

# Deaf People's Wellbeing in Nottinghamshire

A summary of our research carried out in November 2011

East Midlands Deaf Community Research Group

## Deaf BSL-users experience poor health

For some years it has repeatedly been shown that Deaf people (who use sign language) experience more health problems and significantly poorer quality of life than hearing people even though deaf people may have the same number and quality of social relationships (Fellinger et al. 2005).

More recently, the charity Sign-Health helped the national GP survey collect information about Deaf people (SignHealth, 2008, 2009). From this survey we have a good idea about Deaf people's physical health problems in the UK. The findings are similar.

In the GP Survey (2009), the percentage of the Deaf Community who said that their health is 'Poor'

was 10% compared to 6% of the national population. And 30% of Deaf people who thought that they needed to see their GP weren't able to, compared to 11% of the general population. Many studies have shown that Deaf people find it difficult to access mainstream physical and mental healthcare (Fellinger et al., 2005; Pollard & Barnett, 2005; lezzoni, O'Day, Killeen & Harker, 2004).

It is very difficult to estimate the level and frequency of mental health problems in the Deaf population. Mental Health is a complex subject and it is very difficult to measure. We know that many hearing health professionals find it difficult to carry out good assessments with Deaf



people around their mental health (Glickman & Gulati, 2003). For these reasons, we may expect Deaf people to experience more frequent and worse mental health than hearing people.

## What we did and How we did it.

We developed a questionnaire to ask Deaf people about their experiences of health and social care services.

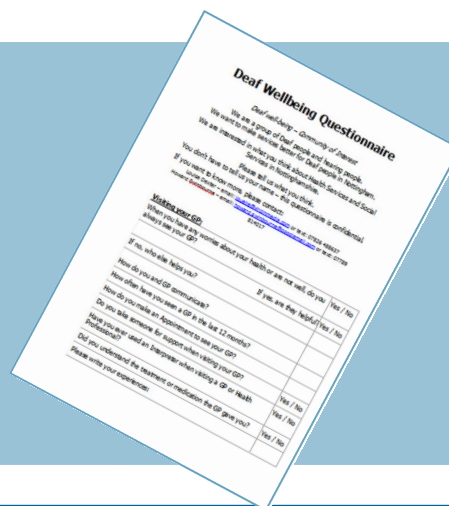
Questionnaires can sometimes be difficult to design. We spent a lot of time thinking about the questions we wanted to ask.

We know that many Deaf people get put off by forms and writing in complicated English.

We decided to ask the questions in face-to-face meetings using sign language. We could then explain more about anything the person did not understand.

### We asked about:

- Visiting your GP
- Getting Help from Social Care Services
- Mental Health and Support Experiences
- Contact with Mental Health Services
- Access to information
- Demographic information



## Numbers of Deaf People in Notts

This table shows the PCTs' estimates of the number of deaf people in Notts. However, these are unreliable and do not indicate whether this includes all hearing impaired people or Deaf people who use Sign Language as their main way of communicating.

This is an important distinction because it has implications on how deaf and hearing impaired people access information and services.

Primary Care Trust	Deaf Adults per 1000 population	Number of Deaf Adults
BASSETLAW PCT	1.3	108
DERBYSHIRE COUNTY PCT	1.6	851
DERBY CITY PCT	5.1	857
LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY & RUTLAND PCT	1.4	700
LEICESTER CITY PCT	5.7	1,196
LINCOLNSHIRE PCT	1.9	958
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PCT	3.4	1,616
NOTTINGHAM CITY PCT	3.6	757
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY TEACHING PCT	1.8	862

## Main Findings

- **Difficulties accessing Doctors/GP and Hospitals and making appointments**
- **Majority not aware of local mental health and social care services, but many would use them**
- **Preference for information from families and friends as well as from Doctors and health professionals**
- **Do not access information from literature, DVDs, TV or internet**

*"Because my husband goes with me I feel ignored and talked over. They talk to my husband because it is quicker and easier, but it leaves me feeling deflated and very useless."*

(This woman was crying while she said this)

*"One problem is that there is a different doctor every time and I need an interpreter. The receptionist call-out is a problem as nurses are either busy or forget. I am deaf and I miss the appointment time and don't realize until it is too late."*

*"I had a letter from hospital marked "Urgent". I had no one to help me make the call, so I went to my GP surgery and asked the receptionist to ring for me. She refused. I offered to pay her £5 to make the call. She refused saying she was not allowed"*

## Conclusions

**Deaf people in Nottinghamshire accessing health and social care services experience the same problems that have been identified in the research literature for some years. This includes higher than average visits to their GP; difficulties in arranging appointments; communication problems with services and staff. Deaf people continue to want more information about health and services.**

**Some services offer Deaf awareness training and try to be more accessible, but this is not working. More needs to be done.**

**Services need to be more proactive in communicating with the Deaf communities around them.**