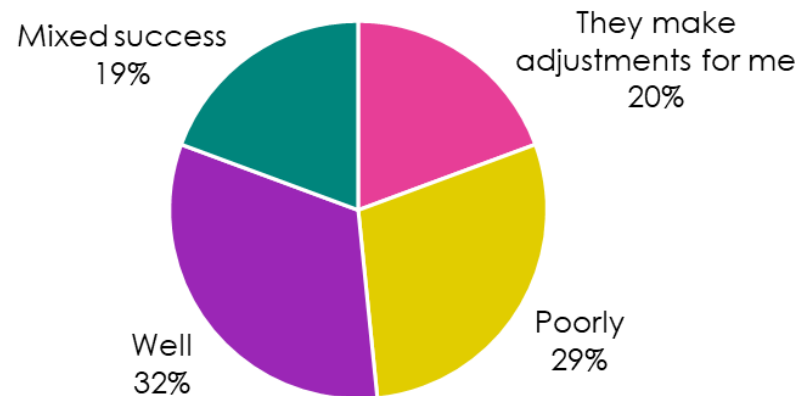
*'Impossible to communicate with GP myself. Interpreter bookings are hit and miss.'*




# Findings from the survey

We asked respondents how they felt staff communicate with them in person.

How do staff communicate with you during an appointment (or when awaiting an appointment or ward admission)?



45% of respondents do not think that health care staff are aware they are Deaf or have a hearing impairment, 26% told us it varies depending on the service, and 29% felt that health care staff do know that they are Deaf or have a hearing impairment.



**Some respondents feel there is a lack of understanding from some health care staff about what it means to be Deaf or experience hearing loss:**

*'When I inform any service, I say "I am profoundly Deaf, I don't hear on the phone" but I get given phone numbers, no one listens!'*

*'Sometimes if you are left in a cubicle and they talk to you on their way out e.g., back to you and walking, I have not been sure if I am supposed to stay where I am or leave the cubicle.'*






**Examples of good practice that were shared with us included: good communication, positive staff attitudes, and an understanding of adjustments that need to be made:**

*'If I mention my hearing impairment individuals will normally speak more clearly, slightly louder and ensure my comprehension.'*

**68% of respondents gave negative answers when we asked them how interactions with health care services leave them feeling. The most used words were 'anxious' (9 people), 'frustrated' (8 people) and 'disempowered' (5 people).**

*'Very often anxious because I am on edge to make sure I don't miss my name when called or miss something of importance when health professionals are talking to me.'*



# In person feedback

- People told us that BSL interpreters often do not turn up to pre-booked appointments and that PAs are not allowed to sign in medical appointments, meaning appointments may have to be re-scheduled or people are forced to struggle through the best they can.
- People told us that dentists do not think it is their responsibility to book or pay for BSL interpreters.
- Feedback showed us that Deaf people feel there is a lack of understanding about what they need during diagnosis and treatment.
- BSL is a different language to English, health care staff's comments have to be translated to this language while keeping the level of comprehension needed.
- Several Deaf people who came to our feedback event feel they do not have equal rights, in terms of access to healthcare, compared to hearing people.



# In person feedback

The deaf people we spoke to made suggestions about changes that could improve services for them:

- Healthcare staff having Deaf Awareness Training, including the use of basic BSL, was seen as something that could make a big difference to improve the experiences of Deaf people in healthcare settings.
- The PA role was seen as extremely valuable to assist with independence, more people in this role would help.
- Any way to speed up the booking of interpreters would mean Deaf people not having to wait longer for an appointment.
- Photographs of points along the route to a healthcare setting would help Deaf people find their way to a new appointment.



**Thank you. Any questions?**

# For more information

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