

COALITION ON DEAFNESS NI

Working together to create an equal world
for people who are deaf, deafblind, have a
hearing loss or tinnitus

A Policy Manifesto for the
Northern Ireland Executive

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The Coalition on Deafness brings together key charitable organisations in Northern Ireland that are working to improve the lives of people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus. The Coalition believes that by working in partnership we can create truly transformational change for our client group, as has been realised by other disability groups in recent years.

Throughout the publication of this Manifesto, we hope to:

Promote the rights of people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus;

Raise awareness of the exclusion faced by people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus as a result of the barriers they encounter;

Recommend actions to address those barriers.

Membership

At the time of this publication, the member organisations of the Coalition on Deafness are:

- Action Deaf Youth (formerly NIDYA)
- Action on Hearing Loss
- Deafblind NI
- Hearing Link
- National Deaf Children's Society
- Northern Ireland Deaf Sports
- Sense
- Signature

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters to the Communication Support section.



Total population with hearing loss in NI

300,000



Children with hearing loss in NI **1,400**



Deafblind people in NI **10,431**

7,000

People with severe tinnitus in NI



People who could benefit from a hearing aid in NI

150,000

The Manifesto

This Executive Summary sets out the key demands for the Northern Ireland Executive from the member organisations of the Coalition, based on our experience, and evidence of the needs of people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus.

We have used a rights-based approach to consider these issues in the context of government responsibilities. Relevant articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) frame a series of 'asks', aimed at a number of Government departments. This Manifesto is based on the 'social model' of disability and on the definition of disability contained in Article 1 of the UNCRPD.

A comprehensive Policy Manifesto outlining the context of each issue, and a large number of case studies, is available from any of the member organisations.

The Coalition on Deafness will seek to work in partnership with Government to address these issues and to represent and enable the views of people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus.

This document is available in alternative formats.

Please contact Sense using the contact details provided at the back.

The term 'hearing loss' or 'deaf' is used throughout this booklet to signify hearing loss, deafness, tinnitus and deafblindness.

Article 3: General principles

The principles of the present Convention shall be:

(h) Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

Article 4: General obligations

1. States Parties undertake to ensure and promote the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability. To this end, States Parties undertake:

(a) To adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 8: Awareness-raising

1. States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures:

(a) To raise awareness throughout society, including at the family level, regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities;

(b) To combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life;

(c) To promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.

2. Initiating and maintaining effective public awareness campaigns designed:

I. To nurture receptiveness to the rights of persons with disabilities;

II. To promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities



◆ Acceptance and attitude

- Attitudes can be changed by raising awareness of the needs of people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus by tackling stigma, and by encouraging everyone to place value on their hearing.

◆ Inclusion and participation

- Organisations need to set aside a realistic budget for communication support, provide information in alternative formats, and provide training and support on how to engage and participate effectively.
- Organisations also need to measure the effectiveness of their inclusion and participation activities, and devise ways of reaching out to individuals who are deemed 'hard to reach'.

◆ Universal Design

- When planning new developments or writing policy, the needs of people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus have to be considered from the outset and their needs 'designed into' the service, rather than being seen as an awkward add on after the rest of society's needs are met.
- All frontline staff working in public services should be aware of how to communicate with people with hearing loss
- People involved in design, planning and management of services need to be trained to consider the needs of people with hearing loss and to involve them in their planning and reviewing processes.

◆ Partnership working

- Government should value the knowledge and expertise of the voluntary and community sector and involve organisations in service and programme development.
- Government departments and service providers should also work in partnership with service users in the design of services at the outset.
- Service users with hearing loss should be facilitated to participate in decision-making, equipped with the necessary skills and provided with the appropriate communication support to enable them to participate fully.

“ I go to a gym that puts subtitles on the TV screen for me when I am working out. It's such a simple thing to do, but they are the only gym I know which does this. **”**

Article 7: Children with disabilities

1. States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.
2. In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
3. States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realise that right.

◇ Early intervention and early years

- The Department of Education must urgently review the adequacy of current education services for deaf children in light of the considerable gap in attainment between deaf children and their hearing peers.
- The Department of Education should recognise hearing impairment as a complex educational need, consider the most appropriate assessments for deaf children and ensure that quantification and specification of services remains with the rubric of any replacement for the SEN statement.
- The Minister for Education should seek NI Executive support for the introduction of Auxiliary Aids and Services in the Special Educational Needs and Disability legislation for Northern Ireland.
- All deafblind children should have the same educational support as those in England and Wales, i.e. children should be supported from diagnosis by a teacher with an appropriate qualification in Multi-Sensory Impairment.
- Health and Social Care should develop pathways for deaf children from the point of diagnosis, to include all relevant statutory and voluntary agencies in a person-centred and joined up way.
- Health and Social Care should introduce specialist Family Support for the families of deaf children in every part of Northern Ireland.
- Early Years staff should be trained in working with deaf and deafblind children.
- Health and Social Care should ensure that information about services for deaf children is available on Health and Social Care websites, and through Family Support Hubs.
- Health and Social Care should offer Family Signing Classes to parents and families of deaf children, aged 0-4, who wish to communicate through the medium of Sign Language.
- Families and children across Northern Ireland should have access to specialist early intervention services, similar to the Sense nursery for deafblind children.

Article 9: Accessibility

1. To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:

Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces; Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.

2. States Parties shall also take appropriate measures to:

- Develop, promulgate and monitor the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public;
- Ensure that private entities that offer facilities and services which are open or provided to the public take into account all aspects of accessibility for persons with disabilities;
- Provide training for stakeholders on accessibility issues facing persons with disabilities;
- Provide in buildings and other facilities open to the public signage in Braille and in easy to read and understand forms;
- Provide forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including guides,

readers and professional sign language interpreters, to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public;

- Promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information;
- Promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet;
- Promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.

Article 20: Personal mobility

- States Parties shall take effective measures to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities, including by:
- Facilitating the personal mobility of persons with disabilities in the manner and at the time of their choice, and at affordable cost;
- Facilitating access by persons with disabilities to quality mobility aids, devices, assistive technologies and forms of live assistance and intermediaries, including by making them available at affordable cost;
- Providing training in mobility skills to persons with disabilities and to specialist staff working with persons with disabilities;
- Encouraging entities that produce mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies to take into account all aspects of mobility for persons with disabilities

Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

1. States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

- a. Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats;
- b. Enjoy access to television programmes, films, theatre and other cultural activities, in accessible formats;
- c. Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services, such as theatres, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and, as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance

Persons with disabilities shall be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture

Article 24: Education

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

- a. Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
- b. Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
- c. Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development.



◇ Communication support

- Urgent action is needed to increase the number of sign language interpreters in Northern Ireland by creating a sustainable training pathway
- Sign language interpreting should be actively promoted as a career opportunity
- Government should conduct an analysis of capacity and demand for sign language interpreters, in the context of best practice in other parts of Europe.
- Services should recognise the right of a deafblind person to have appropriate and timely support
- Public services should ensure that all interpreters and deafblind communicators booked through agencies are registered with a professional body such as NRCPD (National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People)
- Services must provide a range of appropriate communication support and communication professionals where needed
- Public services should apply quality standards in the procurement of language professionals
- Public services should carry out regular compliance checks of language professionals they employ
- Government need to invest in the training of more Communicator Guides for deafblind people.

◇ Culture and Language

Government needs to:

- Identify the numbers, location, age, gender and socio-economic position of sign language users in Northern Ireland
- Ensure equal access to public services to sign language users
- Explore the benefits of a bilingual approach to teaching Deaf children who use sign language
- Improve social and personal development opportunities for Deaf people who use sign language as their first language
- Promote sign language as a viable and celebrated means of communication in Northern Ireland.



Everyday services

◆ Transport

Government should ensure that all public transportation is accessible to people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus, by using good practice such as:

- Pre-travel information available in a variety of formats,
- Real time information available using accessible technology, such as real-time audio visual displays,
- Induction loop systems installed, clearly advertised, switched on and regularly tested
- Accessible complaints procedures
- Consideration of safety issues such as help points designed for people with hearing loss, and the fitting of visual emergency alarms.
- Good lighting.
- Visual interior warnings should be fitted to inform passengers of stopping and door closures.
- Ensure staff making announcements have clear speech
- Controlling and minimising background noise during announcements

◆ Technology

- Service providers should install and clearly advertise a hearing loop or infrared system, and ensure it is switched on, regularly tested and maintained annually.
- Service providers should provide a separate telephone number to allow direct access to an operator, or to offer the option to speak to someone at each menu level of an automated call. Where the customer does not respond, these calls should automatically be diverted to an operator.

◆ Sport and Leisure

- Sport and Leisure facilities and activities should be accessible to people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus

- Sport and leisure providers should develop activities that are tailored for deaf people
- Deaf people should be given opportunities to develop careers in sport and leisure

◆ Cinema

- An increase in the number of subtitled films shown across Northern Ireland.
- Subtitled films shown at more convenient times.
- A range of ways to contact the cinema
- Loop systems in public areas, such as the ticket office and refreshment counter, and cinema screens.
- All loop and infrared systems clearly advertised, maintained and regularly tested, and all staff trained in their operation.
- Cinemas with infrared systems in their screens should have both neckloops and stetoclips available.
- A variety of ways to find out about cinema listings, including by telephone, textphone, internet and in person. Use a recognised logo in listings to identify subtitled showings.
- An alternative to the automated telephone system, or an option to speak to a member of staff directly.
- Monitor sound levels to ensure that they are not excessively loud.
- Make information on subtitled cinema available at www.yourlocalcinema.com

◆ Media

- Broadcasters should reduce background noise on television and radio programmes
- Promote greater involvement of viewers with hearing loss in subtitling and signing programmes, and in creating more audible content.
- Subtitling should be available on all programmes, regardless of method of delivery. This includes programmes shown through catch-up, VOD or live streamed TV.



Article 24: Education

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:
The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

2. In realising this right, States Parties shall ensure that:
Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

“Lecturers often misunderstood the purpose of radio aids, and social activities with hearing students were difficult. I tried to join a number of clubs but gave up because of deafness and communication issues.”



◇ Children

- The Department of Education should ensure there is a sustainable supply of Teachers of the Deaf to support young people through their education.
- All teachers should have access to deaf awareness training

◇ Transitions

- All Government departments involved in providing transitions support to young deaf people should work in a person-centred and joined up way.
- All young deaf people should have an entitlement to transitions planning.
- The transitions planning process should actively involve and engage young people and take their views into account.

- A programme of preparation for leaving school should be developed, to include: information on multiple post-16 options; information and signposts on supports and entitlements; confidence building and life skills; work experience and taster days, visits to colleges, universities, training organisations and talks from deaf role models
- Information on transitions should be made available in different formats including BSL, written text and visual formats, and online
- A post-16 transitions support service should be developed where long-term, independent, young-person centred support and guidance is available
- Deaf careers advisors should provide independent careers advice.
- There should be a more 'formal' mechanism for young deaf people to share experiences and learning with each other.

“ I thought I was not clever enough to do anything and was going to fail at all things, I now know that is not right. The deaf employment adviser from the charity knew what it was like because he was deaf too. I believed him and he helped me get confident again.”

◇ Access to FE and HE

- Development of more systematic and sustained outreach programmes by Disability Services and Learning Support Services with young deaf people as early as possible.
- Accessible information (including information in BSL) should be available on college and university websites and on campus.
- College and university teaching and support staff should have continuing deaf awareness training and a knowledge of sign language.
- Young deaf people should be informed of their entitlements in further and higher education settings
- Government must invest in training more qualified sign language interpreters to meet the need.

- Further and Higher Education providers should consider the use of 'remote interpreters'.
- Support for young people deaf people should meet all of their needs, for example, this could be both an interpreter and a notetaker.
- There should be clear and direct communication between Disability/Learning Support Services, course tutors/teaching staff, and administrative staff in advance of a student starting a course.
- Further and Higher Education providers should develop a 'peer mentor' scheme where a young deaf person can get support from other deaf students
- Support to be provided to young deaf people when they transition from further or higher education.

Article 25: Health

States Parties recognise that persons with disabilities have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services that are gender-sensitive, including health-related rehabilitation. In particular, States Parties shall:

- a. Provide persons with disabilities with the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care and programmes as provided to other persons, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health and population-based public health programmes;
- b. Provide those health services needed by persons with disabilities specifically because of their disabilities, including early identification and intervention as appropriate, and services designed to minimize and prevent further disabilities,

including among children and older persons;

- c. Provide these health services as close as possible to people's own communities, including in rural areas;

- d. Require health professionals to provide care of the same quality to persons with disabilities as to others, including on the basis of free and informed consent by, inter alia, raising awareness of the human rights, dignity, autonomy and needs of persons with disabilities through training and the promulgation of ethical standards for public and private health care;


- e. Prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in the provision of health insurance, and life insurance where such insurance is permitted by national law, which shall be provided in a fair and reasonable manner;

- f. Prevent discriminatory denial of health care or health services or food and fluids on the basis of disability.

◇ Access to health services, health inequalities, and promotion of hearing health

- We call on the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to put in place access quality standards and a monitoring system, by which GP services and other primary care services can be measured for their levels of access and held accountable.
- That the Public Health Agency ensures that public health information and health promotion campaigns are accessible to sign language users, deafblind people and people with hearing loss.
- Information, guidance and health promotion campaigns around other long-term conditions should be provided for people with hearing loss and deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) in a format they can access.

- Employers should understand and meet their obligations under Noise at Work legislation, and promote protection to employees exposed to noise in the workplace.
- The Public Health Agency should raise awareness with the general public of the dangers of over exposure to loud noise
- The Public Health Agency should encourage the general public to value and protect their hearing.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should measure the impact of inaccessible healthcare information on the health and wellbeing of deaf people in the context of the UNCRPD.

 "When I was moved on to a ward the information about my hearing loss was not transferred onto the board above my bed."



◇ Mental Health

- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety must introduce a children's mental health assessment service.
- Mental health services should adopt a 'whole life' approach, and ensure a smooth transition between children and adult services.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should ensure deaf children and young people have access to mental health services that have the understanding, knowledge and skills to meet the needs of deaf children and young people, such as a specialist CAMHS service
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should ensure deaf children and young people and their families are fully involved in the support they receive and the development of services
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should improve the information and data that is available on the mental health and emotional wellbeing of deaf children to ensure that the development of services and policies are properly informed and outcomes are monitored.
- GPs need to be made aware of the specialist Mental Health and Deafness Service
- Deaf people need to be informed and educated about mental ill health and appropriate services
- Mental health services should be accessible to people with all levels of hearing loss, regardless of their first language.
- Hospital inpatient facilities are required for a small number of deaf clients with more acute mental health problems. Consideration should be given to developing such a facility on an all-Ireland basis.
- Generic Mental Health workers should be trained in the psychological, sociological and psychiatric aspects of deafness.
- During an admission period, appropriate and accessible communication support must be provided within a maximum of 24 hours.
- All deaf service users should be enabled to give fully informed consent for their treatment, which includes the provision of qualified communication support
- Deaf people should be supported to train as mental health professionals.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should provide an effective, holistic rehabilitation process for people with hearing loss, which includes a Mental health input.
- GPs and mental health services need to be aware of the mental health impacts of tinnitus, and the need to intervene early.

◇ Long term conditions

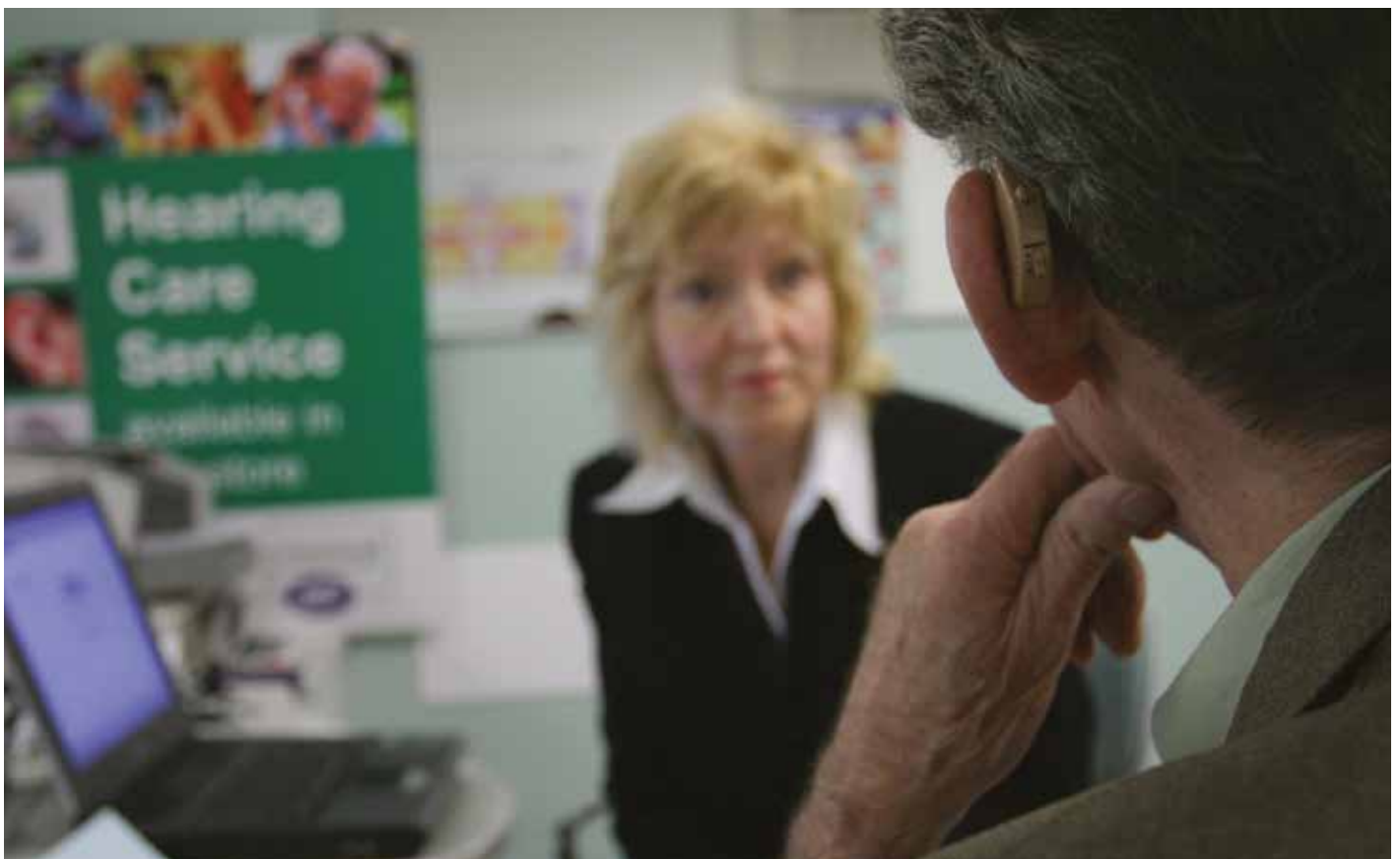
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Health and Social Care Board and Health and Social Care Trusts should recognise hearing loss and deafness in assessing, diagnosing and managing people with other long-term conditions
- Services for people with dementia, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and sight loss must take into account the needs of people with hearing loss and deaf people.
- Government should fund research to develop better diagnostic tools, specialist services and guidance to support people with hearing loss and deaf people who also have other long-term conditions; and make sure these are used.

“A young deaf mother was admitted to a mother and baby unit for assessment. She was ignoring her baby when he was obviously distressed. It transpired that she could not see him unless he was directly in front of her. She was later diagnosed with Usher’s Syndrome”

◇ Hearing screening, audiology and aftercare

- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should introduce hearing screening for people aged 65 and over.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should ensure that Audiology departments are supported to comply with Quality Standards in Audiology, and monitor and report on progress annually.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should develop quality standards in paediatric audiology.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should carry out a workforce planning exercise to identify numbers of audiology professionals required now and in the future.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should identify and support a training route to meet the future workforce requirements for audiology services.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should develop partnership with the voluntary and community sector to ensure that people fitted with a hearing aid are provided with information, signposting and services to enable them to make the best use of their hearing aid, to manage their hearing loss, to maintain communication with family and friends and at work, and to lead a full and normal life.

// Having hearing aids has improved my quality of life. Now that I wear them, I think it was ridiculous that I put off getting them."



“A deaf woman who signed was a long term resident in a residential home. She was not given communication support because her notes explaining her need were lost. Lacking the means of communication, she developed behavioural difficulties and was then misdiagnosed as of low intelligence. She was totally isolated for 30 years until the home was closed and the truth was discovered. She had by then lost her ability to sign.”

◆ **Dementia and deafness**

- GPs and all health professionals should be aware of the high prevalence of hearing loss and links between hearing loss and other long-term conditions. They should enquire about whether the person has a hearing loss, cross-refer and cooperate with other professionals.
- Healthcare specialists need to develop better diagnostic tools, specialist services and guidance to support people with hearing loss who also have other long term conditions, and make sure these are used.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should ensure that resources are allocated in a cost effective way by properly managing hearing loss in people with other long term conditions.
- Services must address the under-diagnosis of dementia in the presence of hearing loss and deafness.

◆ **Tinnitus**

- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should implement the Tinnitus Strategy for Northern Ireland as a matter of urgency.
- The Public Health Agency should make the public aware of what tinnitus is, and where to seek help.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should provide GPs with specialist information for themselves, and for people with tinnitus and their families.
- GPs must be trained to support people with tinnitus and refer appropriately.
- Professionals in ENT, Audiology, Social Work and the voluntary sector must work together to provide support for people with tinnitus at the earliest opportunity, and in a way that is appropriate for them.
- Health and Social Care Trusts should identify, train and resource a specialist tinnitus professional in each area to provide a specialist tinnitus service.
- All tinnitus support services should be joined up and embedded into the patient pathway at every stage of the journey.

“With tinnitus, you get down days, you get depressing days, you get days when you don't want to get out of bed. You get days where you don't want to go on living.”

◆ Reablement and rehabilitation, communication strategies, dual sensory loss or deafblindness

- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should undertake research to identify the most effective ways of delivering lipreading and managing hearing loss support.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should ensure lipreading and managing hearing loss classes are designed into the patient pathway for people with hearing loss.
- Lipreading classes must be provided to people with hearing loss at no cost to them, across Northern Ireland.
- Outcomes for people with hearing loss who attend lipreading classes should be measured.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should address the long term reablement of people with hearing loss and measure the outcomes.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should establish a database of deafblind people in order to plan services to meet need.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should increase public awareness of deafblindness to enable deafblind people to self-identify.
- GPs and other healthcare professionals, including domiciliary care staff, should be aware of deafblindness, to be able to identify older people with failing dual senses, and refer to appropriate support services.
- Social workers should be trained in carrying out assessments of the needs of deafblind people.
- Where required, specialist equipment, adapted services or specialist one to one support for deafblind people should be provided.
- Information should be provided in the most appropriate format for the deafblind person.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should carry out a review of the impacts of Department of Health Guidance, the Care Act and Section 7 legislation, currently in practice in other parts of the UK, to inform the development of guidance and best practice for Northern Ireland.

Article 26: Habilitation and rehabilitation

States Parties shall take effective and appropriate measures, including through peer support, to enable persons with disabilities to attain and maintain maximum independence, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. To that end, States Parties shall organise, strengthen and extend comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programmes, particularly in the areas of health, employment, education and social services, in such a way that these services and programmes:

- (a) Begin at the earliest possible stage, and are based on the multidisciplinary assessment of individual needs and strengths;
- (b) Support participation and inclusion in the community and all aspects of society, are voluntary, and are available to persons with disabilities as close as possible to their own communities, including in rural areas.

Article 27: Employment

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:

- d) Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training;
- (e) Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;

◇ Careers guidance

- Government should carry out an analysis of the nature, quality and impact of careers advice provided to young deaf people in terms of their longer term outcomes
- A consistent approach to the provision of careers advice across Northern Ireland
- Best practice guidance should be developed, in partnership with young deaf people and deaf organisations, on the provision of accessible careers advice and guidance
- The Careers Advice and Guidance service should ensure a ring-fenced budget for the provision of registered communication support
- Careers advisors should be supported by a registered communication support professional
- The Careers Advice and Guidance service should work in partnership with specialists and establish referral procedures
- The Careers Advice and Guidance service should ensure their service is accessible, by providing an SMS facility, working loop systems, and frontline staff trained in deaf awareness

◇ Access to employment and training

- Training providers and employers should be trained in deaf awareness
- Support is needed for young deaf people when they transition from training and employment programmes.
- A work mentoring programme should be developed which matches young deaf people with a mentor in the relevant career area and who can provide ongoing support and advice.
- Employers should ensure their recruitment practices are accessible, by ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made at the application and interview stage and that interview panellists are deaf aware.
- Government needs to provide greater opportunities for work placements for deaf people across a range of professions as a route to work, and support employers in providing those.

◆ The Access to Work programme

- The Department of Employment and Learning must actively promote the Access to Work scheme to people with hearing loss and employers.
- Access to Work should be extended to provide support for people with hearing loss who are on work placements or voluntary placements as a route to work.

◆ Hearing Loss in the Workplace and Underemployment

- Organisations should take steps to create a culture that supports people with hearing loss through training, procedures and information for all staff
- Government must work to raise awareness of the legal rights of deaf people and employers responsibilities under the law.
- Audiology services should provide information and signpost working people to other sources of support such as equipment and technology, lipreading classes and Access to Work
- People with hearing loss must be encouraged to actively seek information and support, and inform their employer about their hearing loss and what adjustments they require.

“As soon as they see the hearing aids they can't get me out of there fast enough. They assume because I can't use the phone I can't do the job.”



Article 31 - Statistics and data collection

1. States Parties undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention. The process of collecting and maintaining this information shall:

(a) Comply with legally established safeguards, including legislation on data protection, to ensure confidentiality and respect for the privacy of persons with disabilities;

(b) Comply with internationally accepted norms to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and ethical principles in the collection and use of statistics.

2. The information collected in accordance with this article shall be disaggregated, as appropriate, and used to help assess the implementation of States Parties' obligations under the present Convention and to identify and address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights.

3. States Parties shall assume responsibility for the dissemination of these statistics and ensure their accessibility to persons with disabilities and others.

◆ Data collection, planning and coordinating services

- The NI Executive should undertake a region-wide data collection exercise to identify accurate numbers of people with hearing loss, deafness, tinnitus and deafblindness.
- Government and associated public services should collect data on people of all ages who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus.
- Government departments and public services should plan appropriate levels of service to meet the needs of people who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus.
- Government departments and public services should ensure that planned services are measured for their effectiveness.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should develop pathways for people of all ages who are deaf, deafblind, have a hearing loss or tinnitus, to include all relevant statutory and voluntary agencies in a joined up approach.
- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should ensure that the Care Pathway is underpinned by policies and protocols around timeframes and referrals.
- The NI Executive should support an interdepartmental Duty to Co-operate in the provision of services to deaf children.



Contact details for the NI Coalition on Deafness member organisations.

Action Deaf Youth

Office 16
Townsend Enterprise Park
28 Townsend Street
BELFAST
BT13 2ES
Web: www.actiondeafyouth.org

Action on Hearing Loss

Harvester House
4-8 Adelaide St
Belfast BT2 8GA
Tel: 028 9023 9619
Text: 028 9024 9462
Email: information.nireland@hearingloss.org.uk
Web: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Deafblind NI

P.O. Box 359
Bangor
Co. Down
BT20 9EW
Email: norman.mccudden@deafblind.org.uk
Web: www.deafblind.org.uk

Hearing Link Northern Ireland

23 Enterprise House
Lisburn Enterprise Centre
Lisburn
BT28 2BP
Tel/text: 07534 563451
Email: northernireland@hearinglink.org
Helpdesk: helpdesk@hearinglink.org
Web: www.hearinglink.org

National Deaf Children's Society

38-42 Hill Street
Belfast
BT1 2LB
Tel: 028 9031 3170 (v)
Fax: 028 9027 8205
Text: 028 9027 8177
Web: www.ndcs.org.uk

Northern Ireland Deaf Sports

c/o Harvester House
4-8 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GA
Email: info@nideafsports.org
Web: www.nideafsports.org

Sense, The National Deafblind and Rubella Association

NI Regional Office
The Manor House
51 Mallusk Road
Mallusk
BT36 4RU
Tel: 028 9083 3430
Fax: 028 9084 4232
Text: 028 9083 3430
Email: nienquiries@sense.org.uk
Web: www.sense.org.uk

Signature

Mersey House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham
DH1 1TH
Web: www.signature.org.uk