



**healthwatch**  
Leicester

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# Insight Report

Accessing Health and Social Care Services:  
Deaf Community

## Accessing Health and Social Care Services: Deaf Community

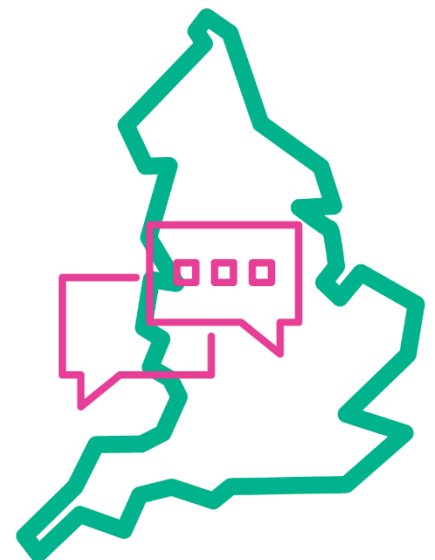
Our access to Health care project is to listen and to explore how people have been accessing their health care and what that experience has been like for them.

In November 2022, we attended the Deaf Community Centre in Leicester to seek the deaf communities' views on their experiences in accessing health care. We engaged with eight members of the community. This was a face-to-face focus group session which were culturally sensitive and community interpreters were used where required.

### Experiences in accessing health and social care

A community of deaf people in Leicester and Leicestershire told us about the services they had been in contact with recently and their experiences of them. Initially they shared insights to services including dentists, opticians and local GP's, and followed with the issues of availability within them.

*"We can't book our services in the same way hearing people do. It's not available to us or goes so wrong we have massive anxiety and don't go again, or we can't explain what's going on and we give up. They give us things to read but sometimes we can't read and then we feel embarrassed."*



## Accessing GP Appointments

All members of the group have difficulty with their GPs. The main reason for this is the interpreter that is provided or the lack of one.



The group have experienced going to their GP and being assigned an interpreter from a different region of the country which presents the issue of a language barrier. When this occurs the community struggle to understand what the translator is signing to them, and the dialects are different.

One member of the group had been to a doctor's appointment and received an online British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to aid them with the appointment. During the appointment, the doctor directed their entire attention to the translator and not the patient and the interpreter the same to the doctor. They shared they felt *"none the wiser"* about anything from their appointment and that they *"came out and didn't know what had just happened."*

## Accessing Dental Appointments



When accessing dental appointments previously, interpreters were provided. For the past two years this has not been the case. One member had received a confusing experience as to whether an interpreter was there or not and ended up in the room on their own to receive treatment. After their appointment they had another booked 6 months ahead.

When they arrived for this appointment, it was clear there was no interpreter and because of this they went in to receive their treatment again, on their own. During treatment, they had no idea what was going on, tried to ask and received no communication from the dentist and nurse. This caused them to have a panic attack and put a stop to treatment. They left the serviced very stressed and reluctant to go back again.

## Accessing Optician Appointments

All members of the group don't feel comfortable accessing appointments for the opticians because there is no interpreter provided. Two members of the group shared their experiences in detail and told us that the opticians become frustrated with the fact they are deaf.



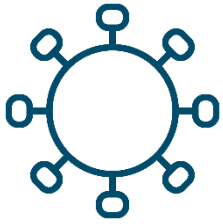
They felt that the staff were rude and aggressive because they do not understand what they are saying. Without an interpreter, they can't understand what the opticians are saying to them.

They also shared their reluctance to go to the opticians because of the lack of access for them. One person has not been back in 4 years, and it now affects their ability to drive as they need a new prescription.

## Quality of Care

The majority felt the quality of care received at health and social care services was limited and in places of a low standard because of provided interpretation, time between appointments, treatment from staff and communication issues.

One felt that whilst using eye hospital services to diagnose their declining eyesight, it was unfair to receive communications via letters, as they struggled to read them. The length of time between diagnosis and treatment was a concern as it has been three years since any initial diagnosis, and they are still waiting for treatment.



## Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on services

The group members told us that the impact Covid-19 on services has made it more difficult for them to access.

Before they were able to access their GP by going to the reception and seeing a GP without a mask. Now, this is not possible and when they have an appointment, they cannot understand what the GP is saying if they speak with a mask on.

Others told us that having to use mobile phones and online applications to access services now, is more difficult as there is a language barrier between BSL, and the words written down for hearing people. When using their mobile phones or computers it is hard for them to read and understand what is being said as it is not written in their language.



### Contact us



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