

**Response from the British Sign Language & Linguistic
Access Working Group
to the Draft Quality Standards for Adult Hearing
Rehabilitation Services
28. 03.08
Completed by Lynne Hawcroft**

The British Sign Language & Linguistic Access Working Group (BSL&LAWG) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft national standards for adult rehabilitation services. The group believes the standards for adult hearing rehabilitation services are important and fully endorses the standards as part of a co-ordinated rehabilitative approach to loss of hearing. The BSL&LAWG has been convened by the Equality Unit of the Scottish Government since 2000 and draws its membership from the national voluntary organisations working with deaf people in Scotland. A number of the organisations represented on the working group have been heavily involved with the modernisation of audiology services and many will have made their own responses to the draft standards.

The BSL&LAWG are particularly interested in the co-ordination of the non medical aspects of hearing rehabilitation services, the geographical spread and the sustainability of these services. We envisage a rehabilitation package at the time of hearing aid issue which would include:

- funded lipreading classes (up to a maximum of two years)
- funded tinnitus support individual or group (as appropriate)
- access to psychological support for individuals and their families for those who need it
- a display of equipment and assistive devices and how to obtain them
- information about the various types of communication support services and how to book them*
- peer support from other hearing aid users
- information about local and national organisations for deaf people
- a formal referral system to appropriate services

*There is a pilot project called PACES to provide such information in selected places in Scotland which is currently being undertaken by LINK and will provide valuable information about this.

In addition to the general rehabilitation package available to all there are specific instances where more urgent support is needed:

- adults presenting with acquired severe / profound hearing loss should be urgently referred to the LINK Centre for Deafened People with health funding to access essential support
- Similarly with deafblind people or those with severe dual sensory loss immediate referral to Deafblind Scotland or to SENSE with health funding to access the highly specialised support

Information Provision

The draft standards outline the need to provide clear information in formats which are accessible to patients and we support this. The information may need to be also provided in a variety of languages including BSL not only for patients but also their families (e.g. carers of a hearing aid user may have BSL as their first language). We suggest increased use of the internet may benefit rehabilitation services with many sources of support being available online and because of the increasing use of it by older people. Booking systems using the internet, faxes and mobile sms may help services feel more 'deaf friendly'.

Waiting Areas

The group are delighted to see the refurbishment and upgrading of audiology facilities and hope that eventually they will all will have appropriate technology which includes visual indicators, screens, message boards and loop systems so that the calling out of names will cease.

Primary Care

The time it takes for referral from GP to audiology clinics is now being addressed with the introduction of the waiting list target and the group welcome this but feels that positive intervention earlier in primary care could also be effective. If information about hearing loss and advice on positive ways to address this were routinely available this may not only reduce the period before which people refer to their doctor but it would give them access to helpful strategies, such as lipreading, whilst waiting. It could also help manage unrealistic expectations about hearing aids

which would save resources in the long term. The advice provided could include an information pack (online or printed), peer support from experienced hearing aid users (volunteers) and referrals to lipreading tutors, tinnitus counsellors and others, as appropriate. Intervention at this stage could help transform the patient journey into a more positive and supportive experience. We fully support direct referral for adults.


Voluntary Organisations working with Deaf People

The member organisations of the BSL&LAWG are acknowledged experts and as mentioned previously some have been involved in the modernising agenda and already are partners in the rehabilitation programme. It is important to note that the organisations have to find funding for the work they do with their particular group (e.g. deafblind or deafened people). In addition to the services they can provide directly to deaf people the organisations can also offer their expertise to health service staff either in initial professional training or later by providing deaf awareness and communication training.

If there are matters you wish to discuss with the group please contact Lynne Hawcroft in the first instance.

Lynne Hawcroft
BSL & Linguistic Access Project Manager
Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate
Equality Unit
Scottish Government

Office:

 0131 244 3197
Mobile 07825 356025

Home:

 lynne.hawcroft@btinternet.com
 01343 813031