

Working well with Deaf people in Social Care

As part of our ongoing work to ensure the voices of Deaf people are heard, on 13th July 2018 we held a workshop to focus on experiences within the social care setting, bringing staff from Sheffield City Council together with Deaf service and their families/carers.

This was the second workshop after the publication of our report '[Not Equal](#)' in January. The first, held in March, was an opportunity for representatives of the city's health and social care organisations to share their responses to the report's findings with Deaf people. We also invited them to bring examples of good communication practice.

A briefing from this event which includes the written responses provided by providers and commissioners can be access through the Healthwatch Sheffield [website](#).

We recognised the need to provide a dedicated event focused on social care, as experiences of health care had dominated the first workshop.

Social care leaders were in support of this and helped to design the event. It was a chance for staff and service users to reflect on Sheffield City Council's response to our Not Equal report, and to discuss next steps together.

The five recommendations to commissioners and providers of NHS and Social Care services:

1. Providers of NHS and Social Care should recognise the legal requirement to meet the Accessible Information Standard and ensure that it is consistently applied within their organisations.
2. Commissioners should consider the use of measures and/or incentives to ensure the Standard is being implemented by providers.
3. Contract monitoring of LanguageLine Solutions should include the experiences and views of Deaf people.
4. Providers should ensure health and social care staff have at least a basic understanding of the needs of, and the problems experienced by, Deaf people and are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
5. Local providers should act to ensure information about their complaints and concerns processes is accessible and available in BSL, including information about NHS complaints advocacy.

The workshop involved a brief presentation of the findings of the investigation published in the report and structured group discussion.

The final version of the leaflet developed in the previous session ([Do's and Don'ts for Communicating with Deaf People](#)) was distributed at the event along with Not Equal.

Who was in the room?

Service users, Sheffield City Council (SCC) social care staff, Disability Sheffield, Citizens Advice Sheffield's Deaf Advice Team, two British Sign Language interpreters.

What experiences were shared of Deaf people and Social Care professionals working together?

- A lot of feedback centred around a lack of knowledge – staff were worried about doing the ‘wrong thing’ and asked for more training and a clear policy.
- Front line staff can have little contact with Deaf people and don’t hear the outcomes of complaints so are unaware of poor experiences of communication.
- There were concerns about how to make initial contact with Deaf service users and how to establish a proper understanding of their needs.
- Those who had worked with Deaf people more personally suggested that direct contact improved their knowledge and confidence.
- Service users highlighted difficulties that they have experiences, including professionals speaking to their hearing relative instead of them, and expecting family members to interpret for them.
- Deaf service users highlighted specific concerns around Deaf people in care homes – if none of the other residents or staff use BSL, this leads to isolation.
- There was clearly confusion amongst staff as to SCC's policy on using BSL interpreters and ensuring the communication needs of Deaf people are met.
- Examples were given when staff had felt pressured to avoid using BSL interpreters to save money.

What opportunities were suggested to improve communication?

- Making use of SCC’s staff intranet page to provide clarity about the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard and best practice information about working with Deaf people.
- Better use of text numbers, including more consistent monitoring of text phones, and a way to complain about these services if there are problems.
- Where the option to book appointments online already exists, to include the option to request an interpreter.
- Enhance the use of Language Line so that front line staff could access interpreters quickly when needed, as well as a desire for Deaf awareness training.
- Improve information sharing, including making a service user’s communication needs clear on first contact forms, and passing information between staff members to increase awareness.

What did people say about the workshop?

"Very useful. Eye opening. It was upsetting to discover how cut off Deaf people are from our world; the hearing world does not accommodate them at all"

"Lots of useful info to share with my team",

"Learned so much I never knew how hard it is to be deaf and try to communicate",

"Looking forward to next event!"

"A good event - please do continue to push the needs of Deaf people"

Appendix - Sheffield City Council's response to Not Equal

Sheffield City Council
Howden House
Union Street
Sheffield
S1 2SH
Tel: 0114 27 34567



8 February 2018

Healthwatch Sheffield
The Circle
33 Rockingham Lane
Sheffield
S1 4FW

Dear colleagues,

Response from Sheffield City Council to the Healthwatch investigation report

We are writing in response to the investigation you have carried out in relation to the experiences of Deaf people accessing social care services in the city. Thank you for sharing these experiences with us. We hope that we are able to use them now and in the future to improve Council services. Our aim is to ensure that our Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing citizens do not face barriers, and are not denied the same opportunities and access to Council services as others.

Our responses to your recommendations are as follows:

- 1. You asked us to recognise the Accessible Information Standard requirements. Embed the standard in the organisation (written protocol, monitor unmet need, standard letters, texting and email communication, protocol and training in SignLive)***

Sheffield City Council undertook a range of work to prepare for the introduction of the Accessible Information Standard in August 2016. This included briefings to senior management, and communications to adult social care staff and partner/provider organisations. We reviewed the existing service provision (e.g. Language Line Solutions) and approached a range of other organisations to agree ways we could purchase services, e.g., Makaton, note-taking, cued speech.

In commissioning a provider of translation and interpretation services in 2016, we made specific references in our contact specification to the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard. We required bidders to provide details of how they

would meet this requirement, and specifically state how they would provide a British Sign Language interpretation service. We also asked bidders to say how they would use technology, such as video interpretation, to support access to services for the Deaf community and others.

We made changes to our client recording system to ensure the full detail of the person's information/communication needs could be recorded. Detailed guidance was provided to staff to explain the requirements, the likely communication needs and how the worker can meet these needs.

We have a regular drop in service where the Deaf community can meet with a member of staff who uses BSL to ask questions and discuss any issues they have.

You asked for some immediate actions with regards to A – E in your report.

- A. Sheffield City Council has written guidance for managers on the use of translation and interpretation services. This was published in April 2016. One of the aims of the guidance is to ensure that customers who have difficulty communicating are not disadvantaged in accessing key council services. The guidance refers to the duty placed on the Council through the Accessible Information Standard to provide people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss with information that they can easily read or understand. It states that this means making sure people get information in different formats, for example, via a British Sign Language interpreter.
- B. Demand for British Sign Language interpretation is monitored through regular contract monitoring. Quarterly reports are provided by Language Line Solutions, which show all requests for interpretation made in the previous quarter. These reports show details of the service requesting an interpreter, as well as the time and date requests were made. The reports show any requests not met. Language Line Solutions'interpreter booking system uses GIS tools to map unmet demand and assess the need to recruit additional interpreters in a particular language and location to meet unmet demand.

Unfortunately, the supply of qualified BSL interpreters in the Sheffield locality is limited. A search through the National Registers of Communication Professionals website indicates that there are only 24 BSL interpreters within a 20 mile radius of Sheffield City Centre. At the same time, demand for BSL interpreters is from across public service providers across the Region.

- C. As part of preparations for our replacement client recording system we have also reviewed the range of standard letters our services use when communicating with service users and carers. This includes new guidance for staff that highlights the requirements under the Accessible Information Standard, and wider accessibility and good practice (e.g., translation, alternative formats and communicating securely by email, corporate design policy regarding clear print and plain language). As far as possible, these letters are generated by our systems to ensure they are consistent, include key standard information and are personalised (e.g., name and address) from the client's primary record.

- D. A client's need or preference for email or text communication is recorded in the client record, and services have the ability to securely email correspondence and send text messages. As part of our preparations for the introduction of the Accessible Information Standard we also ensured services were aware of the ways they could meet needs for other electronic communications (e.g., correspondence sent on a USB stick, CD or DVD).
- E. In commissioning a provider of translation and interpretation services in 2016, we asked bidders to submit proposals on how they could innovate to improve the delivery of interpretation services. Language Line Solutions proposed a Video Interpretation Service for BSL. This service is provided by Language Line Solutions through 'SignLive'. SignLive provides instant access to a fully qualified interpreter through a tablet or laptop device.

The Council's use of BSL interpreters is fairly low (approximately 170 bookings a year) and many of these are lengthy bookings and/or in situations where it is not practical and or appropriate to use video interpretation, e.g., a social work appointments in a customer's home. As a result, SignLive is not being used by the Council at the present time. Its potential is being evaluated by the Council, particularly for drop-in situations, like First Point in Howden House, where this would be an enhancement on the current service provision. If introduced, employees will be given appropriate training on how and when to use SignLive, and we would look at ways to engage service users, through Healthwatch, in the implementation process, where appropriate.

2. You asked us to consider the use of measures/incentives for care providers to ensure they meet the Accessible Information Standard.

In preparation for the introduction of the Accessible Information Standard we reviewed our contract requirements to ensure care providers recognise the need to meet the requirements of the Standard, and explained how we would in future include this as part of our contract monitoring. We also featured information about the requirements of the Standard in a range of correspondence/news channels (e.g., SCC provider ebulletin).

3. You asked us to consider the views of the Deaf community when monitoring performance of the contract with interpretation and translation service.

In commissioning a provider of translation and interpretation services in 2016, the Council held workshops with service providers to establish what was required in the contract specification. These workshops included representatives of social care services, but not members of the Deaf community or other community groups.

The contract with Language Line Solutions is balanced in favour of quality over cost, and includes a number of Key Performance Indicators, including fulfilment rates for BSL interpreters, against which Language Line Solutions' service quality is assessed. During the first year of the contract (November 2016 to November 2017) monthly performance reports were provided, which included the number of

BSL booking requests and the percentage fulfilled. As we moved into the second year of the contract, it was agreed to receive quarterly reports. The reports also include details of any complaints made about Language Line Solutions. The performance reports are considered at regular contract review meetings, which include representatives from Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Teaching Hospital and Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group. As commercial contract management meetings, they do not include representatives of the Deaf community or other service users.

A key performance indicator in the contract is customer satisfaction. This covers service management satisfaction, and end user satisfaction. The commissioners are having discussions with Language Line Solutions about how to best implement this performance indicator.

The current contract is scheduled to run until the end of 2019, with an option to extend for up to two years. As part of this review process, the commissioners will consider how to incorporate service user views into the process.

4. You asked us to ensure staff understand the needs of, and problems experienced by the Deaf community, and our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Staff receive advice and training on the Council's equalities duties and how we identify and meet needs as part of induction and ongoing throughout their employment. Specifically for the introduction of the Accessible Information Standard we provided detailed 'how to' guidance, which explained communication need in detail, including a description, demand/size of the population where known, what support might be required (e.g. specific format for documents, professional support in meetings, need for extra time/longer appointments, etc.), and services the person can purchase (e.g. transliterator, note-taker) including how to assess the quality of the service provider (e.g. skills/qualifications/membership).

5. You asked us to ensure information about our complaints process is accessible and available in BSL.

Sheffield City Council's approach to complaints is that we welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve our services. Our definition of a complaint is 'any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not'.

Customers may complain in any way they choose to – in person, face to face, in writing, by email or online. We encourage customers to use the online form on our website, which allows customers to provide their details, details of the complaint, how it has affected them, and what they would like us to do.

Details of the Complaints Policy, including an Easy Read leaflet and Easy Read form are on the website at www.sheffield.gov.uk/tellus. The website does not have a BSL version of the Complaints Policy, and there are no current plans to produce one. Clear posters explaining how customers can complain have been distributed to all in-person customer access points.

If a customer wishes to make a complaint and there is a communication need, such as the need to use BSL, then in line with our guidance on the use of translation and interpretation, the service being complained about should consider whether an interpreter is required to support the person complaining.

We trust this response will support the Deaf community to understand what they can expect from the Council. In the meantime, if you have any immediate questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

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& Practice Development

Paul Taylor
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