

Call for Action

“Blindness separates us from things, but deafness separates us from people” Helen Keller

There are approximately 1 million people in Scotland who are affected by deafness. We are the biggest minority in the country. Our deafness affects our ability to communicate, our mental health and our access to daily living. The barriers we face on a daily basis simply get bigger and bigger and hearing people who are not deaf aware are one of the biggest barriers we face.

Over the last 20 years, the language of disability has changed so it is no longer acceptable to use certain terms or words in a derogatory way. For example, “cretin”, “spastic” and “retard” were all clinical diagnosis terms then used to describe or dismiss people who didn’t pay attention or who wouldn’t listen. These words are no longer acceptable and very few people use them now. But people do still use expressions like

He is as deaf as a post

It always falls on deaf ears

There's none so deaf as those that will not hear

Deaf and dumb.

We see them in the newspapers and magazines. We hear them (and read it in the captions) on the TV and in films. We hear them used in everyday speech. We know why they are used and it hurts us.

Every time one of these expressions is used, it is used negatively to describe someone who isn’t listening or who is being stubborn for the sake of it. Our disability is being used in the same derogatory way that other disabilities and protected characteristics were used in the past.

Surely in 2021, it is time to unite and campaign to ditch these expressions as other disabled terms have been and find expressions that do not mock our disability and the barriers we face daily.

If we work together as and through the Scottish Sensory Hub, we can make this the new reality.



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