

Hearing Loss and Deafness Alliance – Our Declaration

Who are we and what do we stand for?

We are a coalition of charities and professional representative groups working in partnership to prevent and reduce the impact of hearing loss and tinnitus, and to promote the inclusion and participation of people who are deaf and hard of hearing in our society.

Together we have produced the following statement to ensure that the needs of people with hearing loss, deafness and tinnitus are at the heart of service developments, that the quality of services is improved, and that access is guaranteed for all who need it.

Our goals are to ensure that people have:

- Timely access to integrated services and support
- Choice and control and services designed around their needs
- Knowledge and information to get what they need
- Support and rehabilitation to adjust to life with hearing loss, deafness and tinnitus
- Communication support to access services and enable participation in all aspects of public life.

Why do we want this?

Hearing loss is a major public health issue. It affects over 10 million people in the UK – one in six of the population. As our society ages, this number is set to grow. By 2031, there will be more than 14.5 million people in the UK with hearing loss.

Now is a crucial time for us to act and improve services. Promoting public health and ensuring early diagnosis and support also make economic sense. Such strategies can prevent social isolation, mental ill health and improve employment outcomes, all of which have serious implications for individuals and governments.

However, only one in three people who could benefit from hearing aids have currently got them. This means that four million people in the UK have unaddressed hearing loss. . On top of that, people are not diagnosed with hearing loss in a systematic fashion. And people do not act quickly – research suggests that on average, people take 10 years to seek help.

Evidence also suggests that GPs fail to refer up to 45% of people who report hearing loss. Moreover, services such as health and social care are not well integrated. And lip-reading classes and hearing therapy, which are vitally helpful for people with hearing loss, are at risk of closure or decline.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing often do not have the same access to education and employment as hearing people do. Reasonable adjustments are not always made to accommodate communication needs. People with hearing loss also face a lack of deaf and deafblind awareness, and of communication support. This means that people with hearing loss do not have full control over their lives and the services they receive.

How will we achieve this?

We will work in partnership to promote individual and public action at national and local levels. We will aim to influence policy and practice and use our networks to ensure that people with hearing loss, deafness and tinnitus are able to shape their services, and achieve equality of opportunity.

Our immediate priorities are to develop:

- Quality standards for hearing services, setting out what 'good' looks like with key priorities and outcomes
- Communication standards for wider health services, which could also be applicable to other public and private services.

We welcome anyone who supports our aims to add their signature to this declaration.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing need access to high-quality services in order to enjoy equality of opportunity and choice, and be able to take positive action on their hearing loss.

If you support our aims, please add your name or your organisation's name to this declaration. You can also join the Hearing Loss and Deafness Alliance by contacting Brian Lamb at brian.publicaffairs@gmail.com