



Deaf People's Wellbeing in Nottinghamshire 2014

A summary of a research survey carried out in July 2014

By the Nottingham Deaf Wellbeing Action 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 SignHealth completed a large sample survey of the health of deaf people in the UK—the *Sick of It* report. (SignHealth, 2014). From this survey we have a good idea about Deaf people's physical health problems in the UK. The findings are really not new.

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).

In 2011, we carried out a survey of 54 deaf people and published the results.

The research showed that deaf people in Nottinghamshire experience poor mental health and access to health services at similar rates to other published research on deaf people around the world.

In 2014, we decided to carry out a similar survey to see if things have changed. This is a summary of what we found:



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.

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 43 deaf people about their experiences over the past 12 months. 19 were male, 24 were female. 18 lived in the City and 20 in the county. The average age was 51, (range 19-73).

The majority, 41 said they were BSL users, 2 said that they used speech to communicate, even though they can sign.

We asked about:

- Visiting your GP
- Feeling depressed, worried and emotional
- Getting a Hospital appointment
- Demographic information

Visiting the GP

Helpful?: 60% (26) said their GP was helpful. 26% (11) said that their GP was not helpful.

Making Appointments: 60% (26) usually make appointments with their GP through an interpreter or family using the phone. 9% (4) use text/fax/online. About a quarter of people (26%, 11) said they have to visit the GP surgery in person to make an appointment. We don't think this is the same for hearing people.

Understanding Treatment: Although most people (79%, 34) said that they understood the treatment their GP gave them, 19% (8) people said that they did not understand.

What we think:

No one should have to visit their GP in person to make an appointment.

Everyone who sees their GP treatment should understand their treatment.

Feeling depressed, worried or emotional

How many had symptoms of depression & anxiety: 37% (16) of people said that had symptoms for more than 7 days in the past 12 months.

Getting help: The majority of people (81%, 36) said that they would see their GP if they felt depressed or anxious. 12% (5) of people said that they had seen a counsellor who used BSL in the past year. No one said that they had seen a hearing counsellor with an interpreter.

Of those who knew about the Specialist CPN service for Deaf people in Nottingham, 19% (8) said that they would ask them for help, but 42% (18) said that they would not. This may be because they do not have serious mental health problems. However, only 21% (9) people said that they had heard about the Lets Talk Wellbeing IAPT service which is appropriate for more common mental health conditions.

What we think:

Deaf people should have better access to psychological therapies in their own language at all steps of the stepped care model.

Hospital Appointments

49% (21) of the people we surveyed said that they had had a hospital appointment in the past 12 months.

Although most (47%, 10) of them said that this had gone smoothly, over a third (38%, 8) said that this had been a very difficult experience for them.

What we think:

No one should experience the extreme difficulties that Deaf people do when going to hospital.

What some people said:

"There was no interpreter at the hospital because a full booking. My daughter had to sign for me, which was not ideal. I wished an interpreter was available."

"I get an appointment letter from the hospital, but I don't fully understand what it says. It says that I have to phone for an appointment, but I can't because I am deaf; and I can't even go to the hospital to make the appointment in person because I don't know where to go!"

"I don't need a CPN—I just need some Step 2 support or some counselling".

"It's not easy making an appointment without an interpreter—communicating in speech is difficult".