Covid-19: The Communication Virus
Communication For All: A Strategy for the 21st Century
Key messages

June 2020
Our purpose

deebscotland is the user led, membership organisation for the deaf sector in Scotland. As such it takes a person-centred, rights-based approach to all its work and recognises the importance of monitoring and evaluation in project/partnership development.

We use the term the four key pillars of deafness to describe Deaf BSL users, Deafblind, Deafened and Hard of Hearing, as people experience different barriers that require different solutions.

deefscotland.org

Background

Report written by
Mandy Reid, Development Officer, deafscotland

The lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the level of barriers people affected by deafness in Scotland face on a day-to-day basis. deafscotland understands that population safety is the number one priority for the Scottish Government and that a number of measures taken to protect healthcare and other professionals and the public are necessary. But some of these measures have increased the fear and anxiety of people affected by deafness at a time when there are few services to offer them accessible and inclusive support and solutions to their isolation and mental ill-health.

As it became clear that the lockdown would continue for more than a few weeks, deafscotland received more and more emails and phone calls asking where deaf people could get information, advice and support to help them cope with the additional isolation and separation they were having to deal with through social distancing, self-isolation and the number of people covering their faces with masks.
deafscotland put together surveys to gather evidence directly from deaf people (across the four pillars of deafness) that would explain exactly what they experience and feel and have to deal with on a day-to-day basis during this lockdown. We are also reporting on the qualitative information from our membership - organisations across the Private, Public and Third sectors - and from the enquiries we have had from people affected by deafness and their relatives during the crisis as they cannot access the services and support they would normally have access to.
Now is the time to start planning measures that will make the recovery better and less isolating for the 1,000,000 people in Scotland who are affected by deafness.

Learning for the pandemic response

There is a degree of learning that both the UK and Scottish Governments should take on board from this pandemic. People affected by deafness in Scotland who are usually separated from society by their level of hearing loss and the ability of others round about them to be inclusive in their communication have been particularly badly hit during this crisis. The safety measures of self-isolation and social distancing as well as the wearing of face masks and visors have all made the isolation of those affected by deafness much greater than that of people who are hearing. There has been a marked increase in anxiety and fearfulness about how they will manage to access information, food, exercise, communication with others and “the road to recovery”. Now is the time to start planning the “just in case” measures that can make the recovery better and any further crisis more inclusive and less isolating for the 1,000,000 people in Scotland affected by deafness.
From our survey responses and the emails/phone calls we have received during the last 11 weeks, there are several themes becoming apparent. These are:

• **people cannot use the telephone** and so are excluded from accessing support and help during self-isolation;

• **hearing aids** are breaking and the person doesn’t know how to get them fixed as they would normally go to their library or community hall. This means that the person loses their means of communication;

• **care packages** have been slashed and people are being left completely isolated with no way to contact the outside world to get shopping, medication and someone to talk to;

• self-isolation and social distancing is leaving people affected by deafness more isolated than is usual and they are becoming **mentally unwell without access to support**, including GP support. Most GPs are doing consultations on the telephone.

• **people with a dual sensory loss** – Deafblindness – are even more vulnerable as they need **tactile communication** in order to know what is going on around them. Support has been cut and family do not want to risk their relatives but are worried about their health and their mental health. And

• **access to accurate, accessible information** on TV, online or for those who are self-employed/own a company in the private sector.

There have also been a number of specific issues – some of which referred to the UK Government and others to the Scottish Government.
UK Government should make sure:

• **BSL interpretation is available** on the TV during the Prime Minister's Statements and Question/Answer sessions.

• **All** information videos have **subtitles and BSL interpretation**.

• **Accessible information is available** for those in employment especially those who are self-employed or are only directors of small companies at the same time as everyone else.

• **Delays in action** for those who are self-employed or are directors of very small companies had a disproportionate impact for those working in the deaf sector and should, in the future, be kept to a minimum.

• People who are affected by deafness who are working can access financial support to help them with remote working, for example, **Access to Work or PIP** to support online meetings – Electronic Notetakers or speech to text software. This is a short term measure to cover communication until “normal service” is resumed.
Scottish Government:

It was hoped that the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 would not only promote BSL as a language but also raise awareness of the needs of deaf people across Scotland – what deafscotland calls “BSL plus”. This does not seem to have been the case and so much of what is positive about the government’s response to the pandemic has had a negative effect on the lives of the people affected by deafness in Scotland.
• Funding going to **telephone helplines** that are not accessible to people affected by deafness who do not use BSL. For example, most people affected by deafness do not use text phones any more, and yet the National Helpline was developed with a textphone number. Even people with hearing aids and some degree of hearing become anxious when using the telephone as they feel they cannot keep asking the person on the other end to repeat what they are saying, to speak up and to speak more clearly. As with other people, they do not want to be “a nuisance” and so are more reluctant to use these helplines, missing out on the services and support on offer.

• The **increased use of technology and online information services** - too many older people affected by deafness have no access to online services and the place they normally go for information and support is closed - **libraries**.

• While it is admirable that 9000 people in Scotland were being **helped to get online**, what about the rest who did not qualify as they are not known to any services except Audiology, lip reading classes and hearing aid support services. All closed during the pandemic.

The government announced on 10 June that there would be “an investment of £9 million to provide 25,000 laptops to assist pupils learning at home...” as part of the “£50 million to improve attainment” for school children (click here for more information). A similar investment is needed for access to communication for people affected by deafness who are older, who are unemployed/underemployed and who cannot afford the technology needed to access support and online services. It could be part of a rehabilitation package for people affected by deafness.

• There has been an increase in the **use of technology in care homes** - tablets, laptops, virtual assistants. This is a great improvement for many people affected by deafness who live in these homes, but why did it take this crisis to make this possible?
• There is no register of people affected by deafness in Scotland and so there is no actual figures for people across the four pillars of deafness. deafscotland has campaigned for a change to the Census question so that it would gather some meaningful data on where people are, their ages and the level of hearing loss they have, but the question in the 2021 Census remains the same as that of 2011. In order to plan service provision and communication support, the Scottish Government needs to know where people affected by deafness live, their age and more importantly, their level of deafness as the barriers faced by people across the four pillars of deafness are different.

• Deafblind people who use tactile communication are particularly vulnerable as their ability to communicate with others has diminished substantially and while they want to stay safe and make sure their communication support workers stay safe, they are being left for long periods of time with no-one to talk to, which in turn increases their anxiety levels and makes them more susceptible to mental ill-health.
• **Care service packages** have been decreased to people affected by deafness and additional disabilities, including people who are Deafblind or for older adults. Without other means of communication, these people are substantially more isolated and vulnerable than people with disabilities who have no communication support needs. Deafblind Scotland and local deaf organisations have, where possible, been picking up some of the slack but more planning needs to be done to ensure these people are not left for long periods of time with nobody to talk to and little means of engaging with people outside their homes.

• **Day care packages** which many deaf people rely on for company, exercise, activities and a hot meal have been cancelled. People are stuck at home with little access to alternative services as most of the support that has been put in place is accessed through the telephone.

• **Audiology services** being closed as not an “essential service”. Communication is a basic human right without which the rights holder cannot enjoy the rest of their rights. For a person affected by deafness, access to hearing tests, hearing aid adjustments and hearing aid repairs are an **essential** part of their lives and helps to keep them involved with society. Without this service, many people are becoming more isolated, suffering from increasing mental ill-health and feel that they are not listened to or cared about by government/Scotland.

• **Access to hearing aid packs** has been a lifeline for a number of people at a local level. A few local deaf organisations, for example, S.I.S.G (Sensory Impaired Support Group) in the Ayrshires, have received funding to provide packs of tubing, batteries, cleaner and a magnifier to people affected by deafness in their local area, including those in care homes. Before Covid-19, these organisations provided hearing aid services in libraries, community halls and GP surgeries. Without their hearing aids, people affected by deafness lose the ability to hear on their telephone, the TV, and what people around them are saying. Add in the fact that more people are wearing masks, and their ability to be a part of their community is reduced more than is normal.
deafscotland accepts that **PPE (personal protective equipment) and social distancing** keeps people safe, but it makes people affected by deafness feel even more isolated, anxious and fearful than usual as they cannot lip read what people are saying to them. Social distancing means that they cannot hear with their hearing aids as the aids have a working distance of 1 metre.

**Children and young people** – Teachers of the Deaf and Support Workers in some local authority areas are not allowed to have online/face-to-face contact with the deaf children/young people they have been working with. There is a real fear that these children/young people will start to lose their BSL. There is also a fear that some children who are living in dangerous circumstances – houses where there is domestic abuse – are not being monitored as there is little or no face-to-face contact with them.

A number of deaf children/young people are not engaging with online classes and the Teachers of the Deaf/Support Workers do not know why not or what the circumstances are.

There is also concern for parents of newborn babies who have just been told their baby is deaf and who may not be getting the support they need in all areas of Scotland.
Overall, people affected by deafness have found themselves more isolated and left out of society due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Report

The majority of people who responded to the survey were Hard of Hearing and use English as their first language (this reflects the statistics across the four pillars). The people who responded live across Scotland and in urban, rural and very rural settings. Most are retired. The same can be said for the increased number of enquiries we have received during this crisis. Enquiries have gone up by 160% since the start of lockdown – by telephone and email. There has been a similar increase in enquiries to our members – contactSCOTLAND-BSL, Action on Hearing Loss and Age Scotland, for example.

People answered the survey questions themselves. Enquiries are coming mainly from family, friends and care workers supporting older people affected by deafness.
The main themes are:

• people cannot use the telephone and so are excluded from accessing support and help during self-isolation;

• hearing aids are breaking and the person doesn’t know how to get them fixed as they would normally go to their library or community hall. This means that the person loses their means of communication;

• care packages have been slashed and people are being left completely isolated with no way to contact the outside world to get shopping, medication and someone to talk to;

• self-isolation and social distancing is leaving people affected by deafness more isolated than is usual and they are becoming mentally unwell without access to support, including GP support. Most GPs are doing consultations on the telephone.

• people with a dual sensory loss – Deafblindness – are even more vulnerable as they need tactile communication in order to know what is going on around them. Support has been cut and family do not want to risk their relatives but are worried about their health and their mental health. And

• access to accurate, accessible information on TV, online or for those who are self-employed/own a company in the private sector.
**Information**

From the survey, the majority of people received information about the pandemic through watching TV, by going online or by speaking to family/friends. The majority understood the information they received but there has been too much information coming out from too many sources.

An issue that was mentioned by a number of people is that there was no distinction made when the Prime Minister and UK Government were on the TV as to what information was UK-wide and what referred only to England.

“It felt like the Government didn’t understand what they were responsible for.”

“Most of the BBC news only refers to England and Wales, not Scotland. This is confusing because we don’t know what to follow.”

The other main issue was that the Prime Minister and his cabinet did not have BSL interpretation on any of their news slots and the captions were not always accurate. Considering how many BSL users there are in the UK and how many people need captions, this is not acceptable during such a crisis.

We have had a small number of enquiries asking where to get information relating solely to the situation in Scotland as the people involved do not have access to subtitles on their TVs and are not online.

**Use of technology to get information out to the citizens of Scotland and support to those who need it**

It would seem that there has been a general move towards using technology to get the messages out. Not everyone has access to technology or knows how to use it even if they do have access.

For example, older people may have a mobile phone for SMS messaging as they can no longer hear on the telephone, but they may not have access to the internet from their phone or if they do, they do not know how to use it. For those who don’t have home access, their normal source of information is not available as the libraries are all shut and there is only online or telephone helpline replacements.
Too many services are still reliant on telephone help/info lines. For example, I want to contact insurance broker. They want me to phone. They won’t let me use email or relay interpreters. I am a Deaf BSL user.”

The Scottish and UK Governments have invested a lot of money in telephone helplines:

“Several helplines have been set up, including the national phone line (0800 111 4000) and the Age Scotland helpline (0800 12 44 222), to enable people who need support and who don’t have a support network around them to contact their local authority to ask for help with essential services. These services can be accessed via text phone so that those who are hard of hearing or who have difficulties with speech, and are text phone users, can get in touch directly.

The national phone line was set up in recognition that many people who are older or from other protected characteristic groups are less likely to be online than the wider population. However, should people prefer to contact their local authority for help online, rather than over the phone, they can do so. In both cases, over the phone or online, help can also be requested on someone else’s behalf, if the individual concerned is unable to request help themselves.

Additionally, you may be aware that Relay UK provides a centralised relay service for people who are deaf and without speech. This can be accessed by the app or by text phone. Of note, the operators also answer 999 emergency calls. You can call NHS 24’s 111 service (18001 111) or NHS inform (18001 0800 22 44 88) or for Emergency 999 calls the number is 18000, using this relay service...people can still contact their Local Authority via post if they prefer.”

Scottish Government Equality Unit.

The majority of people affected by deafness do not use a textphone any more as they, like the rest of the population, have moved to mobile phones. Older people, who are less likely to be online, are also less likely to use their mobile phone for anything other than SMS messaging and are unaware of the many other uses that a mobile phone can have. Many people do not have “smartphones” which have access to the internet so they can download apps such as Relay UK.

“Helplines should always have email or SMS contacts - rather than just telephone or Text Relay.”
People need to be able to make contact in “real time” – not just by email. SMS messaging, Whatsapp and webchat are all more “real time” than email.

“Need a text-based way to access help; too many sources of support including NHS 111 are only offering telephone support.”

Most local Councils expect everyone that contacts them to have a mobile phone and if they do not, much of the pandemic service provision is not meeting the needs of those it was set up for. One person contacted deafscotland as there is no mobile phone signal where he lives so he cannot have a mobile phone. When he contacted his local Council, he was met by derision by the call handler as they wouldn’t believe that there was no signal in the village he lives in. Technology is not yet the answer to all communication issues in Scotland.

Access to money is another issue for a lot of people. Online banking is not the answer for everyone. As more and more branches shut, during an emergency such as the one we are living in now, it makes it more difficult for people who cannot hear on the telephone to access their money, especially if they are older, have an additional disability or have no internet access.

“Too many services are still reliant on telephone helplines.
I want to contact insurance broker. They want me to phone. They won’t let me use email or relay interpreters.
I am a Deaf BSL user.”
The use of technology to keep in touch with people

The majority of people said they have managed to keep in touch with family, friends and work during the pandemic but it has not necessarily been easy.

Others have had problems as they only have a smartphone and little signal for anything other than SMS messaging. Those who do not have smartphones can only use their mobiles for SMS. Some people affected by deafness who are online are finding the only time they can get a good signal is very early in the morning or very late at night, which is not necessarily when their family and friends are available. This is due to the number of people using online services increasing dramatically since lockdown.

People have been phoning and emailing asking how they access GP services for their older relatives as the service offered is only by telephone and their relative cannot use the phone. Some GPs will allow a third person to be involved but if the older person lives on their own, this is not an option.

“GP surgeries are relying on patients being able to hear on the telephone. What is there in place for those who can’t?”

“The fact that should we need medical help for Covid-19 related symptoms and we can’t use the phone makes us very anxious.”

A real issue is the lack of access to face-to-face contact. Online video conferencing can be a solution but it is not necessarily accessible if you have a hearing loss and you are not a BSL user. The quality of the sound is determined by the quality of the microphone the other person uses and few people have microphones they plug into their computer/tablets. The internal microphones are not very powerful and make hearing conversation for a lot of people impossible. There does not seem to be any free apps that convert speech to text in real time and is accurate for UK accents.

This is an issue for people who are working remotely and trying to keep in touch with colleagues too. If the deaf person has Access to Work then they can access an Electronic Notetaker who can work remotely and provide “speech to text” but without this support, this option is not available to the person. There is no short term support from Access to Work or Personal Independence Payment to cover the pandemic and people working remotely.
Audiology departments are all closed as they are not considered “essential services” during the pandemic. This means that there are many people who are left with little support and much reduced means of communication because their usual source of batteries, tubing and repair for their hearing aids has been lost or they hearing aids are no longer effective as their hearing has diminished and they have no way to access hearing aid settings to help them to hear with this reduced level of natural hearing. This has led to increased isolation, reduced mental health and a communication crisis for many people. Most health boards have an audiology service providing batteries and repairs by post. A lot of older deaf people have a fear that their hearing aids will get lost in the post or they cannot afford the registered delivery, so are not sending their aids to get fixed. Rather they are struggling to do without them.

Information about audiology services went out to deaf organisations, health and social care partnerships and libraries. The majority of deaf people do not have contact with deaf organisations or health and social care partnership services and the libraries are all shut. Information is available on some health board website but not all.

“Concerned that hearing access has low priority yet communication is essential!”

From survey

Hearing aid users in care homes may also be losing out as often the care and repair is carried out by volunteers who are not working during the pandemic. To be further isolated from those you live with when you cannot have your usual visitors must be devastating for older people or those with a Learning Disability and a hearing loss who are live in care. One relative asked us whether or not hearing aid care is part of the qualifications for all paid carers as he is the one who normally makes sure his mother is wearing her hearing aids and his fear is that she won’t have it in and she won’t understand why he cannot visit and will give up. His mother has dementia and uses two hearing aids. Another enquiry by email was much the same but it was a mother worried about her adult daughter who has a Learning Disability and regularly breaks her aids. She is concerned that the home will not make sure the aids are sent for repair and her daughter won’t be able to hear anything and will give up.

Those who have hearing loops installed in their homes or have portable systems and have had equipment break down have not been able to get their equipment fixed, which means that they cannot hear what is being said or what is on the TV, which in turns increases their isolation and reduces their mental health.
“One of our staff wears a hearing aid. They cannot hear online. We don’t have a budget for communication support. They don’t qualify for Access to Work and cannot claim PIP. How do we keep together as a team?”

Communicating face-to-face

deafscotland understands and supports the need for PPE to keep people safe during the crisis. Unfortunately, masks stop people being able to lip read as do visors. So while health and social care professionals should be bringing in language and communication support to ensure that people affected by deafness in hospital are given information they understand in order to give informed consent, the same cannot be said for pharmacies and banks.

“Use of masks is very challenging. Masks are preventing me from being able to lip read at pharmacies and supermarkets.”

Face masks and visors mean that people affected by deafness have much less chance of conversation when outside their home due to the fact they cannot lip read. If the only person you see each week of lockdown is the person in the local shop who is wearing a face mask, your quality of life is much reduced, which in turn affects your mental health.

Social distancing is making it hard for people who are affected by deafness. Trying to lip read people outside from 2 metres away is not easy and as most meetings now take place outside,
sounds round about cut down on what the person can hear. For example, a gentle wind can be very noisy in a person’s hearing aids. Also the 2 metre distancing makes it almost impossible to hear what someone is saying even with hearing aids as most hearing aids have an efficiency distance of 1 metre. Deaf people, even outside the home, remain isolated in the fact, they cannot hear the other person due to distance and noise round about, and they cannot lip read due to people wearing face masks, visors and scarves over their mouths. Social distancing and self-isolation means something completely different to people affected by deafness.

“Social distancing reduces my ability to have successful face to face spoken communication. Face coverings exacerbate the situation. I can’t hear people coming up behind me so sometimes I can’t get out of their way quickly enough.”
Working remotely

In our survey we asked about people working remotely and it there were any particular challenges.

The main issue is the reliance on technology and online meetings and how for the most part, they are not accessible for deaf people.

From one of our members:

“One of our staff is very hard of hearing and wears a hearing aid in one ear. Their hearing has diminished and they were waiting for an audiology appointment to get their hearing checked again and their hearing aid adjusted. Lockdown happened before they got their appointment. They cannot hear online. We don’t have a budget for communication support. They don’t qualify for Access to Work and cannot claim PIP. How do we keep together as a team?”

“My manager needs information on how to make sure he and all my colleagues make their phone and video calls accessible to me. It’s really hard to follow some of them. It is not feasible to have an Electronic Notetaker on each call because they cannot always be planned in advance. People sometimes remember to do things that help me but mostly don’t. It feels like token gestures are being made but that’s the same as when I am working in the office. It is embarrassing and hard work to keep having to interrupt and distracts focus from my competency to do my job.”

Organisations where people were not particularly deaf aware before lockdown are still not deaf aware during lockdown which makes it harder for people affected by deafness to keep in touch with colleagues when they are working remotely. As has been said above, technology can help as long as it is the right technology and people understand the benefits but also the limitations.

For those who are self-employed or running their own businesses, there has been an issue about how inclusive the information coming from the HMRC and DWP has been. There has been little fully accessible information produced and there has been conflicted information available depending on the source.
Children and Young People and Education

We received separate feedback from a number of Teachers of the Deaf and Family Support Workers around the country. While there is lots of good work taking place using technology, there is also many teachers and support workers who are worried about pupils who are not engaging with online education or who need one-to-one support that they cannot give just now.

Staff members are also concerned as most parents do not sign so if there is little one to one support, pupils may start to lose the BSL they do have.

There is also a concern about deaf children and young people who are in unsupportive and often dangerous home circumstances. Little monitoring can be done online if face-to-face contact is not allowed.

As most deaf babies are born to hearing parents (97%), even though newborn testing continues, these parents need support to help them cope and communicate with their babies. There is a fear that this is not happening due to lockdown.

“Audiology notify me of new and I’m supporting by phone at the moment. Teachers are emailing me with hearing aid issues and I’m liaising with Audiology to get replacement aids, batteries and hooks sent out. Cannot get impressions just now, although if urgent I’m sure something can be arranged. Skeleton staff at our local hospital will do the same and are concentrating on the under 2’s for repairs. Crosshouse continue to send out spares by post.”

“Class teachers seem to be in touch with most of the pupils, Google classrooms were only set up in the last week. Only one out of five high schools is using this system with us. Most primaries have access but pupils are not online for some reason. We have no direct contact with parents so can’t get answers.”

“I know of one BSL pupil who is causing concern as she hasn’t been seen since before lockdown.”

“Children are being supported by email. We are not allowed face-to-face contact by Zoom.”
“Having contact with pupils has been tricky. We are not allowed to video call pupils for communication and for tutorials due to safeguarding issues. Teachers of the Deaf and mainstream teachers have set work for pupils but there are concerns that some students are not engaging. I have two BSL pupils who are not completing any work set. They do not have the home support and they simply need someone beside them helping them at every stage. It has been very frustrating. One pupil, who has severe mental health problems, is the happiest they have ever been, which lets me know how hard school is for them. I spoke to school guidance staff who say that their main concern is that the children are safe and happy.”

“Our NDCS [National Deaf Children’s Society] family support officer is furloughed and we were told that she is not able to work at the moment. We have been in regular contact with families of newly diagnosed babies, via phone calls, to support parents.”

“Staff are keeping in touch with parents and offering any support they need but staff are not allowed to do face-to-face sessions with the signing pupils as it’s against council policy. They are reviewing it but will probably be too late by the time they make a decision. I worry about these children because few parents sign and the children are isolated. Domestic abuse is also worrying because at least a third of my pupils were in abusive situations and I’m sure this lockdown will have exacerbated their situation and this will be the same across all councils mainly because of poor communication with their family.”

“Testing is still going on with newborns but not sure what support is offered (health or education) if a baby is diagnosed as deaf.”
Overall, people affected by deafness have found themselves more isolated and left out of society due to the Covid-19 crisis. Some of this isolation cannot be helped as it is about keeping people safe. But the majority of decisions taken by governments, with proper planning and Equality/Human Rights Impact Assessments that include “Communication For All”, could have been more inclusive of the needs of the 1,000,000 people in Scotland who are deaf.

There are a number of things the UK and Scottish Governments could do to ensure any such future health pandemic does not impact people affected by deafness in the way this one has and which ensures their human rights remain intact throughout the crisis while keeping them safe. For example:
UK Government:

• Making sure every broadcast on TV from the Prime Minister and their advisers includes BSL Interpretation and subtitles.

• All information about the crisis on the TV is fully accessible to the citizens in the UK.

• Every online information video from government includes BSL and subtitles.

• Information for all those working is accessible and includes people who are self-employed or run their own businesses; and

• That information is timely so that people are not left wondering how they will manage.
Scottish Government:

- Only funding telephone helplines that come with SMS/email/webchat contact so that everyone can access the support they offer;

- Looking at economies of scale and tying it into rehabilitation of people affected by deafness - national procurement of basic smartphones so that everyone can be online and have access to either contactSCOTLAND-BSL or Relay UK and a speech to text app. This could be funded out of PIP and Attendance Allowance payments for language/communication support for individuals. If the person wants something “bigger and better” they fund that themselves.

- Face masks are designed and produced that are clinically safe but have a “viewing” window over the mouth so that people can still lip read.

- App designers are encouraged to come up with a cheap app that translates speech to text for UK accents.

- Planning for all care/health/mental health support/support services include an impact assessment on communication so that people affected by deafness are not left more isolated, anxious and with decreasing mental wellbeing due to the lack of inclusive, accessible support.

- Support services for the most vulnerable, including those whose only means of communication is tactile, are impact assessed and these people are prioritised for support.

- National deaf awareness training programme so that people are aware of the needs of people who cannot hear in a hearing world. If 40% of 40 year olds and 75% of everyone aged over 70 is deaf, a lot of people are affected. People might be keener to look after their hearing if they know what could be round the corner.

What is needed is a real commitment from the Scottish Government to a Communication For All Strategy for the 21st Century, part of which will be to work with the UK Government on reserved issues that affect people affected by deafness.
Survey results

54 people responded.

Q1. What Council area of Scotland do you live in?

Angus .............................................. 1
Clackmannanshire .......................... 2
Comhairle N an Eilean Siar .............. 1
Dumfries and Galloway .................... 8
East Ayrshire .................................. 2
East Dunbartonshire ......................... 1
East Renfrewshire .............................. 1
Fife ............................................... 4
Glasgow City Council ......................... 5
Highland ........................................ 13
Midlothian ....................................... 1
Moray ............................................ 2
North Ayrshire .................................. 2
Perth and Kinross ......................... 2
Renfrewshire .................................. 2
Scottish Borders ............................. 1
South Lanarkshire ...................... 4
Stirling ........................................... 1
West Lothian .................................. 1

Q2. What level of hearing loss do you have?

Hard of Hearing ................................. 22
Deafened/Acquired Profound Hearing Loss .... 6
Lost hearing as an older adult ............. 1
Born Deaf/Sign Language user ............ 10
Born Deaf/spoken language ............... 9
Deafblind/have a dual sensory loss ........ 1
Dual sensory loss as an older adult ........ 1
Auditory Processing Disorder ............. 1
Cochlear Implant .............................. 1
Other ............................................ 1

Q3. What do language do you use to communicate? May be more than one.

Other Sign Language – 1

BSL – 13
English – 51
Q4. Do you have any communication support needs?

- Speech processing issues – 1
- Access to Electronic Notetakers – 4
- More access to hearing loops in shops – 2
- Access to subtitles/captions – 3

Q5. We asked whether or not people are working as lockdown means something different for those with a job.

- Employed – working at home – 11
- Employed - furloughed – 4
- Employed – working at your place of work – 8
- Employed - on sick leave/maternity/paternity leave – 1
- Retired – 21
- Working in your own company – 1
- Self employed – 3
- At school – 1
- At university/college – 2
- Unemployed – 1
- Other – 3
Q6. Where are you getting the personal information about Covid-19 – the Corona Virus?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care/Support workers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and family</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Government</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbours</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News apps</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers/magazines</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Inform</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online news</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Government Depts through work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone/SMS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatsapp</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q6. Was the information you received accessible to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessible Information</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In English - spoken with subtitles/captions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In English - written</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In English - spoken</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In BSL</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haven’t received accessible information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Braille</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q7. Did you understood all the information you have received?

- Yes - 43
- No - 8
- Don’t know - 3
Q8. Is there any information that you haven’t had but you think you need?

Too much info is confusing. Difficult to know what is real/valid or missing.

How to deal with online companies scamming people out of money for equipment – face masks, other protection equipment.

Advice on how to manage return to work after maternity leave.

Want more breakdown in statistics by region of Scotland with further breakdown into care homes, hospitals, community.

Information on PPE and what it is.

I never got my letter telling me I am a shielded person. 4 phone calls from GP, consultants. But no letter from Scottish Govt.

Statements that say who things have not changed for as well as lists of what changes have happened. Otherwise we are reading through stuff and left to work out none of it applies to us.

Q9. Are you managing to keep in touch with people if you are self isolating?

Yes - 52

No - 2
Q10. Is there anything that would make it easier for you to keep in touch with other people at this time?

Fewer but safer ways to keep in touch: concerned about online safety.

Video conferencing with good text support, it is a struggle to lip read.

A simple guide to the various ways you can video link

All news reports posted on social media should have captioning/subtitles; too many don’t.

Face masks make life even more difficult.

Music playing in supermarkets “to lift spirits” prevent me hearing the little speech I can.

Perspex barriers between people – too thick to hear what is being said.

Free and readily available captions on video calls. Would be easier if everyone used mobile phones and could text.

I can keep in touch with most by text based support but find I’m unable to keep in touch with those who don’t use such digital means.

I stay in touch using Instagram and FB [Facebook] messenger. Though my mam is elderly and can’t use a pc so we try with the phone but just a hello I’m fine so she knows I’m OK.

I find the face masks difficult to wear, as it catches on my hearing aid. Also as I like to see what people are saying; the mask makes this impossible.

I’m trying to Skype in desperation but I would not use this with people I don’t know. I would have difficulties hearing them properly as I do depend on lip reading without me knowing it.
Q11. What other barriers have you faced?

Anxious about family member who is vulnerable.

Impossible to have GP consultation over telephone at appointed time as we couldn’t get online interpreter for that time.

Sometimes difficult to make out what people say on the phone, despite boost being on. People are not deaf aware.

Trying to get online services are dependent on how many other people are online at the time - too often the only time when few others are online is in the early hours of the morning.

During most major news reports on mainstream media TV channels, the palantypist struggle to keep up and information gets missed.

My loop system has been broken since lockdown started and I cannot get repairs until the lockdown is lifted. The only contact with the outside world is telephone and email.

Being blind, there is now no personal help in shops when I go to get my shopping.

Drs appts...any health issues will be ignored till I can see a Dr face to face.

They don’t do text service so assuming my GP doesn’t do video linking

At work giving us work to do and too much information in English. No BSL access. Work had to change tasks for us as we’re not reading English. Not receiving enough information or missing information because there is no BSL interpretation/translation.

I feel the subtitles on the news need to improve; also need BSL interpretation when the Prime Minister is on.

There are no subtitles to Government adverts re the virus so no idea what they are about.

I need better headphones and the sockets in phones etc. often break too easily and leave me with no means for hearing better.

I lost my hearing aids in the move of my office to my home so I could work here. I have been waiting 11 weeks and still no acknowledgement of my request for new ones let alone a contact with some hope of when I can get some.
Just all of the time struggling with everybody as I can only use the telephone so important calls make it difficult especially from Health Care. I had to go to hospital for skin cancer treatment. The Doctor had a mask on and I was struggling to “hear her” as her face was covered hindering my lip reading. I just got on with the treatment and forgot to ask her certain things.

I work in the hospital as an auxiliary, I depend on lip reading/ facial expressions, since wearing these masks, I’m finding it hard to understand what people are saying.
We also asked people how Covid-19 has made them feel.

I feel bamboozled about informed choices about how I work but I think the best thing is to work together where the information/resources are kept at work.

It made me feel stressed and anxious.

STUPID.

Stressed. Tired.

Real problem communicating with people wearing masks. I have no clue what they are saying plus two metre distancing prevents me from hearing clearly anyway.

I work in care, but due to health issues I was advised by my doctor and got letter from Scottish Govt to shield, my concerns are when I return to care if I am going to be safe myself and I know I am going to be anxious knowing I struggled with face masks before I had to shield and again as I do not hear what people are saying. So I am not sure what to do.

A bit down not seeing members of family, especially my mum on her 80th birthday; and not being able to hug my boys and grandkids.

No more information in BSL as they do English all time; I sometime no understand.

Amount of information:

Not enough information? - 15
Too much information? - 15
The right amount of information? - 24
People in work

Q11. If you are employed, has your employer provided you with all the information you need to make informed choices about how you work?

Q12. Do you understand the information you have had?

Q13. If you are self employed, has UK Government given you the information you need to make informed choices about how you work?

Q14. If you own your own company, has UK Government given you the information you need to make informed choices about how your company should operate?
Q15. If you own your own company, has UK Government given you the information you need to support any employees you have?

- Yes: 2
- No: 5

Q16. Have you been able to get information in a format that you understand?

- Yes: 17
- No: 7

Q17. Anything else you want to tell us about your work and what would make things easier for you?

More support and information from the TSIs

Short-term Access to Work so that ENTs could be available for every online meeting. Difficult to hear due to reliance on others computers/microphones/deaf awareness.

Captioning and subtitles need to be mandatory in all forms of media and when used in news bulletins; a major improvement in quality has to happen sooner rather than later.

Been happy to keep in touch with my line manager and mentor via text or email

I just really haven’t had any communication with my boss at all and with having a childminder, I am now back to work. What happens with my child? Is he allowed to go for one day? So I can go freely to get shopping without the fear or him in the shops etc.?

Need to create a short and clear information in BSL with illustrations for better understanding

More information could be provided for those who are employed in case any underlying questions remain unanswered.
The information coming out of the UK government and HMRC is very difficult to understand. Needs to be written in plain language rather than policy speak.

Proper PPE for deaf and hard hearing; good equipment ie clear masks; better way using due to hearing aids.

Been hard of hearing and working with deaf/deafblind/deafened it’s important that we are given clear masks, both for myself and our client group we work with.

Headphones and sockets that don’t break so easily and work better.

Report written by
Mandy Reid
Development Officer
deafscotland
Consultancy and Evaluation

What can deafscotland do to support your organisation?

We can:

• Carry out affordable, deaf health checks and support your organisation to become more deaf aware across the four pillars of deafness.

• Evaluate your plans or service(s) with input from service users, their families and carers;

• Support your organisation to become a “Communication For All” organisation;

• Support your organisation to become more involved in local and national issues across government and across the four pillars of deafness.

• Advise, support and provide participatory activity.

For more information, click here
Are you Committed to Communication?

Join us in supporting Scotland to become the first inclusive communication nation – accessible to everyone!

Web deafscotland.org
Phone 0141 248 2474
SMS 07925 417 338
Email admin@deafscotland.org

facebook.com/deafscotland
twitter @deafscotMedia
linkedin.com/in/deafscotland

deaftscotland
c/o The ALLIANCE
Venlaw Building
349 Bath St
Glasgow, G2 4AA

On request, this report can be made available in plain text