

NEWCASTLE HEALTHY CITY



NEWCASTLE
DEAFLINK

Working with D/deaf, Deafblind & Hard of Hearing People

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION REPORT 2004 TO 2007

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INTRODUCTION

This report will show the history and evolution of the Newcastle Deaflink service. It will specifically address and evaluate the services it has provided for the Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing (D, DB, and HOH) communities in Newcastle during the period of Lottery funding (2004-07). It highlights the benefits, and barriers, of working with communities to develop services and identify individual and group needs.

This report concludes by identifying the areas of work yet to be developed and what we believe we can achieve should we receive further funding.

BACKGROUND

In 2001 Newcastle Social Services Directorate brought together a small group of Deaf, Deafblind, and Hard of Hearing people to discuss the exclusion of these communities from Service development processes.

This resulted in the funding of a Community Development worker post for a time limited period of 2 years by the Local Authority. Newcastle Healthy City Project had a good track record of Voluntary Sector community work and agreed to provide the support structure and a base for the worker and the newly formed steering group.

One of the outputs from the various meetings was a conference held in October 2002 which highlighted the needs of D/deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people within

- Education
- Health
- Public Services
- Community Safety

This was later published in a report called "Your Chance, Your Views". This report became the manifesto of the subsequent group namely Newcastle Deaflink.

The aim of Newcastle Deaflink is to

- Improve access to employment, education, health, leisure and social opportunities for all Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people in Newcastle
- To raise awareness of the needs of these excluded groups to statutory and voluntary/private organisations and agencies in Newcastle upon Tyne
- To act as a consultative group offering training support and advocacy.

Funding

In order to maintain the momentum that was started by the Local Authority, Newcastle Healthy City Project and Deaflink as a consortium, was awarded £169,534 for 3 years from the Community Fund now the Big Lottery for a Development worker post and a part time administrator.

We have since received funding for specific items, research and events from Money for Change, Community Foundation, and Community Learning Chest, Northern Rock, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Newcastle Futures.

Legal Status

We continue under Newcastle Healthy City Project (NHCP) which is a Charitable Company and looks after 10 other projects which has 22 staff. Newcastle Deaflink has a member who is on the Board of Trustees of NHCP.

Although we have established our own constitution, our funding is managed under “Restricted Funds” within the budget of Newcastle Healthy City Project.

Governance and Accountability

Newcastle Deaflink has a committee of 10 people and chairperson elected at the first AGM from the three communities, who meet monthly with 2 hearing/sighted advisers. The development worker presents a work report to the committee who are responsible in partnership with Healthy City for ensuring the direction of Deaflink is in keeping with the aims and purposes of the project. Members of the committee act as representatives for their specific groups and ensure 2 way feedback to their groups and the committee.

PROJECTED DEAFLINK OUTPUTS 2004/07

Agreed outputs for the last 3 years 2004-2007 were to:

Year 1

- Set up an office base and recruit staff
- Establish/train a committee made up of beneficiaries
- Undertake a mapping exercise to identify needs
- Liaise with agencies on identified issues and ensure communication support.
- Organise an annual conference where 100 people attended.
- Set up a Black & Minority Ethnic group from the 3 communities
- To set in motion and plan the development of a new Deaf Resource Centre. (This was a new proposed outcome due to increasing demand on the Development worker from the beneficiaries.).

Year 2

- Set up a Gay and Lesbian Group from the 3 communities
- Develop a Hard of Hearing network
- Develop/research Deafblind network.
- Organise an AGM
- Prepare a business plan
- Liaise with agencies

Year 3

- Organise an AGM
- Organise a Deafblind support group.
- Liaise with agencies

WHAT WE ACHIEVED AND LEARNT IN YEAR 1

The end of Year 1 report in May 2004-April 2005 showed that 367 Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people and 25 agencies had benefited from their involvement with Deaflink. This information was gathered through the workers report, registration at events and the establishment of a data base.

Office base/ Recruitment Process

In May 2004 the base for Deaflink was established within the organisation and building of Newcastle Healthy City Project. The recruitment of a Development worker and Administrator involved members of the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing Community, who received training from the Chief Executive of Healthy City who gave them appropriate support to prepare them as interview panel members and equip them for the recruitment procedures. This complex process was supported by interpreters, lip speakers and Deafblind communicator guides throughout.

The candidates for the post had to demonstrate through a presentation their ability to communicate with all three groups a vision that would empower and enable full participation within the wider community. It was vital that the Development worker was fluent in British Sign Language and had a knowledge and awareness of the needs of all three groups.

It was vital that the whole recruitment process was accessible and followed the Healthy City Equal Opportunities policy specifically looking to attract applications from D, DB, and HOH people. The successful candidate started in their post in May 2004.

Committee establishment /training

The first provisional committee was established at the launch of the "Your Chance Your Views" Report event. Initial guidance and training was given by the Chief Executive of Healthy City who attended all the meetings, as to how the committee should develop a basic constitution as terms of reference on how to operate as a group. The committee identified various training needs and funding was acquired through the Community Foundation to run the training programme which was also open to other D, HOH, and DB members of Deaflink.

Due to the specialist nature of the training we asked Becoming Visible, a deaf led training organisation to run a workshop on issues such as "How to use an Interpreter".



Deaflink Committee Training (2005)

Mapping Exercise of Needs

We established monthly forums supported by interpreters and lip speakers for 30-40 people where specifically chosen topics and speakers, identified by the committee, came with information. This proved to be an empowering process on subjects like, Pensions, Direct Payments, Investments, Credit Unions, Patient Advice and Liaison Service, Drugs/alcohol. As consequences of the presentations from the Pensions Service 6 deaf people were assessed for an increase in their pensions, one person received £15,000 back dated allowances.

The forums were also the chosen platform for agents to consult with the 3 groups, such as Community Action on Health, the Primary Care Trust wanted feedback regarding "Patients Choice", and Northumbria Police Community Engagement wanted the views of the 3 groups on how to improve access to their service; this resulted in a deaf member being invited to sit on the Police Strategic Advisory Board. Deaflink was invited to have representatives on the Equality and Diversity groups of the local NHS Trust and Newcastle City Council .The work of Deaflink as a bridge has meant the ongoing involvement of grassroots Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people on key committees which is vital to see ongoing change to policies and challenge attitudes on equality and access.

One of the main issues identified by the group was sexual health, as there had been a dearth of information which was accessible to the BSL community (where English is not the first language) and therefore knowledge in the area of sexual health was vague amongst all age groups. This made this particular marginalised group particularly vulnerable. See Year 2

Y Slim Project

Within the context of the forums Deaflink set up a 10 week Healthy Exercise/Eating pilot scheme for 10 Deaf women in partnership with the Deaflink Development Worker, the North Tyneside YMCA and Deafplus called “Y Slim”. This highlighted the gap in knowledge of deaf women where the meaning of many words we hearing people take for granted, such as “carbohydrates or protein” were not easily understood. All of the women had not accessed a gym before or a slimming club as there is no communication support available. One participant lost 1 ½ stone during the 10 weeks of this course.



Y Slim participants (2005)

Due to the dearth of information on such projects nationally, members were invited to attend and give a presentation on our Y Slim project at a national conference. This pilot has enabled us to be successful in getting funding in 2007/08 from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund for research on obesity, which will result in an accessible training pack and hopefully assist with a proposal for a healthy living information worker.

Employment

Deaflink was approached by Shaw Trust to provide a signing environment work placement for 3 young deaf people. This helped give some work experience to prepare and build confidence for their future employment Awareness Training.

We provided 2 separate work placements for Northumbria Police trainees within Deaflink. This raised the officer's awareness of the issues and challenges Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people face in every day life. The reports from the officers were fed back to the Police HQ Tutor group.

AGM

One of the specific tasks of the provisional committee was to plan and hold an AGM in order that the wider community could have a say in who should represent them on the committee. Led by the committee, the first AGM was held in October 2004 at the Civic Centre, over 100 people attended with presentations from each of the committee members and a guest speaker from the British Deaf Association. Nominations had come in prior to the event and members were able to vote which 10 members would represent them.

Deaf Black & Minority Ethnic Group

The development of a BME group initially started well with 7 members, all women. We linked in with the Angelou Centre in Newcastle and a Deaf Asian Women's group in Middlesbrough to develop activities. Unfortunately 2 of the leaders returned to Pakistan for family reasons and on their return one got full time employment and the other had married.

We should not assume because they were Asian that they wanted their own group

Due to the lack of leadership and the small number the group decided to integrate into the wider Deaflink activities. It was noted that their identity as deaf women where BSL was used to communicate was more important to them than their ethnicity. One deaf Asian young woman stated "that she preferred to be within the mainstream of deaf people and that we should not assume because they were Asian that they wanted their own group".

Deaf Resource Centre

In response to the "Your Chance Your Views" report and the needs for a deaf resource centre expressed by the 3 groups; the development worker set up and facilitated the Deaf Centre Consortium. This was a group of community leaders and projects from the 3 groups. This development attracted the involvement of One North East, Home Housing Group, Sign and the Local Authority, and resulted in a bid going forward to the Big Lottery Living Landmarks which was one of two projects that succeeded in getting through to the second round in the North East.

This ran through in to Year 2 of the Deaflink project's development as it was put forward to the Living Landmarks Fund and took up an extra day a week of the workers time which was negotiated with the Big Lottery Grant Manager. This was a major learning experience for everyone which highlighted the differences with the groups in regard to cultural and communication issues. Initially there was a power struggle between the three groups as to priority of needs, and how appropriate communication (BSL to English Interpreter, Lipspeaker, Deafblind Communicator guide) was vital in order that the wider members of the 3 groups were to feel included in the consultation and decision making process. As one adviser said from their experience "it was a miracle to get all 3 communities to work together".

The opportunity that the Living Landmarks presented helped the groups to focus on the task, building in to the business plan strategies for long term sustainability. With all the complex jargon to decipher and translate into BSL, and with many other related hurdles, with the help of the planning department at the Local Authority we were able at one weeks notice to give a 3 day presentation to the Big Lottery assessors. Unfortunately due to the fact that we were still in an embryonic stage, the project was not accepted as we were not able to meet the full criteria. The sense of failure came very hard to the consortium who as volunteers had given many hours of their time to this. However the profile of the D, HOH, DB people in the city and surrounding area had been raised within the city and it was good to see all the goodwill and support we received from the hearing sighted world.

However as a consequence of this, the need for specialist housing was picked up by Sign, a national organisation that specialises in housing for deaf people. It was decided that the agenda for housing in the Newcastle area could be taken forward independently from a deaf centre. This is still ongoing through Year 2 and Year3 with members of Deaflink and the Statutory Sector working jointly with others to establish a scheme which will benefit deaf people. Currently deaf people who have ongoing mental health needs have to be housed in Leeds or Manchester, away from their families and friends.

In addition Deaflink highlighted the need of Deaf /Deafblind young people leaving home and seeking independence, as many are still dependent on their parents to act as carers/interpreters/advocates. Within that context the Development worker gave advice and assistance to a homeless young deaf person by visiting various housing agencies and giving deaf awareness advice to the housing agents who are now supporting him within the local authority. This raised an issue within the Housing providers within the city as none of them could provide a signing or accessible environment for any person from these 3 groups whether it

was training staff such as wardens, or the provision of appropriate equipment in the home to support the person with safety or access.

Recognition

Deaflink was awarded a Diversity Award by Northumbria Police recognising our work of challenging barriers in the community.

Tyne & Wear Museums

Deaflink was invited to be part of the initial consultation group alongside Becoming Visible, and North Tyneside Development worker to discuss making museums more accessible. This resulted in the appointment of a full time deaf access officer and the establishment of volunteer guides from the deaf community to work in the Tyne and Wear Museums.

CAMPAIGNING & SOCIAL POLICY WORK

Access to Hospital Services

Feedback from deaf users of the ENT Department at the Freeman Hospital had identified that access to the clinics proved difficult as nursing staff shouted the name of patients when they had to go in to see the clinicians. For deaf users who are dependent on visual clues, never heard and often missed their turn to see the consultant, and were left waiting, sometimes till the end of the clinic.

Deaflink had been informed of a “vibrating alerting device” which was being piloted at another hospital in Northumberland. This was discussed by Deaflink in various meetings with hospital managers, who agreed to run the pilot at the Freeman Hospital.

As a result of our campaign for change the vibrating alerting system is now fully used in the Freeman Hospital and is spreading to the other hospitals in the city benefiting over 45,000 people who use out patient departments.

Interpreting services

Currently the BSL/English Interpreting service is managed and run by the City Council based at the Civic Centre. It was identified that over 65% of interpreter /Lipspeaker bookings were by Health who do not fund the management overheads for this service. After discussions between Health and the Interpreting Service, a proposal was received from the spoken language interpreting service (who are funded by Health) to take over the interpreting services provided by the Council.

Deaflink organised a consultation event within the AGM for the 3 groups to hear the proposal and to discuss their views. A representative steering group was set up to look at details of the proposal and to raise awareness of deaf peoples needs with the managers of the spoken language service.

After a year of debate and consideration it was realised that the services to the deaf communities was very different from those whose first language is not English, and the proposal was withdrawn by Health. This process was a learning curve more for health providers who learnt about the different nature and culture of sign language, and lip speaking as a mode of communication.

Interpreting Availability

Deaf people raised concerns at the lack of interpreter provision at hospital and other appointments and in cases of emergency there is no 24 hour service. These were immediately taken up with service providers, who acknowledged the national shortage of qualified interpreters. There are only 20 qualified interpreters and 6 lip speakers in the North East. This is an ongoing problem which affects all access issues for deaf people who need to communicate with services.

Media Subtitles

Many concerns and complaints were raised by the 3 groups as to the poor quality of subtitling services on most TV channels, and in many instances there are no subtitles at all. Deaflink sent a letter highlighting our concerns to all the main broadcasters. We received acknowledgments from each stating their efforts to change, in the hope that by 2008 there will be full subtitling services available on all programmes and an increase in programmes having BSL signing provision. See Campaign in Year 3

Highways

Concerns were expressed by Deaflink members to the City Council and the Police in relation to cyclists and skateboarders on pedestrian areas. This proved to be hazardous for deaf people who could not be alerted to cyclists coming from behind. This is still an ongoing concern.

Training Provision

1. CVS gave training and advice to 10 members on the role of the committee.
2. CVS gave admin worker training on "Minute taking".

3. Kenton College provide HEFC in English for admin staff.
4. Newcastle College European driving Licence for admin worker.
5. Community Empowerment Fund provided funding for Confidence and Assertiveness Sessions for 15 members, and Newcastle Partnership training to the committee.



Newcastle Partnership Training (2005)

WHAT WE ACHIEVED AND LEARNT IN YEAR 2

The end of Year 2 report in April 2005 till May 2006 showed that 350 Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people and 35 agencies benefited from their involvement with Deaflink.

Gay and Lesbian group (North East Deaf Rainbow)

Historically deaf people had very little information on issues surrounding their sexuality. For those who have “come out” they have faced discrimination and bigotry from the wider Deaf community, therefore becoming more excluded. The nearest known deaf gay/lesbian groups are based in Leeds and Manchester.

Through personal networks the development worker was able to initially recruit 2 members who identified themselves as gay; this has now grown to 7 gay and lesbian young deaf people. This group met monthly and have their leadership represented on the Deaflink committee. This group has been difficult to hold together over the year due to breakdown in some of the relationships which resulted in a gap of 3-4 months till issues had been resolved. Despite these individual relationships were maintained with frequent visits to the Deaflink office, for advice and support. See Year 3 for progress.

Hard of Hearing Networks (Self Help for Hard of Hearing, Shhh!)

Acknowledging the difference between Deaf BSL users from a linguistic and cultural perspective to the Hard of Hearing group whose mode of communication was predominantly speech / lip-reading, the HOH members set up their own subgroup. This group is also represented on the Deaflink committee and are proactive in attending meetings within the PCT and Hospital Trusts

This group have been difficult to reach out to and we failed to meet initial target figure. By Year 2 we had managed to identify only 47 HOH, which resulted in us adjusting our target figures.

The Development worker had established links with a local HOH group who were made up of elderly people and was slowly shrinking in numbers. Contacts were also established with Link and Hearing Concern both national organisations, neither of whom had established networks in Newcastle.

Deaflink received funding to do a small piece of research to assist the small Shhh! Group to establish what the needs were, specifically targeting the younger group of deafened people as most HOH people are elderly.

The methodology used was one to one contact using an interview format developed by the group. As a consequence of the research it was decided to seek funding to develop a website containing access information and a talk shop. The group was unable to get funding to take this forward.

In addition to this the Development worker did a questionnaire within two of the Out Patients clinics at the ENT department at the Freeman Hospital. From 20 one to one contacts, many did not know what services were provided in Newcastle outside of the hospital, some felt they did not have a problem, others bluffed their way through situations, especially within employment. Three patients wished to have a referral made through to the Sensory Support team at Social Services for equipment to help them in the home.

One woman disclosed that she did not want her family to know how difficult it was for her to hear so she waited for her husband to go to bed before putting the subtitles on the TV.

This highlighted the difficulty people in reaching this specific group and the more personal issues such as, accepting their deafness and feeling accepted by others. Statistics from the Sensory Support Team of Social Services have 18,000 Hard of Hearing people registered in Newcastle. (See APPENDIX 1 Results of the Hard of Hearing Questionnaire)

Deafblind Network

Meetings were held between the Social Worker for Deafblind people in Newcastle, Sense, Deafblind UK and Deaflink's Development worker to look at gaps in the provision given to this hard to reach group. It was identified that there was a Deafblind group in Sunderland covering Durham which has now ceased, and one in Northumberland run by Social Services.

Social Services in Newcastle and the hospital clinics had identified over **450** people with a dual sensory loss, ranging from those who wear hearing aids and have sight problems to those who are either profoundly deaf with a sight loss or vice versa.

Through this network Deaflink was able to meet with 2 DB people both of whom agreed to come on to the Deaflink committee. This needed careful managing, with correspondence in large print and support with transport and lip speakers. The Deafblind network of professionals continues to meet quarterly and keep up to date with all known research and services.

Through the networks of Deaflink we have encouraged and facilitated Deafblind UK in Northumberland to employ Deaf people to become Communicator guides for those who are BSL users who have a degree of sight loss. This has proved to be an excellent resource and enables deaf people to find employment in the caring field. (See Year 3 for progress).

AGM

This was organised within the Civic Centre with the sponsorship of the City Council. This was well attended again by 100 people from all three groups supported by interpreters, lip speakers and a palantypist. The Deaflink committee facilitated by the development worker gave feedback on the progress of the previous years work, followed by a presentation on the proposal for the spoken language interpreting service to take over the BSL/English interpreting service. See previous details under Campaigns

Business Plan

The process of developing a business plan included the possible appointment of a Business Manager who would identify potential clients and negotiate contracts to set up services in order to ensure a sustainable future for Deaflink.

Initially this was included in the draft proposals for a new Deaf Resource Centre within the Living Landmarks Bid. With the failure of our bid, the ideas formulated from that have been shelved by the consortium. However the ideas and vision still remain but can only be resurrected with future funding for a business manager post.

Sexual Health Forum

In May 2005 working in partnership with the Development worker from North Tyneside Council, it was decided to have a forum targeting the over 40's within the BSL community using flyers and other networks. Due to the shortage of staff within Newcastle Sexual Health team at the time, two workers from Gateshead Sexual Health Team led the taster session. This was held in Brunswick Methodist Church Hall and was open to any D/deaf person in the area. Approximately 40 people attended aged 40-72 years.

This proved to be an "earth shattering" experience for the workers as people stood up and "bravely" gave accounts of personal experiences including one disclosure of rape. With the aid of post its and the 2 interpreters to translate, people were able to write private questions so they could be responded to anonymously in the wider group.

"Can you have sex after a hysterectomy?"

“Can women have orgasms after a hysterectomy?”

It was found that during consultation at the hospital for a hysterectomy the Deaf woman was told by the consultant, through a BSL interpreter, that she would have “no more periods ,no more babies” The woman either misunderstood the signed translation or it was misinterpreted and thought the consultant meant “no more sex”

“I have 2 hearing daughters how I can help them, I feel embarrassed talking they are 13 and 10 years?”

The Sexual Health workers were alarmed and angered at the systems that had let this specific group of people down as they had never come across this in any other group of this age. It was clear that there was misinformation and lots of ignorance in the group many of whom had been taught in special schools where communication was not always clear. Most of the deaf people also came from hearing families who could not communicate at such a level to discuss any in-depth issue such as sex or healthy living.

As a consequence of this and the demand for more information we decided to have 6 monthly sexual health sessions in place of the forums open to all ages and gender. The resources that were used were those used in mainstream schools, which took people back to basics. The monthly sessions were well attended by up to 20 deaf people who were split in to small groups, using visual aids and question and answer sessions, this seemed a good method to ensure full participation.

Subsequent to this it was recognised that the BSL interpreters needed training as they found they were also lacking in knowledge on the terminology and the appropriate BSL signs to use. Gateshead Sexual Health Team agreed to do a separate training session for the local BSL interpreters.

On completion of the sessions it was agreed to work with the Managers of local Sexual Health teams to put together a report/proposal which would be forwarded on to the local PCT's to fund a specialist Health Worker post for the Deaf community. Due to other pressing commitments and limited resources on the Development worker this report still has not been completed.

Will making

Deaflink contacted Age Concern who was hosting a Will Making Day at their centre, to find that it was not accessible to BSL users as they had no funding to pay for interpreters. Consequently discussions were held with Age Concern on the feasibility of facilitating a special day for Deaf BSL users who cannot access this service through the normal channels.

Historically some deaf people have used members of their own family to interpret for them which at times can be inappropriate.

With the use of a recommended solicitor, 3 Deaf couples came forward and with the support of interpreters were able to make a will. This proved successful and as word spread more deaf made requests for the service in future forums.

Access to Official Records

In response to the local Deaf School closing and being taken over by new management, local deaf people expressed concerns that their school records would disappear. An agreement was reached with the school to have sessions with the Archivist where ex pupils could see copies of their old school reports and photographs, and take copies. Funding for interpreters was found and over 50 ex pupils made appointments via Deaflink to visit the school. For many this was an emotional occasion, and proved invaluable to each of the ex pupils as a part of their own deaf heritage.

The dissemination of accessible information is vital to the BSL community who generally feel they are the last to know about anything, being left disempowered and frustrated. Many Deaf people have left school with a reading age of 8 ³/₄ and prefer information in BSL either direct from signed DVD's or via a BSL/English interpreter. The work of Deaflink has been to re-educate providers of services not to assume their information is "easy reading" and to ensure that members of all three groups have information in their own preferred mode. This is proving to be a long arduous task.

Training

Three members of the management committee completed 'Lead the Field' training. This programme of management courses was provided by MBA in their "Time Out" programme, funded by Northern Rock. It was recognised that the Newcastle Deaflink management team have little experience of managing initiatives or negotiating with statutory agencies. They do however have a strong commitment to be heard and to tackle injustices they have experienced.

Awareness Raising/Publicity

Part of the awareness raising role of Deaflink has enabled that Deaflink volunteers attend specific meetings where information needs to be disseminated to the wider community. To ensure the same information

goes out to all 3 groups, we are in a position to advice on accessible formats e.g. DVD's with BSL or subtitles, audio tape, Braille, large print. Using our networks we can suggest appropriate specialist providers who have a knowledge and experience of the deaf community. Examples of good practise that we have been instrumental in promoting are; a summary DVD versions of the Newcastle Plan, and Newcastle City Council's Disability Equality Scheme "A Fair City". We have also worked with Northumbria Police to ensure their website is deaf user friendly alongside other information they produce for instance having flyers for people who are victims of domestic violence.

As users of services Deaflink members are often at the receiving end of good and bad providers and will feedback observations and recommendations to their groups, who to use and who not to use. In one instance 2 deaf users of a GP practise were aware of a lack of deaf awareness within this medical group. This resulted in the practise manager asking Deaflink to do some awareness training; working with the 2 users on what was needed for that specific practise we were able to offer bespoke training. This experience was empowering for both the provider and the deaf users.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED AND LEARNT IN YEAR 3

The end of project report in May 2006- June 2007 showed that over the 3 years of funding 3,105 people and 96 organisations have benefited from their involvement with Deaflink. This information was gathered through the workers report, registration at events, newsletter distribution and the membership data base which now stands at 342 full/associate members.

Deafblind network

The Development worker made 2 visits to the nearest Deafblind group in Morpeth who meet monthly to gain some ideas on how this group functions. This group was strongly dependent on the specialist social worker who facilitated the meetings and the need for transport to get to the venue. The group had unique individual communication needs; some used a portable loop system for those with hearing aids, two members had a communicator guide and one had a guide dog. Conversation was difficult at times as people had no visible clue who wanted to talk next, so turn taking became quite complex.

As in all groups there is a mix of personalities, leaders and followers. Due to the specific nature of this group there was a desperate need to be heard, not to be patronised and a strong determination to take control of their lives. These characteristics have enabled the group to become political, using their own skills and those of their supporters to get the attention they seek on various issues.

The lessons learnt here were taken back to the Deaflink committee where the decision was made to seek partnerships within the dual sensory network of professionals, and set up a similar group here. The Deaflink worker facilitated the first meeting at Brunswick Methodist Church was attended by 12 DB people and their carers. The venue proved to be acoustically poor, due to the wooden floorboards, so people had problems hearing through the loop system. Despite this there was a willingness to meet again in a different venue.

The next meeting attracted members of the BSL community who were also using the same venue. Due to their visible form of communication (BSL) they do not naturally mix with those with a visual impairment, so for the DB group it was strange to see people "waving their hands about". This inquisitiveness led to one member of Deaflink who is a communicator guide teaching one of the DB to do Deafblind manual alphabet, this opened the gates to a new world of communication which was fully embraced by the DB members. The following meetings included fun sessions learning the alphabet and various hands on signs which greatly enhanced

communication particularly between one couple where the carer who had found life very frustrating having to shout at her partner found relief in using the manual signs.

In partnership with Newcastle Blind Society, Deaflink facilitate the Deafblind Pop In based in MEA House the membership is slowly growing, recruiting members and their carers from the Blind Society who have a dual sensory loss as well as those referred by Social Services.

In addition to learning new communication tactics the group responds to issues of access as in one instance one of the members had a problem with the new bus station which had opened that week.

The beautiful glass etchings in the passage ways made it difficult for this person to find their way into the building from the bus as the dark contrasts on the glass confused their vision. In response, instead of staying in the meeting the group decided to make their way to the bus station and take their concerns to the Manager, who appreciated the groups input and suggestions, which he would forward on to the City Council planners and the bus companies.

There has been no feedback to date.

In another incident one of the members complained about his recent visit to the Ophthalmology Department at the RVI which was as follows;

“On entering the department with my carer I was ushered in to the Red area, where we sat in one of the booths in an open plan area .During the consultation we could hear the conversations going on in the other booths and in one case a doctor was shouting at another patient who was evidently hard of hearing. There was no sense of confidentiality. With me being a hearing aid user I could pick up all this background noise which made it difficult to hear what the consultant was saying to me. To add to the problem there was an open corridor behind me where staff was reaching over my shoulders to give things to the doctor. I found this totally unsatisfactory,”

In response the development worker wrote a letter of complaint to the Chief Executive of the Hospital Trust, who investigated the situation, the complaint was upheld and the Deafblind person received a full letter of apology with the reassurance in future that all people with hearing aids will be offered a private consultation room fitted with a loop system.

North East Deaf Rainbow group

This group now continue as a sub group of Deaflink with 5 core members and those who attend occasionally. The group is now looking at building networks with the hearing mainstream Gay/Lesbian groups in Newcastle and attend events as and when appropriate, such as Gay Pride and the Deaf Health Day that Deaflink helped to organise with other groups in the region. Deaflink organise and book all the communication and childminding support that is needed to ensure that members can attend such events.

Deaf Health Day

Deaflink was approached by Sign (a national organisation specialising in work with Deaf people with Mental Health, issues based in London) to hold a Health Day for vulnerable deaf people in the North East.

Using the established networks Deaflink asked a number of local groups to help with organisation of the event. (See attached flyer). There was a real need to ensure all the diverse communication needs were met as some people had extremely limited signing skills(due to a poor education background or having learning disabilities) or preferred to lip read. As well as interpreters, lip speakers we employed deaf relay interpreters for those with limited sign language, this proved invaluable for some people.

The Health Day ran workshops presented by Deaf professionals on issues such as

- Stress
- Alcohol
- Anger management
- Reflexology

27 deaf people attended including a group from Northumberland. The feedback from the groups was very positive, one lady said

“I wish I had learnt this years ago, why did no one tell me?”

Another said

“Great to have deaf people telling us instead of hearing people, they understand”

This raises many important questions as to the accessibility of health information, health services and how much the D, DB; HOH people actually know and understand about their own personal health and wellbeing. This needs further research.

Obesity Research

If you used the term “Obesity” with a Deaf British Sign Language (BSL) user, most would not understand the word or what it meant. The BSL translation would depend on the size of the person and then reflected in the visual format of BSL which could mean a puffing out of cheeks and using arms indicating how large the person is. Deaf people just sign “you fat “or “you very fat”. This is an example of the language and culture of the Deaf community where BSL is their first language and English can be a very poor second language. To the D/deaf community their needs are not complex and yet time and time again there are barriers to many things that the mainstream population take for granted.

Our argument is if you can serve the needs of the D/deaf, and Deafblind community at a level that they can understand you will cover all the other disadvantaged groups in our community.

For example in a recent case brought to the attention of the Disability Rights Commission a Deaf woman from Newcastle tried to access a local slimming club, struggling to lip read the instructor, she requested an interpreter. The worker took the request to Head Office who stated that the worker would have to pay for the interpreter, as all the clubs are part of a franchise therefore they are all self employed. The worker was unable to afford to pay for an interpreter, so the compromise was that the Deaf woman was allowed to attend free of charge with no access to the spoken information. Understandably the deaf woman gradually withdrew from the club.

In response to the needs of D,DB,HOH and the “Choosing Health” agenda set by the DOH and the local Healthy Eating Action Plan developed by the PCT; an opportunity arose to apply and subsequently receive funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) to do some research on the topic of Healthy Eating and Exercise within the Deaf Community

As a result of this funding we have employed a deaf researcher to work for us for a year to develop this training pack. This exciting research is now in its second quarter and will be monitored through the NRF systems and is being supported by the local partnerships till March 2008. (SEE APPENDIX 2 for proposal on Healthy Eating/Exercise).

Employment Forum

Nationally underemployment and unemployment has always been a contentious issue with D, DB, and HOH people. Concerns and complaints were often received by Deaflink about the discrimination people received within their work place; such as interpreters not booked for meetings so excluding deaf employees participating in union talks, training events, staff meetings.

A number of reports came back from Hard of Hearing people that they bluffed their way through meetings as they did not want their boss to know they could not hear properly.

The Job Centre proved a difficult experience for deaf people caused by the lack of Deaf awareness by the staff and potential employers who would create barriers to employing a deaf or dual sensory impaired person. With the cooperation of the manager of the Disability Employment Advisors' we organised a forum in the local Deaf Centre where deaf people could raise their concerns directly with the manager and 4 of her DEA staff. This was an uncomfortable meeting for them to attend as members of the 3 groups expressed their frustration and anger at the attitude they had encountered at the Job Centre and the low paid jobs they were often offered despite some of them having good qualifications. Following on from this the Committee agreed to meet with the Manager from Job Centre plus and Connexions to see how to improve the situation.

There are no short answers to the issue of employability to those who are in the minority and seen as an excluded or hard to reach groups. The majority of Hard of Hearing and Deafblind people can be regarded as of pensionable age. For the remainder it is very much a case of looking at each **individual's** needs and aspirations, their abilities, education and training, life and work experiences. The issues can be very different for each person depending what they want and need and how they can achieve it.

For instance the majority of Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) have been born to hearing parents (90%) many of whom have had no previous experience of deafness. Consequently communication within these families is extremely limited. This continues on in to education which can be oral/aural based or total communication depending on the policy of the local education authority, this can result again in communication breakdown depending if the appropriate communication support is given.

This then has a knock on effect in regard to employment opportunities where many deaf young people are not prepared for the workplace.

Issues for those children who are Hard of Hearing can be more complex to identify and such children can be over looked in the screening process and can be labelled as having learning difficulties from an early age. Where children who have been diagnosed profoundly deaf early are identified and given support quickly, those with a moderate hearing loss can miss out on the early intervention.

This summary does not highlight the many stories from deaf people, or Deafblind people themselves on the discrimination that goes on from the very beginning of their diagnosis. For many this has proved to be a painful experience where in some parts of the region the discrimination could be termed as “institutionalised abuse”. Emotional terminology maybe but this term was used by a professional working in the field of deafness, when faced with deaf adults who cannot make themselves understood because they were taught in an oral/aural education system which did not acknowledge the individual needs to communicate in a different mode.

Deaflink has now been approached to do a small piece of research on unemployment on behalf of New Futures. This is to interview 5 deaf or deafened people to find out what their experience was and to find pathways what would improve their chances of getting into work. (See Appendix 3 for Issues and Barriers to Employment)

Newsletter/Information Sharing

The publication of a quarterly newsletter proved to be a popular, effective link with all the 300 Deaflink members. This was produced by a deaf member of staff who knew how to make it an easy read for those whose first language is not English and those with sight impairment. The articles were on both national and local issues which would be of interest to the readers and created both positive and negative feedback which we welcomed. Unfortunately whilst current funding is on hold we have not been able to produce any further editions.

Campaigning/Awareness Raising

As a result of no improvement over the last 3 years to subtitling on TV the committee decided to run a large campaign called “Sound Off”

The ‘Sound Off’ Campaign wanted the public to imagine life without sound. On Tuesday 8th May as part of the National Deaf Awareness week (from the 7th -13 May), members of Newcastle Deaflink wore “Sound Off” T

shirts and gave out leaflets challenging hearing people to turn the sound off on their TV's, radios and i-Pods to experience what it felt like to be excluded from every day information that hearing people take for granted. Newcastle Deaflink asked members of the public to send them their views on the services for deaf people. The findings of the campaign survey will form part of a report on access issues within the media which will be sent to Ofcom.

Newcastle Deaflink hoped that the campaign will enable the hearing community to understand some of the many problems experienced by the deaf community and unite in calling for change. The Vice Chair of Deaflink, explained that the group want hearing people to exchange places with them for a while and see what it is like watching subtitles, especially on live programmes, like the news, where big chunks of information are missing.

“Turn the “Sound Off “ and switch to the analogue TV channel 888 and try watching your favourite programmes with subtitles for an hour, or a day or even the whole week! That’s what our members have a lifetime of. We think that people will quickly feel the frustration, anger and depression that many of our members feel because they know they’re missing out on important information all the time.



Nationally 15% of the population have some degree of deafness. 70,000 people in the UK use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred language. A further 2 million people in Britain wear hearing aids

and almost all deaf and hard of hearing people rely on lip reading to some extent.

Terry Bainbridge, Chair of Deaflink, said:

“Deaf people still face bad attitudes and discrimination when going for jobs, using health services or even just getting on a bus. When there’s an emergency deaf people cannot even use the 999 service because we can’t hear the service. That’s wrong! Surely in this day and age of new technology we should have a system where we have the same access as everyone else. We want this campaign to change people’s attitudes and become aware of how much information is unavailable to the deaf community.”

The publicity gained through this campaign was very positive and the 10 volunteers who were out on the street felt a sense of pride in what they were doing as they raised awareness with the public and in some instances were able to share their experiences.

Over the last 3 years Newcastle Deaflink has raised awareness of the needs of the 19,000 deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people in the city with the Local Council, Health, Police and other public services. In a recent review of these services Newcastle Deaflink found that the level of ignorance and lack of understanding in the hearing communities is still a barrier for this silent minority. (SEE APPENDIX 4 for service review)

Committee Review Day

This day gave the Deaflink committee time together to reflect and evaluate the work of the last 3 years.

To remind ourselves of all the things we had achieved we created a “time line” of all the events, publicity, reports, AGM’s and training we had done and reflected on what we had learnt. Most of all we saw how much more there still needed to be done. The wheels of bureaucracy run slowly, too slowly at times where improvement and change is hard to gauge. Some members felt worn down with having to repeat themselves so many times to so many people, as staff turnover in many of our institutions is high, so we have to go back and do it all over again.

Hence the needs to take a fresh look again at the next challenges. During the day members took the opportunity to plan the next 3 years looking at how we can become more sustainable in keeping with the people we serve and the communities we come from.

LESSONS LEARNT THAT WILL BE USEFUL IN THE FUTURE

1. Advantages of partnerships with other agencies from outside of our own specialism.
2. Importance of using Government targets to the advantage of the 3 groups with policy makers within the local setting
3. Importance of empowerment
4. Impact of a lack of knowledge about services amongst the three communities on vital every day issues
5. The commonality and differences between the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people
6. The importance of a political champion
7. The importance of a media strategy
8. The importance of a vision and the passion to carry it through
9. The importance of going at the pace of the community you work with.
10. The absolute importance of Deaf / Deafblind awareness training for all partners working with D, HOH, DB groups.
11. The vital importance of having a funding strategy that includes sustainable income.

POSITIVE INFLUENCES OF DEAFLINK

1. Deaflink's involvement within mainstream services helped build valuable networks.
2. The Primary Care Trust have now acknowledged this group as a priority
3. The profile and requests for advice from the hearing community and agencies has increased and the members of the 3 groups have acquired more knowledge and information.
4. The quarterly newsletter has built a sense of identity within the 3 groups
5. Deaflink has been a positive model in the city and beyond.

6. Employing staff from one of the three community groups has given credibility to Deaflink and has had a positive impact on Newcastle Healthy City Project as a whole

7. Having a Deaflink committee made up of Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people to advise and direct the staff and project.

8. The encouragement, motivation and passion of Deaflink volunteers who are willing to give their time to go to events and meetings on behalf of Deaflink

There was a lot more work involved in Deaflink than the originally anticipated. The work of Deaflink needs to continue to monitor to ensure that agencies are accountable and deliver their requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act.

The work of Deaflink needs to continue so that the 3 communities have the opportunity to be actively involved in this process which will ensure their needs do not fall off the mainstream agenda

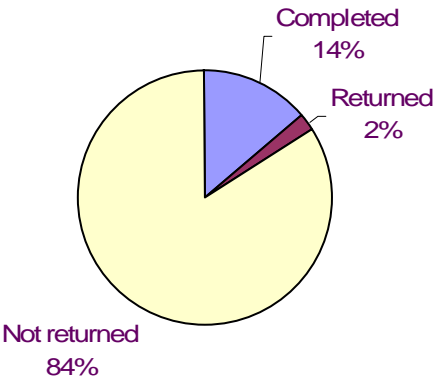
All those who have been involved with Deaflink have experienced some empowerment; this is only the tip of the iceberg. We need to reach more Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people to further challenge and change the perceptions of the hearing sighted world.

APPENDIX 1 HARD OF HEARING QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

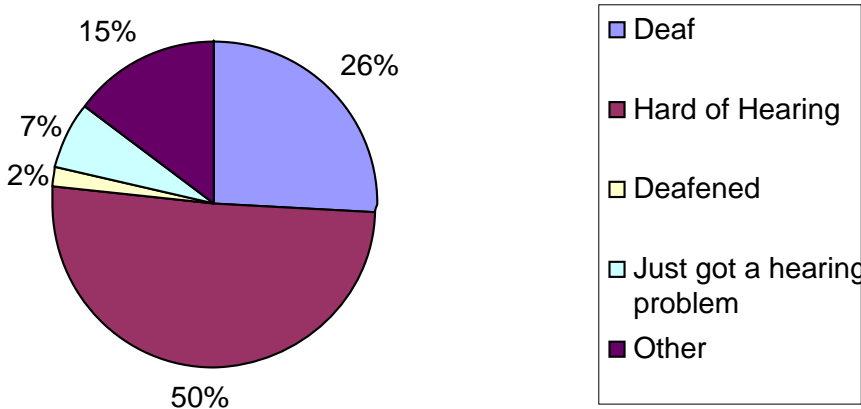
Report on the Hard of Hearing Questionnaire

The questionnaire was posted to 1,832 hard of hearing people registered with the social services. 260 completed questionnaires were sent back, 41 questionnaires were returned with a note saying the occupier had decreased or moved. The aim of the questionnaire was to find out how registered hard of hearing people saw themselves, how their family and friends saw them, how they communicate, whether they understand when people speak to them and whether they are aware of different services available to them.

Returned questionnaires



The **first question** asked was 'how do you see yourself?'

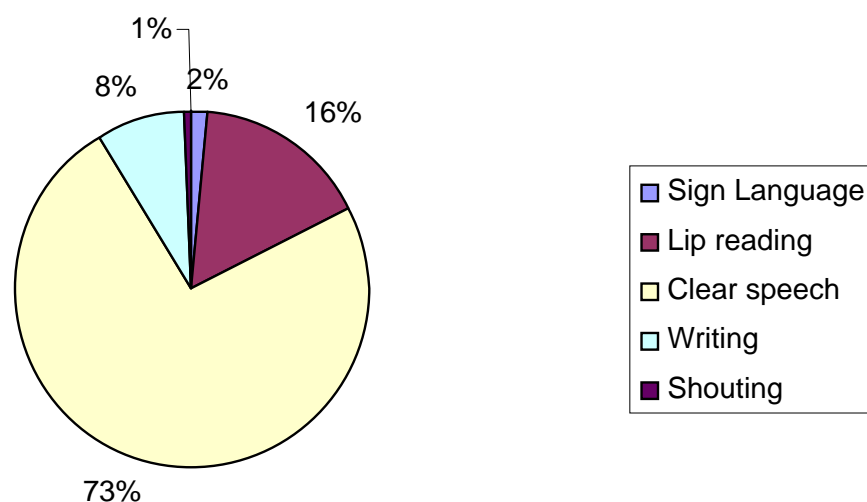


The majority of the respondents said they see themselves as hard of hearing (50%).

The **second question** was how they thought their family and friends saw them. There were a variety of different responses. Responses include:

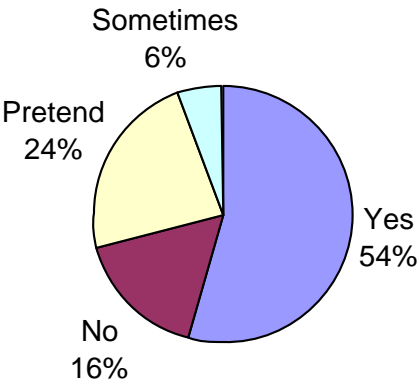
- They get impatient with me
- Very deaf
- Limited communication due to hearing impairment
- Not always hearing or understanding what is being asked
- The family have to shout to be heard
- Able to cope very well as long as I have hearing aids in
- A pain when he won't put his hearing aid in
- Daft!
- Hard to get through me sometimes
- All understand my situation
- They think you are stupid – that's one thing I'm not
- I do miss going to the theatre and shows as I cannot hear the conversation, it is muffled, also music and singing
- Have to speak clear and doesn't always hear
- They are very patient
- Tolerate my deafness
- They are very supportive
- Ignored frustrated
- A happy and contented person
- As an overstressed and overburdened individual
- They have to shout and get fed up with repeating things
- Very understanding
- A nuisance
- Not a good question

The **third question** asked how they communicated.



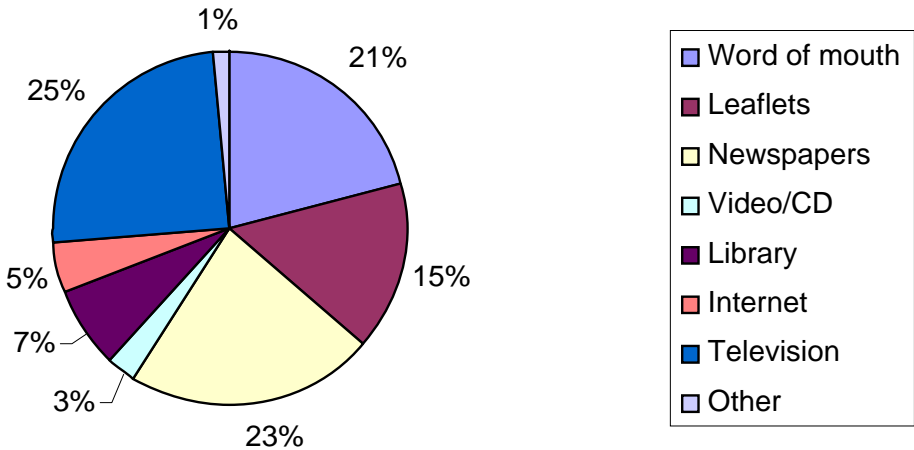
A vast majority of the respondents communicated using clear speech (73%). Only two percent used sign language.

The **fourth question** asked if they understand people when they speak to them.



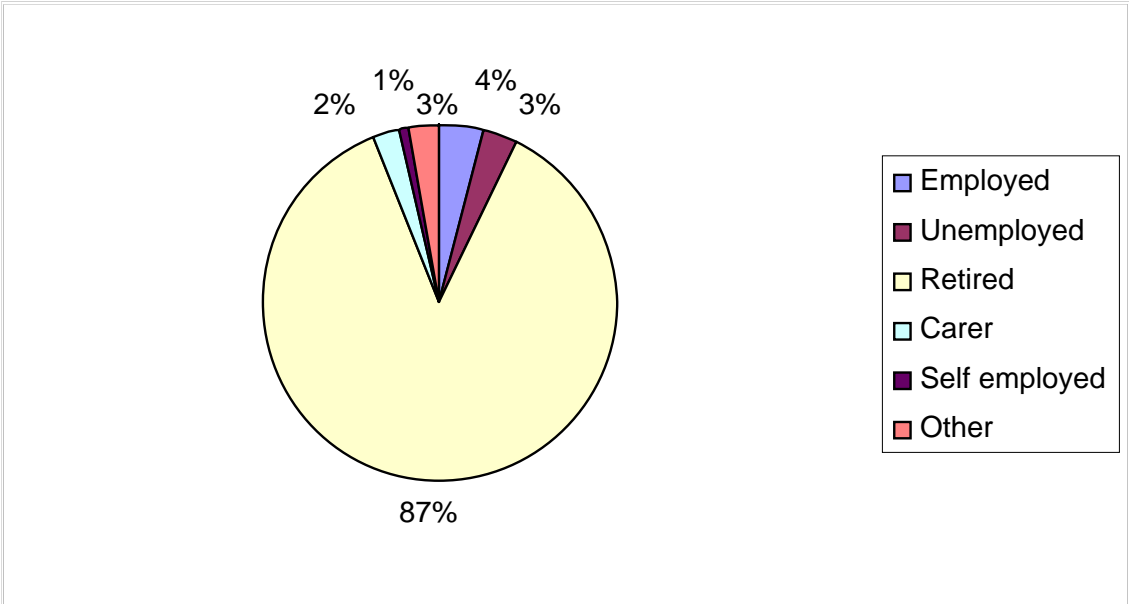
Majority of the respondents stated they understand when people speak to them (54%) and 24% pretend to understand people when they speak to them.

The **fifth question** asked how they got useful information:



Most of the respondents get useful information from the television, newspapers and word of mouth Respondents didn't get information from the internet, library or CD/videos.

The **sixth question** asked about their occupations:

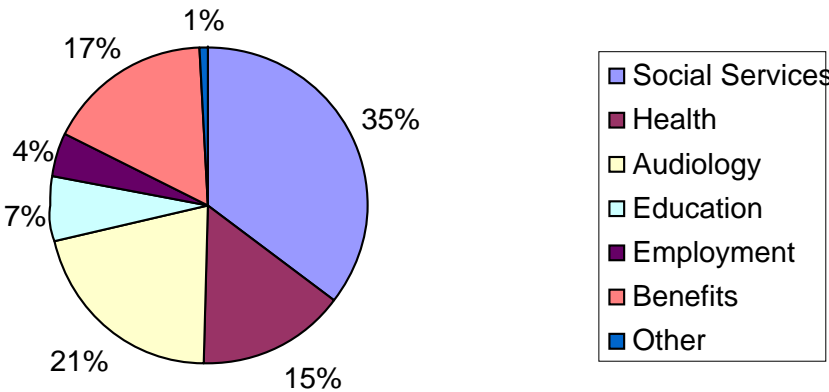


87% of the respondents are retired.

The **seventh question** asked if had support at work if they were employed or self employed:

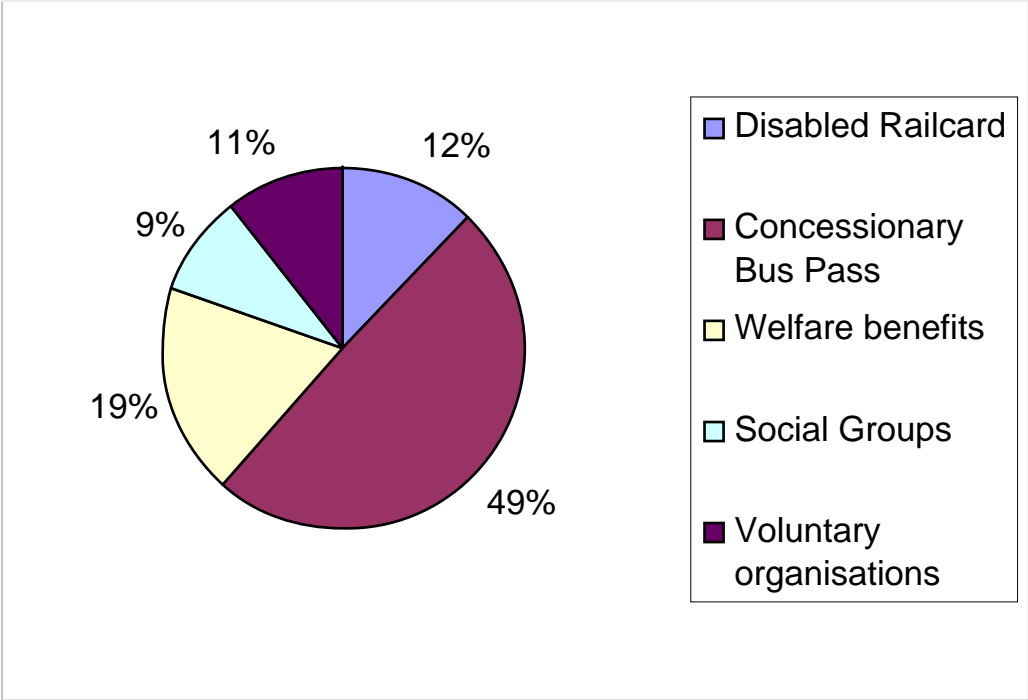
10 respondents are employed, 3 receive support such as Access to Work and 5 receive no support at work. One respondent said he/she doesn't know if they receive Access to Work. One respondent did not comment on the support they receive at work. One self-employed respondent did not receive support such as Access to Work, the other self employed respondent did not comment.

The **eighth question** asked if they were aware of the services available from the Social Services:



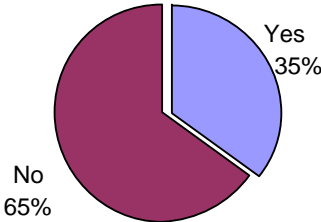
35% of respondents said they were aware of the Social Services. However most respondents were not aware the Social Services provided services linked to education and employment.

The **ninth question** asked if they were aware of information on the following services:



49% of respondents were aware of Concessionary Bus Passes. This rate is low in comparison to 87% of the respondents being retired. 100% of the respondents have some kind of hearing loss and just less than half of those respondents are aware of Concessionary Bus Passes. Only 19% of respondents were aware of benefits available to them.

The **tenth question** asked if they would find a website useful to access information and advice:



65% of the respondents said they would not find a website useful to access information and advice. 35% said they would. We asked those who did not find a website useful, how they would like to access information and advice, most respondents would like to receive information via the post, leaflets and newspaper.

APPENDIX 2 PROPOSAL FOR HEALTHY EATING PROJECT

THE PROPOSAL FOR HEALTHY EATING/ EXERCISE IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY PROJECT

To complement the Disability Discrimination Act.1996. Disability Equality Duty 2006.

Proposal

1. Newcastle Deaflink to work in partnership with Newcastle Community Food Initiative both at Newcastle Healthy City Project, Newcastle Nutrition at RVI, and Human Nutrition Research Centre at Newcastle University to do a dedicated piece of research and develop/adapt a package aimed at the local D/deaf Community.

Note; There is no national research on the dietary, nutritional or physical activity needs of D/deaf people. This would be a first! In our view this would need to be co worked with a D/deaf worker who can directly communicate with the D/deaf community on a sessional basis and would save on interpreter costs if working with a hearing professional.

2. To record the results of the research on to DVD using a specialist company.

3. To look at what material is already available on healthy eating that can be translated on to DVD for distribution to the D/deaf Community within the region and nationally.

Outcomes

Reducing obesity levels in children

Many D/deaf parents had hearing parents who could not communicate with their children. Many D/deaf parents learnt how to cook at school but did not understand issues on healthy eating or in some instances were never taught about healthy eating. D/deaf know that it is important to feed their children but don't understand the nutritional value of the food they are giving. Any Health related information that is circulated in this instance about food is not accessible in BSL and again uses words that cannot be understood i.e. (saturated fats, carbohydrates).

Increasing physical activity in adults

D/deaf people do not have access to local gyms; keep fit classes, swimming tuition or many other recreational activities in the city. Again they are unable to take instruction without the provision of a BSL

interpreter. However there is one black belt Deaf judo instructor resident in the city, and one Deaf woman rugby player.

Reducing levels of isolation

Because of the exclusion D/deaf people feel from mainstream activities, groups or clubs, the D/deaf community have been polarised within their own clubs and tend not to mix with the Hearing world where they feel they are not understood. This does not assist integration and inclusion in society where all could benefit from the diverse groups within the city.

Increasing levels of expectation about good diet and nutrition

Newcastle Deaflink has identified a major gap within the D/deaf and Deafblind community in regard to major health issues such as diet and nutrition. There has also been a growing demand from these groups for training and information in an accessible format e.g. DVD in BSL, by trainers who are fluent in BSL.

APPENDIX 3 ISSUES/BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

- Poor education, where at times appropriate support is not provided, if it is, it may not be in an accessible format.
- Lack of appropriate training given to teachers and education staff.
- Lack of unbiased information given to parents.
- Low expectation expressed by professionals to parents (both of whom are predominantly hearing) about the future prospects for their children.
- Limited access to appropriate deaf role models employed within the education system.
- Lack of school leaver training support to prepare for future courses.
- Prevention from doing further training or higher education due to being deaf, or Deafblind.
- Lack of accessible material which informs students of specific courses.
- Course providers do not always consider the need for interpreter provision in their budgets therefore excluding deaf people from their courses.
- Students whose first language is BSL may have limited English skills and cannot easily access written English.
- Job Centres DEA's have very limited Deaf, Deafblind awareness.
- Therefore Job Centres are not accessible. Lack of communication support, use of the phone when needing to contact an employer.
- Lack of suitable jobs
- Deaf people feel they can earn more on benefits rather than on a low paid job.
- Deaf people are not aware of the additional costs they can receive on top of their wages i.e. Working Tax Credit
- Deaf people are usually not sure how to complete the application forms and would rather present their forms in BSL format.
- Deaf peoples confidence is easily shattered once rejected after a job interview.
- Shortage of appropriately qualified interpreters in the region.
- The attitude of employers can be poor and in some cases discriminatory.
- Many employers are not Deaf, Deafblind aware.

- Low pay
- Employers are not made aware of the benefits of Access to Work
- Deaf, Deafblind students are not aware of their right to have Access to Work provision.
- Deaf, Deafblind students do not know how to use an interpreter or other communication support methods.
- Employers do not always give deaf, Deafblind employees access to training courses.
- Under the DDA employers do not always comply with the need to make adjustments for their staff.
- Opportunities for promotion are extremely limited due to their deafness.
- Deaf, Deafblind staff are often left in isolated situations with no support or social inclusion from other staff.
- Being Deaf, Deafblind means there are less career options or job choices.

Actions/Projects/Programmes needed.

1. Parents of newly diagnosed deaf, Deafblind children need to be given unbiased information, which should include an opportunity to discuss their child's future with good role models who are Deaf or Deafblind. *There is no such programme.*
2. Parents should have free classes in BSL if appropriate for their child. *There is no such provision.*
3. Deaf awareness training given to all education staff by deaf, deafblind trainers. *There is no such provision*
4. Appropriate Deaf, Deafblind Mentors provided within schools for all pupils. *There is no such provision.*
5. Communication lessons given in the school timetable. *Not known*
6. Early identification for effective communication strategies within all schools. *Issues not recognised within mainstream schools.*
7. For real inclusion there needs to be more accessible material in schools. *This is still not being achieved; DVD's used are not subtitled or signed.*
8. Deaf, Deafblind people need to have courses to empower them for example "Confidence and Self Esteem", Rights under the Law, "How to use Communication support". *Newcastle Deaflink have run one off courses, but there is no funding to do regular training.*

9. Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people need courses to become trainers of varying courses. *Becoming Visible has provided Basic English courses, and Training the Trainer courses. Newcastle College has provided basic training but the trainers tend to be hearing/sighted people.*
10. DEA's need to be fully trained and understand the rights of all Deaf, Deafblind people and those with other disabilities. *DEA's currently only receive minimum training.*
11. Employers need to have mandatory training in DDA. *This can be very tokenistic and on an ad hoc basis*
12. Accessible information on the use of interpreters and the rights of people under the DDA. *Not known*
13. Needs to be local higher education provision and courses to develop home grown interpreters and other communication support. *There are only 23 Registered Qualified interpreters in the North east region. Those who are students have to travel to the Midlands for appropriate courses which are normally funded by themselves?*
14. Course providers need to be challenged as to their responsibilities under the DDA to provide accessible material and accessible courses, and to include this in their budgets. *The experience of Newcastle Deaflink is that particularly in the voluntary sector course providers do not consider the communication needs of Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people in their budget*

This is not an exhaustible list

APPENDIX 4 WHAT DIFFERENCE DEAFLINK HAS MADE

Issue	Agency	What Deaflink said	What has changed	What hasn't changed
Health	Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	No alerting system in ENT	Pager system now installed affecting over 40,000 patients annually. RVI/General hosp to adopt system	
		Sensory awareness training for staff or Equality & Diversity training	Internal DA training has been given to some staff. An audit is being done now on the knowledge of all staff in this area ,results will be complete by March 2007.This report will tell the training dept what training is needed	Staff are still not deaf aware and are unsure on how to book and use interpreters
		Staff being alerted to special needs	Will look at a new referral form to be given GP's stating special needs e.g. interpreters	See above
		Mobile phone use	Looking to have safe zones to use mobile	Not achieved
		Patientline use	Cost of use reduced for patients with special needs	
			Deaflink now have 2 volunteers supported by worker on Diversity & Equality working group	
		D/deaf did not know they had a choice of hospitals. No accessible info	Patient Choice Choose & Book workshop DVD made in BSL	DVD 'boring' complaint made to the DOH who thanked us for our comments

		Complaints procedure is not accessible to BSL users or Deafblind people. Both groups dependent on Deaflink to be advocates	Accessible formats need to be worked through with hospitals	ongoing
Sexual Health	Health Promotion Unit	Evidence from the 6 Sexual Health Forums identified major gaps 25 deaf attended	Issue for identified worker made to other professionals. Proposal has been started	Not completed yet
Obesity	Food Initiative project/NRF funding	Research needed to take hearing information and translate into accessible material for Deaf people	NRF funding has been won Further prep work to be done to appoint a deaf researcher.	Researcher appointed
Deaf awareness training	Ponteland Medical Centre	Staff not trained	Training given over 2 sessions to 35 staff each session	Staff now deaf aware in this specific centre .Need to do feasibility to contact other health centres

Issue	Agency	What Deaflink said	What has changed	What hasn't changed
Employment	Job Centre Plus	DEA service not Sensory Aware	Basic disability training has been given. Job Centre plus & Connexions willing to meet	Deaf people still do not understand Job Centre system
		Employers discriminate	DEA have been made aware at the forum of discrimination	Discrimination still goes on. Deaf do not know how to complain
		D/deaf people do not know of Access to Work		Still ongoing
	Dept of Work and Pensions	No Sensory Awareness	Training given to 25 regional managers on how to employ Deaf people	
	Pensions Service	Deaf/HOH people not aware of their benefit entitlement	6 deaf people over 60 yrs had home visits. 1 under 60 received over £15,000 back dated DLA	No research done with Deafblind people

Issue	Agency	What Deaflink said	What has changed	What hasn't changed
Transport	Arriva Stagecoach Nexus	Drivers D/deaf Awareness	Request has been made	Drivers unions won't do courses in their own time unless paid therefore attitudes unchanged
		Inspectors Deaf Awareness	As above	As above
		North East Concessionary Bus Pass	80 Deaf have been made aware of all the new changes for bus passes and changes to timetables	Hard of Hearing people do not get a bus pass
		Deaf Only Bus Pass	Nothing	
		8 Deaflink volunteers involved in trials to test new initiatives for people with disabilities	Passenger Alert Warning lights to be installed for new metros 5 staff done basic sign course	
		Complaints about drivers	Deaf have been informed to take drivers number from ticket	No follow up on this as yet

Issue	Agency	What Deaflink said	What has changed	What hasn't changed
Community Safety	Police	No emergency SMS	Domestic violence incidents now have a contact number & info bookmark	Still no emergency for 999 although discussions
		Website not accessible	Approval given to put video clips in BSL on website	No research done with Deafblind people
		Leaflets not accessible	Leaflets now designed with Easy English	
		No safety equipment	Free equipment given to OAP groups	Still more needed. No research done with Deafblind people
			Representatives of Deaflink now on police advisory group. Regular consultation with Community Officer. Deaflink given 2 trainee police officers work experience	
	Fire/Social Services	No appropriate Smoke alarms for Deaf people	Referrals now being taken in Red areas of the city	

Issue	Agency	What Deaflink said	What has changed	What hasn't changed
General	Northern Counties School	Deaf people wanted their school records	Well over 50 ex pupils have visited the school with interpreters to access their personal information	
	Age Concern	Deaf needed help with Will making and could not access Age Concern provision	Worked in partnership with Age Concern.3 couples attended 2 sessions with interpreter's .Deaflink will now run its own service.	No work done with Deafblind people
	Newcastle City Council Interpreting Service	There needed to be all round improvement and accessible SMS	Now have SMS and improved response. Foreign Language interpreter service have now withdrawn their bid to take over the service	More trained interpreters/lipspeakers.
	Newcastle City Council	Newcastle Plan was not accessible	Deaflink rep on communication committee resulting in a BSL DVD and our photos of members included in the printed version of the plan	
	Newcastle City Council	Customer Services needed to more accessible	Views of Deaflink members heard by managers to improve access	Changes to be made to all customer services throughout the city in 2007