

Lip reading in Highland

“Lip reading is the ability to recognise lip shapes and patterns and to use context to fill gaps in a conversation in order to maximise communication. For many people with hearing loss, lip reading is vital communication skill. Most people learn to lip read by attending classes taught by a qualified lip reading teacher. Lip reading classes develop the ability to recognise the different lip shapes and patterns and to use context to fill gaps in conversation. Classes also include information about other strategies to encourage attendees to manage their hearing loss and enhance communication such as knowing how to manage a communication environment. Many classes will also provide useful information about services and equipment for people with hearing loss. In addition, classes provide an important source of peer support, as people meet others with hearing loss and have an opportunity to share experiences and coping strategies. Therefore, while often referred to as “Lip reading Classes” it is standard practise for courses to provide a package of support for people with hearing loss” **Action on Hearing Loss 2014**

History of Highland Classes

Lip reading classes have been provided by the Speech and Language Therapy Service in NHS Highland for almost 35 years. This was initiated when the Manchester course to train Teachers of Lip reading came to Highland to train tutors.

One of those trained was a speech and language therapist and as a result a regular class was established in Dingwall that has been running successfully ever since.

Other classes in Highland (Lochaber, Caithness and Inverness) have been provided through the voluntary sector organisations (Caithness Sensory and Lochaber Sensory service)

This survey was undertaken to evidence the requirement and efficacy of the lip reading service in order to take this forward when the current NHS post holder retires and to look at a more equitable model of provision across Highland.

Referrals

Classes open to anyone who struggles to hear. There is no prior assessment to attending a class. The classes are not graded according to ability or experience.

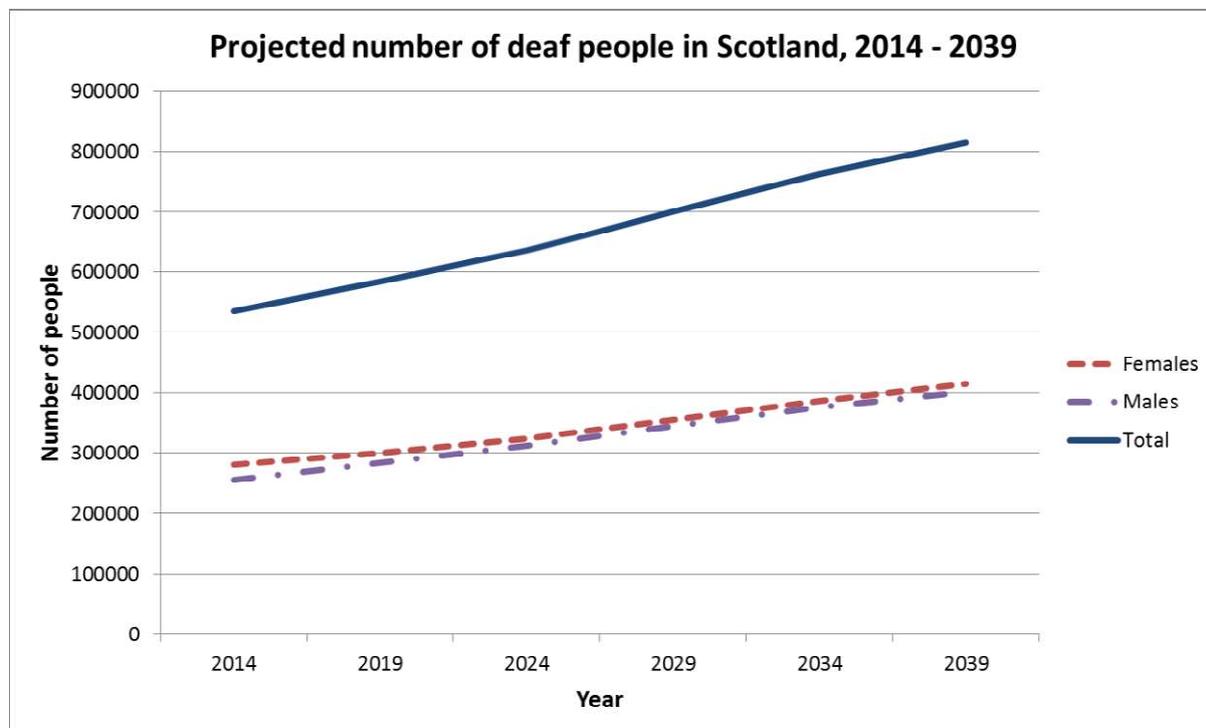
Attendees can be self referrals having heard about the service through word of mouth or other publicity .

Referrals can come via GP, Audiology, Social Work or Deaf Services Team. These can be direct referrals or general sign posting to the service.

Demographics of Deafness UK in Scotland

Projected number of people with hearing loss in Scotland, 2014 to 2039. Numbers based on populations projections by the National Records of Scotland and hearing loss prevalence rates by Davis (1995).

Ref: Deaf Action 2016



There is increasing evidence linking untreated hearing loss to a significant increase in risk of dementia.

Over the last few years, there is growing evidence of a link between dementia/cognition and hearing loss. Hearing loss and dementia are linked with ageing and often occur together as we get older - the majority of people with dementia are over 70 and nearly three quarters of people over 70 have hearing loss. There is strong evidence that mild hearing loss doubles the risk of developing dementia, with moderate hearing loss leading to three times the risk, and severe hearing loss five times the risk. Hearing loss can be misdiagnosed as dementia or make the symptoms of dementia appear worse. Ref: Action on Hearing Loss

Lip reading Outcomes

There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that lip reading classes have improved communication skills, promoted inclusiveness and generally enhanced quality of life of the participants, enabling them to self manage their condition.

In 2014 the Scottish Government commissioned a Lip reading strategy project to look at provision across Scotland.

Information was gathered to assess the efficacy of Lip reading.

90% of their respondents found the lip reading very useful or useful.

REF: On everybody's lips. 2015

The Highland Picture

There are around 30 people currently attending lip reading classes in Highland at present.

The NHS provision will cease this year and in order to look at how this can be taken forward a small survey was circulated to gather feedback.

Survey Monkey was used and distributed to as many people with hearing loss as possible. The Questions were based on the Therapy Outcome Measures for Aural Rehabilitation (Enderby et al)

Distribution of Survey.

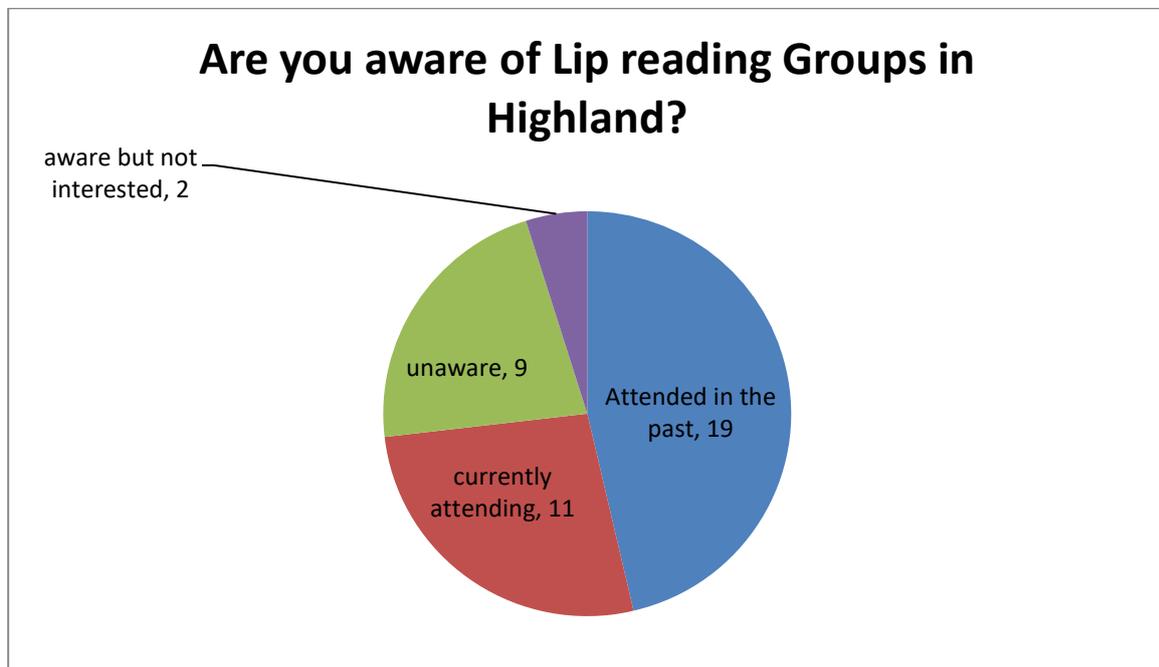
The survey was distributed to all current classes and also sent to people who had attended in the past. It was also distributed via Audiology and NHS social media in an attempt to reach as many people with hearing loss as possible.

There were 42 respondents. The majority had attended classes at some point.

There has been no data collected on numbers of people that have attended classes in previous years.

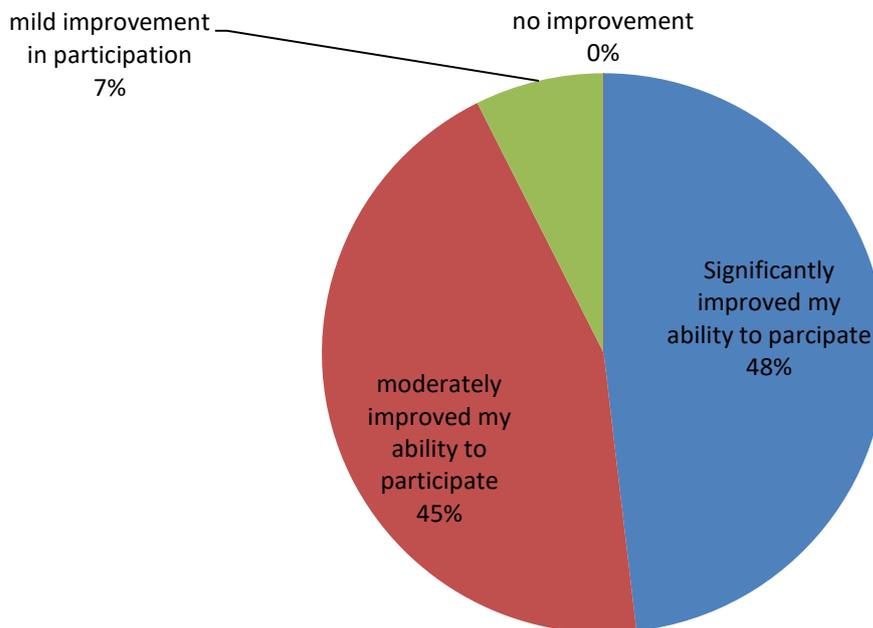
There are currently around 30-40 people currently attending classes in Highland.

The results are in the pie charts below. Participants of the survey also had the opportunity to add comments at each section. These are listed under the charts.



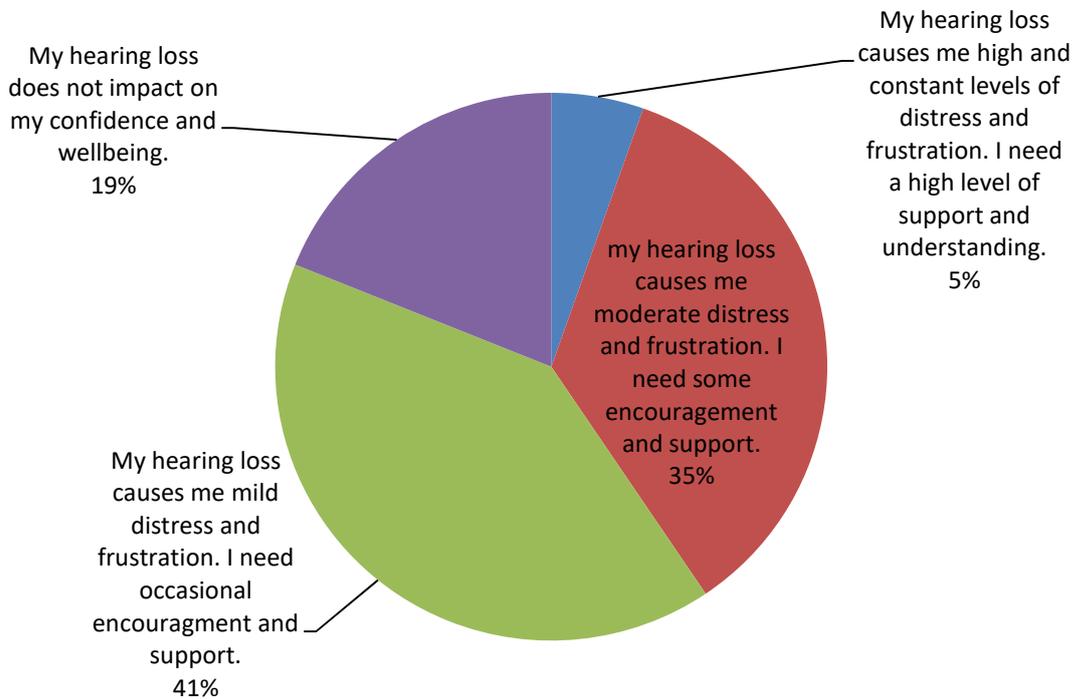
- I attended once. Difficulties with travel.
- I am aware and currently interested.
- Can only go when not teaching on the same day as the class.

If you have attended classes, did this improve your ability to take part in activities?



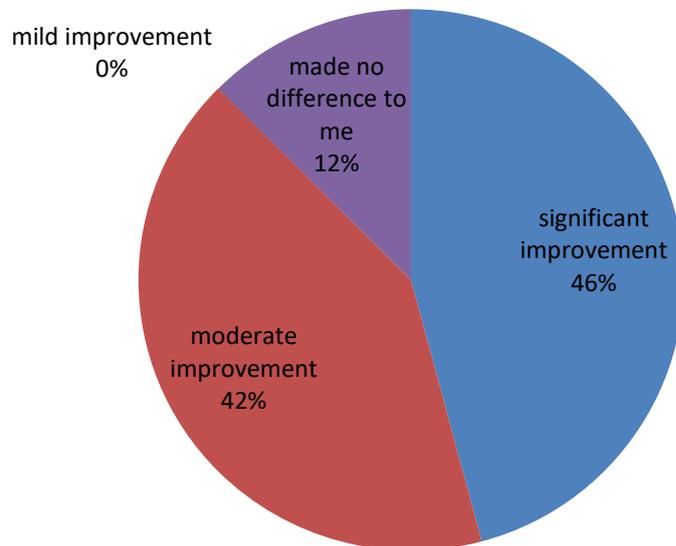
- I've lip read from childhood and not attended classes.
- I'm not deaf but enjoy learning new skills.
- Not yet involved but very aware of the positive feedback from people who have attended.
- Gave me the confidence and knowledge to understand how I best participate and work to these strengths while working hard to improve other situations I come up against.

Does your Hearing loss impact on your confidence and wellbeing?



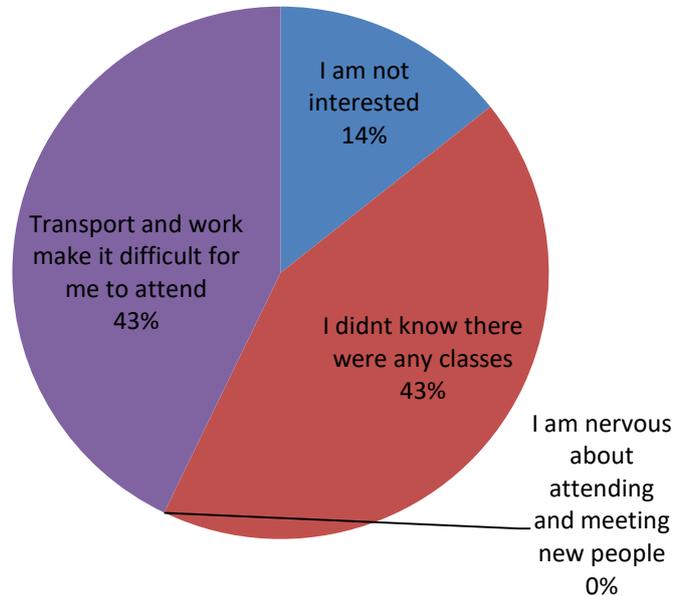
- My hearing loss causes frequent frustration but I cope. I would enjoy more support.
- I understand how my friends feel and help.
- It affects me more than I care to admit and in ways that are not understood by people and trivialised.
- With certain people due to their specific voices being exceptionally difficult for me to hear properly.
- My hearing loss does not impact on my confidence as I have long since learned to live with it. But it does cause me moderate, and sometimes even high distress and frustration in social situations where there is a lot of ambient noise and I struggle to hear people and quite often just switch off as it's hopeless trying to hear.

If you have attended Lip reading classes did this improve your confidence and well being?



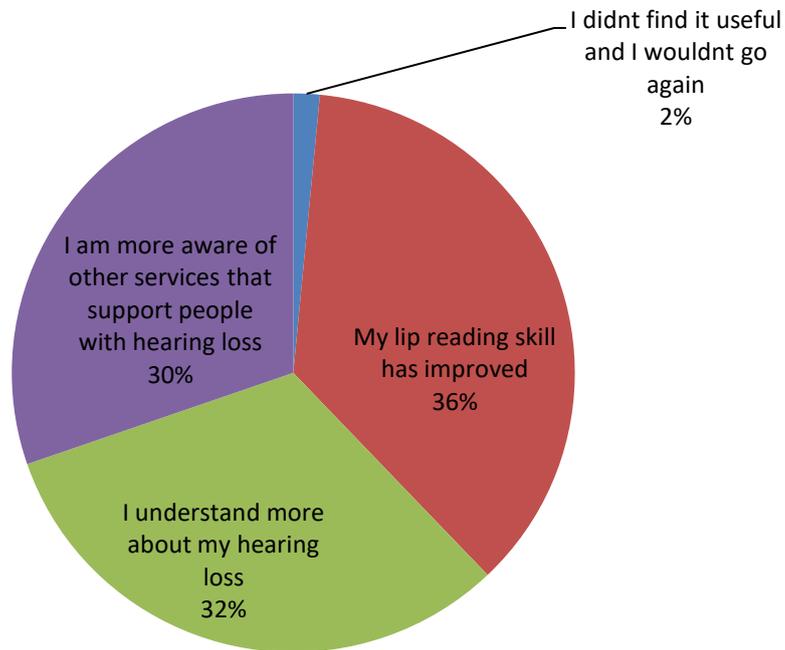
- Enjoyed the classes will miss them if funding cannot be found.
- Gives me another skill
- Not yet attended but something I am interested in.
- I don't think attending has improved my confidence and well being. But I make more of an effort to look directly at people's faces when they are talking to me, and I think I am even more aware than I used to be to others who are experiencing similar hearing difficulties.

If you have not attended classes please tick any of the following that apply.



- Not attended classes
- I can only attend on days I am not working.
- My hearing problem is not bad enough to need it.
- Don't need them, learnt to lip read from birth. A natural behaviour I do without thinking.
- I now have hearing aids and find I can hear most things now.
- Attend as often as possible on occasions I could not attend because of other commitments I feel I have become more withdrawn and less likely to attend events or every day outings so much that friends and family have commented on how much I struggle in conversation and also getting withdrawn from social events.

If you have attending please tick any of the following that apply



- Our Tutor made the learning very easy to follow. I will be enrolling again for the next course.
- I learnt a lot of strategies to employ.
- It's good to understand (hear) others without requesting them to repeat themselves.

Summary of findings

Almost 70 % of the participants reported that their hearing loss impacted in some way on their daily activities.

All reported some improvement in their ability to participate following classes.

80% of the respondents indicated that their hearing loss impacted on their confidence and well being.

53% reported a mild to significant improvement in confidence and well being after attending the classes.

Of those that do not attend classes, the majority would be interested in attending. The main reasons for not attending were:

- Work commitments
- Transport problems
- Unaware there were classes.

A significant number reported that:

- Lip reading skill had improved
- They understand more about their hearing loss
- Are aware of other services
- Benefit from peer support.

In conclusion the results support the anecdotal evidence that attending lip reading classes not only teaches the ability to lip read, but supports the individual in self management of their hearing loss, reducing the effects of isolation and promoting inclusion.

This leads to significant improvement in health and well being as studies have evidenced hearing loss is associated with poor mental health, primarily due to isolation and exclusion.

These findings correlate with the findings from the Scottish Lip Reading Strategy Group and provide evidence that Lip reading can enhance quality of live, inclusion and participation.

There is also evidence to support the fact that lip reading classes support health and well being and enable participants to self manage their hearing loss.

NHS Highland, See Hear Education and Learning Service (SHHELS) are working with partners to explore options to develop community based classes.

Liz Kraft
Speech and Language Therapist
Specialist for Hearing Impaired NHS Highland
March 2020