

TITLE	Healthwatch Presentation and Report - Are You Hearing Us?
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Are you hearing us?

The experience of deaf patients in
Wokingham Borough accessing GP services



In partnership with

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough

September 2014

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Summary

Deaf people and their families are a group of people who are likely to experience difficulties accessing health and social care services. Deaf Positives Action (DPA) mystery shopped the 13 GP Surgeries in Wokingham Borough in June 2014, on behalf of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough, to measure the quality of service and compliance with regulations in providing a service to the Deaf community.

One Deaf person visited all of the 13 surgeries in Wokingham Borough. One Deaf person researched all the surgery websites obtained from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) website. A hearing person contacted the surgeries by telephone. This work has revealed that there are a number of problems faced by Deaf people in accessing GP's in Wokingham Borough. Issues with communication and interpreters can mean that Deaf people are unable to be fully involved in decisions about their care. A number of recommendations have been made to improve service provision.

The words used are from the mystery shopper and not Healthwatch interpretations. Whilst this is one person's experience, this experience is valid. Healthwatch Wokingham Borough does feel that it points towards an area where a part of our society is being unwittingly excluded from access - the hearing impaired and deaf community. This is a not just an issue for GP practices but everywhere through society.

The report was sent out to all 13 surgeries (e mailed to 5 surgeries and posted to 8 surgeries). This report has been amended since the initial drafts were sent out.

The Clinical Commissioning Group's responses are at the end of this document, individual surgeries responses have been taken into account,

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough believes that this report and the recommendations form a basis for a dialogue about how to improve access for the hearing impaired.

Whilst Healthwatch Wokingham Borough also recognises that the responses received from the Surgeries may not reflect the policy of the GP practices, it would be worth sampling again after 12 months to see what changes have been made.

Recommendations

In surgeries

- Set up a webcam or Skype system on a computer and link into a live interpretation service.
- The receptionist should have details of an interpreting agency including how to book and how it is processed.
- A buzzer to be handed to the client when they report in for their appointment. The buzzer will vibrate when it is the clients turn to see the GP. It is discreet and effective.
- Information on Deaf services in the local area and what their rights are as a patient.
- Of the 4 surgeries that had a screen advertising the services, not one had the information signed in British Sign Language.

Accessibility via websites

- In-vision on the website would make the website inclusive of the Deaf community. It would also clarify words or acronyms and stop confusion or mistakes that can often happen when the correct form of communication has not been used.
- The on-line facility should have a red flag system to alert staff that an interpreter would need to be booked. This may cause a delay in the appointment process; however, it is the only way for a Deaf person to book as they are unable to telephone themselves.

Contacting by telephone

- Receptionists to undertake Deaf Awareness training. The training would have to be specific to their role. Including topics on 'what to say' and 'how not to offend a Deaf person,' along with a few simple signs to welcome people when they arrive at the reception.

The recommendations do have a cost. But co-ordinating Awareness training would minimise this and promote a constant access for hearing impaired patients across all GP practices

Healthwatch believes just a little effort and organisation would change this perception which could then be very easily be validated and promoted.

Theme and Purpose

This report looks at the issues Deaf people face in accessing GP services in Wokingham Borough. It sets out how we identified the problems. It makes recommendations to tackle inequity and to give Deaf people a stronger voice as patients.

In this report we use 'Deaf people' (with a capital 'D') to mean people who have British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred language. Some Deaf people have a foreign sign language as their first language but have learned BSL when they came to live in the UK. However, there are some Deaf people who use International Sign Language as a preferred language, or choose not to learn another Sign Language at all.

According to figures sourced from Public Health Wokingham recorded in 2012; an estimated 34 people in Wokingham to have a profound hearing impairment and around 3,900 adults are estimated to have moderate or severe hearing impairment. These figures are estimated to rise to around 38 and 4,300 by 2020.

Deafness in the UK

There are 9 million people in the UK with some form of hearing loss.

Deafness at birth or in childhood has significant effects on the learning of basic skills and this affects 180,000 people in the UK. A further 500,000 people become severely or profoundly deaf later in life. For them, deafness does not in itself create a need for basic skills, but those who wish to acquire basic skills might find it difficult to access appropriate provision.

There are two important subgroups of deaf learners: those who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their preferred language and those who use speech and lip-reading. Although the best medium of instruction is different for each group, the required strategies for teaching and learning are similar. The last survey of deaf school leavers was in 1979. It found that the average reading age for all deaf learners was 8.6. This situation has not improved.

The main barrier for deaf people who have BSL as a first language is that their school education was often not conducted in that language. English as the structure of BSL is different from English. Introducing In-Vision into GP websites would create accessible content for Deaf people and will help increase their customer base. It's also a great way to raise Corporate Social Responsibility profile.

Providing accessible content not only makes good business sense, it also creates product awareness, brand loyalty and inclusion.

Deaf people and their families are a group of people who are likely to experience difficulties accessing health and social care services. Online research reveals a number of examples including a son who had to tell his Deaf father that he was going to die:

<http://limpingchicken.com/2013/04/23/i-told-dad-his-battle-with-cancer-was-lost-because-the-nhs-didnt-provide-an-interpreter/>

The survey

Walking in to the surgery

Our Mystery Shopper walked into each GP surgery and approached the reception. The Mystery Shopper wore hearing aids which were visible. These were the findings.

<u>When walked into the surgery, the response was: GP Surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Brookside Surgery	Friendly
Burma Hills Surgery	Friendly
Finchampstead Surgery	Flapped about, didn't understand the request
Loddon Vale Practice	Friendly, but not patient. They talked to another patient whilst I wrote down my questions
New Wokingham Road Surgery	Ok, the receptionist tried to lip speak
Parkside Family Practice	Not patient
Swallowfield Medical Practice	Friendly
Wokingham Medical Centre	Not friendly, felt very rushed and told me to hurry up.
Twyford Surgery	Friendly
Wargrave Surgery	Friendly
Wilderness Road Surgery	Didn't acknowledge, because was busy on the telephone
Woodley Centre Surgery	Friendly
Woosehill Surgery	Friendly

All of the GP receptionists communicated with pen and paper.

The receptionists did not offer the opportunity to communicate with an interpreter.

Recommendation

Set up a webcam or Skype system on a computer and link into a live interpretation service.

The Deaf patient would be able to communicate with an interpreter via the webcam system to explain their issues, book an appointment, change appointment, book a nurse or any other concerns or questions they may have.

The live interpreter can relay to the receptionist. Webcam is not expensive (£25) and Skype is free. Live interpreter would probably charge £1 to £10 a minute, depending on the supplier.

The Mystery Shopper asked a few questions via pen and paper. The following questions were asked.

1. Does the surgery supply an interpreter?

<u>GP Surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Brookside Surgery	Yes
Burma Hills Surgery	Yes
Finchampstead Surgery	Never have, they would like to provide
Loddon Vale Practice	Yes
New Wokingham Road Surgery	Not sure. Has a volunteer who can sign. Is the volunteer an RSLI? Not sure.
Parkside Family Practice	Yes, but don't know how.
Swallowfield Medical Practice	Yes. Dr Ansari was offered to interpret but only has level 1 qualification
Wokingham Medical Centre	Yes, not sure if it is a RSLI.
Twyford Surgery	Yes
Wargrave Surgery	Yes, haven't used an interpreter before
Wilderness Road Surgery	No
Woodley Centre Surgery	No
Woosehill Surgery	Yes, do not know if the interpreters are RSLI's

2. What was the process to book a BSL interpreter?

<u>GP Surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Brookside Surgery	GP book an interpreter
Burma Hills Surgery	GP book an interpreter
Finchampstead Surgery	Hasn't booked an interpreter before so does not know the process
Loddon Vale Practice	GP book an interpreter
New Wokingham Road Surgery	Doesn't know the process
Parkside Family Practice	Doesn't know the process
Swallowfield Medical Practice	Patient email the surgery. GP books an appropriate appointment for the patient

Wokingham Medical Centre	<i>Doesn't know the process</i>
Twyford Surgery	<i>GP book an interpreter</i>
Wargrave Surgery	<i>GP book an interpreter</i>
Wilderness Road Surgery	<i>Doesn't know the process</i>
Woodley Centre Surgery	<i>Doesn't know the process</i>
Woosehill Surgery	<i>GP book an interpreter</i>

Recommendation

The receptionist should have details of an interpreting agency including how to book and how it is processed. Some Deaf people prefer certain interpreters as they have worked with them before and already have a relationship with and would rather have a postponed appointment than have a different interpreter.

Some Practice Managers feel that the recommendation to have a “live interpreter” link for a patient to book an appointment is not practical. At £10 per minute this is not possible within the NHS budget. It is felt the “T loop system” and patients being able to write down their requests if they come into reception is sufficient. Some patients have used the “Type talk” system in the past which is now called “Text Relay”, others have chosen to use faxes.

New Wokingham Road Surgery use a volunteer to sign and their Patient Participation Group's chosen charity is 'Hearing Dogs for Deaf People' They have raised enough money to sponsor two new puppies, Merry and Berry, to be trained to help Deaf people, our Patients' Group continue to raise awareness and funds

If a Wokingham Medical Centre deaf patient requires an interpreter they use Reading Borough Council as nominated and qualified provider. However Reading Borough Council is currently asking for at least five days' notice for an interpreter. An interpreter can also be requested for a patient with the 'Choose and Book' system when requesting a patient referral.

The MS looked around the reception to see if there was any information about accessibility for Deaf people

<u>GP Surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Brookside Surgery	<i>T Loop sign</i>
Burma Hills Surgery	<i>No</i>
Finchampstead Surgery	<i>T Loop sign. Had 1 leaflet with information about online booking</i>
Loddon Vale Practice	<i>No</i>
New Wokingham Road Surgery	<i>Not seen</i>
Parkside Family Practice	<i>No</i>

Swallowfield Medical Practice	<i>No</i>
Wokingham Medical Centre	<i>T Loop sign</i>
Twyford Surgery	<i>No</i>
Wargrave Surgery	<i>T Loop sign</i>
Wilderness Road Surgery	<i>No</i>
Woodley Centre Surgery	<i>No</i>
Woosehill Surgery	<i>No but a poster asking if you have special needs</i>

There were no visual indicators, so patients could be left in the waiting room as they wouldn't be able to hear their name being called. Most surgeries use a Jayex call in system so the patients name is visible when it is their turn to see the GP.

Recommendation

Some surgeries use a visual and hearing call system, where patients are handed a key fob with their appointment number and room colour and the clinicians use a computer recall system to alert patients, this is then displayed on monitors in the waiting room very clearly. We would recommend all surgeries use something like this; A buzzer to be handed to the client when they report in for their appointment. The buzzer will vibrate when it is the clients turn to see the GP. It is discreet and effective.

Information on Deaf services in the local area and what their rights are as a patient.

Of the 4 surgeries that had a screen advertising the services, not one had the information signed in BSL.

Accessibility on the Website

The MS looked at the accessibility for Deaf people. We were interested in how easy it would be to read all the information and find their way around the website.

Was there a facility to see all the information in BS, the first language for Deaf people?

GP Surgery	Response
Brookside Surgery	<i>Many spoken languages</i>
Burma Hills Surgery	<i>No website</i>
Finchampstead Surgery	<i>Many spoken languages</i>
Loddon Vale Practice	<i>Could not find it</i>
New Wokingham Road Surgery	<i>No website</i>
Parkside Family Practice	<i>Could not find it</i>
Swallowfield Medical Practice	<i>Could not find it</i>
Wokingham Medical Centre	<i>Could not find it</i>

Twyford Surgery	<i>Many spoken languages</i>
Wargrave Surgery	<i>Could not find it</i>
Wilderness Road Surgery	<i>No website</i>
Woodley Centre Surgery	<i>Many spoken languages</i>
Woosehill Surgery	<i>Could not find it</i>

We also looked at the processes available when a Deaf person needed to contact the surgery, book an appointment, cancel an appointment, and speak to a Doctor.

<u>Book an appointment online? GP Surgery</u>	<u>Response</u>
Brookside Surgery	<i>Yes</i>
Burma Hills Surgery	<i>No website on CCG, accessed through Google. No</i>
Finchampstead Surgery	<i>Yes, Need PIN & Access ID</i>
Loddon Vale Practice	<i>No. Telephone only</i>
New Wokingham Road Surgery	<i>No website</i>
Parkside Family Practice	<i>Yes. Need PIN & Access ID</i>
Swallowfield Medical Practice	<i>Yes. Need PIN & Access ID</i>
Wokingham Medical Centre	<i>Yes. Need PIN & Access ID</i>
Twyford Surgery	<i>Yes, Must register</i>
Wargrave Surgery	<i>Yes, must register</i>
Wilderness Road Surgery	<i>No website</i>
Woodley Centre Surgery	<i>Yes. Need PIN & Access ID</i>
Woosehill Surgery	<i>Yes. Need PIN & Access ID, can also text for an appointment</i>

Contact details

How does someone contact the surgery? GP Surgery	Response
Brookside Surgery	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
Burma Hills Surgery	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
Finchampstead Surgery	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
Loddon Vale Practice	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
New Wokingham Road Surgery	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
Parkside Family Practice	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
Swallowfield Medical Practice	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>

Wokingham Medical Centre	<i>Telephone</i>
Twyford Surgery	<i>Telephone and letters</i>
Wargrave Surgery	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
Wilderness Road Surgery	<i>Telephone</i>
Woodley Centre Surgery	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>
Woosehill Surgery	<i>Telephone or FAX</i>

What happens when I type Deaf or interpreter in the search box? GP Surgery

Response

Brookside Surgery	<i>No results</i>
Burma Hills Surgery	<i>No results</i>
Finchampstead Surgery	<i>No matches were found</i>
Loddon Vale Practice	<i>No search box</i>
New Wokingham Road Surgery	<i>No results</i>
Parkside Family Practice	<i>No results</i>
Swallowfield Medical Practice	<i>No search box</i>
Wokingham Medical Centre	<i>Sorry, but nothing matched your search terms. Please try again with different keywords.</i>
Twyford Surgery	<i>No results</i>
Wargrave Surgery	<i>No results</i>
Wilderness Road Surgery	<i>No website</i>
Woodley Centre Surgery	<i>No results</i>
Woosehill Surgery	<i>The search did not return any matching pages.</i>

What we recommend

The websites are clear for people who are not Deaf and cannot speak English. However, there is not a service for the information detailed on the website to be signed in BSL.

There is also not any information on the facilities that Deaf people should receive as their right. In-vision on the website would make the website inclusive of the Deaf community. It would also clarify words or acronyms and stop confusion or mistakes that can often happen when the correct form of communication has not been used.

The on-line facility should have a red flag system to alert staff that an interpreter would need to be booked. This would cause a delay in the appointment process; however, it is the only way for a Deaf person to book as they are unable to telephone themselves.

Contacting by telephone

Each surgery was contacted by telephone.

The first question asked:

'What facilities do you have for a Deaf patient?'

The mystery shopper did not find evidence that those they dealt with had been given training on how to deal with a patient with hearing impairment. Some of the receptionists seemed resistant in explaining the services offered.

One receptionist asked to phone back and 2 people had to speak to the Practice Manager before they could respond.

One receptionist explained that *'one of our patients is Deaf and they provide their own interpreter, you will have to contact Reading Borough Council.'*

Another comment, *'we have a patient who also has that thing, so we can accommodate'*.

One surgery offered the facility of BT translation service to communicate on the Deaf persons behalf. One lady said that my friend could use the *'Hearing equipment to communicate'*. When asked it was a Hearing Loop, she responded *'I think so, so your friend can definitely use that'*.

'How Deaf is the patient?' was asked. Profoundly Deaf was the response. *'Oh can they use a friend?'*

When asked if an interpreter could be booked for 'my friend', The Burma Surgery abruptly responded, *'we cannot offer an interpreter, thank you'* and hung up.

Wokingham Medical Centre has an answer telephone facility only, explaining that a GP will contact the patient to discuss the health issue first before booking an appointment.

Swallowfield Practice said he was reluctant to single out a particular group of patients to inform them of what their rights are as a patient, as all patients have rights. *"I believe there is a risk of having too much information on display, such that none of it is visible."*

All of the surgeries were contacted by telephone to ask about facilities if a Deaf person registered. Although the receptionists were very understanding, it was apparent that they did not understand the culture of Deaf people and what they require.

There was a general lack of awareness regarding the difference between profoundly or severely deaf people and those with some degree of hearing loss. There is also a lack of awareness of the different communication methods (people who sign and people who do not.)

It was clear that some receptionists were not comfortable in answering the questions as they did not have an answer. Once asked how a Deaf person could contact the

service to book an appointment. 11 of the surgeries said the Deaf patient 'had to either come in or ask a friend to ring on their behalf.' Once prompted about the online facility, the receptionists that have the online booking system became very confident and said, '*yes they can book online.*'

A further question was raised, '*Can they also request an interpreter on the online booking facility or is it red flagged that the Deaf patient has book an appointment?*' Silence fell on the phone again.

Of the 9 surgeries that offer online services:

- 5 did not know if an interpreter can be requested through the facility.
- 1 surgery has a red flag system that would inform them that an interpreter would be required.
- However an email facility was offered by 2 surgeries to request an interpreter. Not all of the online surgeries offer the option to request a nurse. You could only book via the telephone if the patient required a nurse.

Recommendation

It was apparent that the receptionists would need Deaf Awareness training. The training would have to be specific to their role. Including topics on 'what to say' and 'how not to offend a Deaf person,' along with a few simple signs to welcome people when they arrive at the reception.

Conclusion

This work has revealed that there are a number of problems faced by Deaf people in accessing GP's in Wokingham.

This is likely to be in breach of the duties outlined in the Equality Act 2010, which requires service providers to avoid unlawful discrimination and to make reasonable adjustments. Under the Equality Act, it is considered a 'reasonable adjustment' for organisations to book appropriate communication support.

As well as the human cost to the people and their families who have had these experiences, there are potential monetary costs due to missed and delayed appointments caused by the absence of interpreters. There are also potential costs arising from misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment. There is also a significant litigation risk.

Patients should have full access to information and the options available to them. Issues with communication and interpreters can mean that Deaf people are unable to be fully involved in decisions about their care.

<u>List of Wokingham GP surgeries Surgery</u>	<u>Address</u>
Brookside Surgery	Brookside Close, Gipsy Lane, Earley, RG6 7HG
Burma Hills Surgery	Ashridge Road, Wokingham, RG40 1PH
Finchampstead Surgery	474 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 3RG
Loddon Vale Practice	Hurricane Way, Woodley, Reading RG5 4UX
New Wokingham Road Surgery	18 New Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, RG45 6JL
Parkside Family Practice	Green Road Surgery, 224 Wokingham Road, Reading, RG6 1JS
Swallowfield Medical Practice	The Street, Swallowfield, Berkshire RG7 1QY
Wokingham Medical Centre	23 Rose Street, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1XS
Twyford Surgery	Loddon Hall Road, Twyford, Berkshire RG10 9JA
Wargrave Surgery	Victoria Road, Wargrave, Reading, Berks RG10 8BP
Wilderness Road Surgery	1 Wilderness Road, Earley, Reading RG6 7RU
Woodley Centre Surgery	6 Headley Road, Woodley, Berkshire RG5 4JA
Woosehill Surgery	Fernlea Drive, Woosehill, Wokingham, RG41 3DR

Surgery response to report

Healthwatch is keen to work with providers in making service change and improvement based on patient feedback and complaints. The draft report went to the Wokingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and direct to the GP surgeries. The report was e mailed out to 5 surgeries and posted to the remaining 8 surgeries, asking for comments and feedback.

A number of surgeries have reported improvements made as a result of this report - especially around training of reception staff. If you wish to read individual surgery responses please get in touch.

NHS
Wokingham
Clinical Commissioning Group

Chalfont Surgery
Chalfont Close
Lower Earley
Reading
Berkshire RG6 5HZ
Tel: 01189 299 469 ext 3487

1st October 2014

Dear Nicola,

Re. Are you hearing us? report

Thank you for the report which was undertaken by Healthwatch “mystery shoppers”. It measured the quality of service and compliance with regulations, at General Practice surgeries, in providing a service to the Deaf community.

The report details the experiences of these “users” in three defined areas and then sets out Recommendations for improvement.

The CCG would like to take an opportunity to respond to the information gathered and the method employed:

1. Within the context of a General Practice, where deaf patients are usually well known to all staff and where they are individually flagged on our systems, the use of anonymous “mystery shoppers” gives a very artificial point of view and is not a true reflection of the experience to which these patients would be used.
2. As a result of the anonymity of the “users” and their lack of knowledge of the practices, there were some who presented themselves at the wrong venue initially. This was clearly a source of confusion for all concerned and not a reflection of actual usage.
3. With regard to patients being called to see practitioners, most surgeries have visual boards which display the names of patients as they are called in, usually with an indication of the room number at the same time.
4. All surgeries are able to link in to interpreting services, however these are mostly telephone based and therefore would not be suitable in this context. Visual systems have not been installed at most surgeries as the need is very small and individually, practices know their own patients and are, with warning, able to respond appropriately.

Secondly, the CCG would like to respond to the Recommendations that have been made:

A. In Surgeries

1. Provision of an interpreting service with a Skype link. The CCG IMT Steering Group is currently examining the use of Skype or similar
2. Receptionists need to be reminded of the mechanism for accessing interpreting services. For deaf patients, these may well be different from the usual telephone based services with which receptionists are expected to be familiar.
3. Given the visual calling systems used by most surgeries, a buzzer would seem to be unnecessary.
4. Information on Deaf services would be welcome. We would be very pleased to be guided in this respect.
5. The content shown on screens in the surgeries. It would be possible to speak to providers, to examine possibilities

B. On the Website

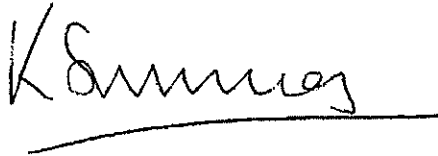
1. To provide information detailing facilities available for Deaf patient - we would be very happy to receive guidance about this content.
2. Many surgeries already allow on-line booking of appointments, repeat prescriptions and checking of results. Over the next year, this will be rolled out further and may include access to the written record as well. As previously mentioned, most patients who are Deaf, are already flagged on the Practice systems.

C. Contact by Telephone

1. It is accepted that Deaf awareness training should be included in the continuing education provided to Receptionists.

Overall this report has been a useful exercise and has highlighted to General Practice the issues which Deaf patients face in accessing services. We look forward to receive further input from Healthwatch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Summers', is written above a solid horizontal line.

Katie Summers
Director of Operations

cc. Dr Johan Zylstra

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