

DEAF SENIORS

A Profile of Deaf Seniors in NSW

1999

***A Publication of the
Deaf Society of NSW***

Deaf Seniors

Researched and Compiled by Peter Bonser

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PREFACE

DEAF SENIORS is the report of the findings from a survey of people over 50 years of age in the Deaf Community of NSW. This report, produced by the Deaf Society of NSW, details the responses from the survey which focus on the accommodation and support expectations respondents have for when they become elderly.

What makes the needs of this group of people unique is the fact that Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is their primary mode of communication. It is therefore important to ensure that generic services are available and accessible for Deaf people as they grow older.

The study was undertaken by the Society in line with its five year corporate plan that was approved by the Board of Directors following a planning seminar held in March 1996. The study findings cover a specific range of issues relating to people who identify with the Deaf Community of NSW who are aged fifty or over.

The conduct of the survey was made possible through funds provided by Ageing & Disability Department in recognition of 1999 as the Year of the Older Person.

The statistical information contained in the report will enable the Society to make further representations to various government departments and generic service providers on behalf of Deaf Seniors to enable all services to better meet their individual needs.

The success of the study would not have been possible without the co operation and involvement of members of the Deaf Community. I would like to sincerely thank those people who assisted with the organisation and the conduct of the many consultations held throughout NSW.

I must also congratulate the research team, staff and community representatives for their efforts in conducting this study and producing this informative report.

Armed with this information and by conducting regular consultations and surveys such as this, the Society can be confident that its services remain relevant to all individuals in the Deaf Community of NSW.

Peter Brownlee
PRESIDENT

DEAF SENIORS

1. INTRODUCTION

In March 1996, the Deaf Society documented a five year Corporate Plan which was intended to lead the organisation into the next century.

A priority within the Plan was to investigate the needs of Deaf Seniors especially focussing on those who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) as their primary means of communication including those who live in rural areas and who have a disability.

2. GOAL

The goal of the study was to provide the Deaf Society with an insight into the needs of Deaf seniors.

The primary objective of the study was to collect data from Deaf people.

3. RATIONALE

The rationale underlying the study was to acquire statistical information about the needs of seniors in the Deaf community to assist the Society to:

- determine the expectations of Deaf seniors regarding support services and programs
- plan future services and programs
- establish relationships with local service providers particularly in country regions
- lobby government
- provide information to government
- respond to requests for information from external sources

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Rationale for selection of methodology

It was decided that the collection of data should be based on extensive consultation with members of the Deaf community.

In undertaking this study, a range of methods existed to collect data. It was believed that a combination of strategies would be needed to determine the complete picture.

Although the most efficient mechanism from which to collect information on a large scale from Deaf people was perceived to be a questionnaire approach, there was recognition that implications arising from the unique characteristics of the target population needed to be addressed if this method was to be utilised.

It was not seen as viable to simply disseminate a survey and expect respondents to complete and return the form. Surveys mailed directly to people are renowned for having low response levels, a pitfall that was likely to be exacerbated when considering the limited English skills of the majority of the target audience.

The use of interviews presented another option. The prime advantage of this method was that information could be expressed via visual means, through "sign of hand" and clarification could be sought where necessary. The interviewer would also have the benefit of being able to explore issues in more depth if they arose during discussion. The logistics however were problematic.

As the initial goal of the study was to interview people around the state, arranging and conducting interviews on an individual basis was not feasible, particularly considering the limited timeframe and geographical dispersion of those involved. Interviewing in small groups using brainstorming as an information gathering tool, also does not ensure that all participants' perspectives are taken into account as the more assertive people in the group naturally tend to dominate. It was also difficult to obtain the statistical data desired using this technique. Nominal group techniques were also not seen as appropriate as Deaf people tend to respond better to direct questions as opposed to generating ideas themselves.

The adoption of a hybrid method incorporating features of both the questionnaire and interview techniques was viewed as the optimal way to proceed in much the same way as data was collected for the **Hands Up NSW* study. This approach has the potential to overcome the anomalies associated with using only one tool.

The approach adopted, involved the explanation of the questionnaire through live presentation, in Auslan (Australian Sign Language) to respondents, prior to their completion of the survey. The effective implementation of this project thus required the use of a facilitator. Ideally, this would have been a member of the target group, that is, a person who had first hand experience of deafness as well as a knowledge and understanding of the communication modes of the Deaf community. Alternatively, this person could have been someone closely associated with the community over a long period of time and who had the requisite language skills. The criterion of being aligned with the Deaf Community however was not sufficient to justify employment, as this person had to have credibility with Deaf people, through their immersion in the culture of the Deaf community.

** Hands Up NSW is a demographic study conducted by the Deaf Society of NSW in 1998 which gives a profile of the Deaf Community of NSW.*

In endeavouring to utilise an approach that would give a high probability of obtaining data, having the facilitator present while participants responded to the survey overcame a possible shortcoming of this method. Questions which otherwise may have been open to interpretation in the absence of the survey's designer were able to be clarified immediately. This approach also allowed the facilitator to ask additional questions if necessary.

4.2 Survey Design

The objective in phrasing questions within the survey was to attempt to produce questions which were reasonably grammatically correct in English, yet were able to be comprehended by participants, the vast majority of whom would have English as their second language. Furthermore, in designing the survey, account was taken of which English words have sign equivalents and hence would likely be familiar to the target audience.

In addition to the respondents limited written skills, the fact that the use of example is a significant component of Sign Language provided justification for the use of closed or "forced choice" questions and questions which required one word/short answers. These types of questions provided the foundation of the questionnaire with open ended questions only used where they were unavoidable. Although it could be argued that this restricted people's opportunities for creative input, allowance was made for this by the inclusion of a section towards the end of the survey that allowed individuals to make additional comments.

The facilitator was also able to listen to Deaf people's individual comments during group discussions which gave a greater insight into the survey responses.

5. PROCESS OF CONSULTATION

As is the case with many linguistic minorities within society, Deaf people tend to congregate together because of ease of communication. Although this provided easy access to groups of respondents, meetings often needed to be scheduled around other pre arranged activities of the group. This, as well as the distance involved in travelling to liaise with people at various locations, meant that consultations were time consuming. This was necessary however, to gain a representative sample and to be seen by the community to be considering the views of a range of Deaf people and not to be excluding those who live in country regions.

Consultation with people on a small group basis in conjunction with the use of questionnaires facilitated interaction among respondents and allowed respondents to maintain their anonymity if they so wished, a consideration which was important when dealing with a small close knit community.

To ensure wide coverage, the facilitator visited all of the regional locations which were determined by where significant numbers of Deaf people reside and / or congregate.

6. WHAT IS THE DEAF POPULATION OF NSW ?

This is a question often asked of the Deaf Society. It is difficult to know exactly how many Deaf people there are in NSW as they may not need or wish to contact the Deaf Society or any other deaf related agency. It was also not possible to get responses from every Deaf person in NSW.

To get an approximation of how many people are Deaf in NSW there was the need to contact government departments and make some calculations based on the information received. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) quoted the overall NSW population as being **6,384,300** as at December 1998.

Figures quoted in western countries indicate that 10% of the total population have some degree of hearing loss. This covers all age ranges and all types and levels of hearing loss. It is also quoted that 1% of this 10% represent the Deaf community. Using this as the formula and working on ABS statistics, the Deaf community in NSW would be approximately **6,384**.

In order to establish an approximate number of people in the Deaf community 50 years of age and over, reference is made to the age table as found in the *Hands Up NSW* report produced by the Deaf Society of NSW in 1998, to find the population breakup by age. This table indicates that 36.3% of the Deaf community population is 50 years of age or over.

Using the overall figure of 6,384 as calculated above the number of Deaf Seniors in NSW is approximately **2,317**. This figure represents more than one third of the total Deaf population of NSW.

7. NUMBER OF SURVEYS ISSUED AND NUMBER RETURNED.

There was a total of **201** surveys issued during the consultations with a total of **128** surveys returned either at consultations or by mail. This gave the survey a return rate of **63.7%**.

8. LOCATION OF CONSULTATIONS

Consultations were conducted in the following **country centres / regions**:

Albury

Bateman's Bay / South Coast

Lismore / Northern Rivers

Mid North Coast

Orange / Bathurst

Tamworth

Wagga Wagga

City and Greater Metropolitan Area Groups consulted were:

Deaf Seniors Group - Sydney

Newcastle Deaf Community

Shoalhaven / Nowra

Wollongong Deaf Club

STUDY FINDINGS / RESULTS

Question 1: WHERE DO DEAF SENIORS LIVE IN NSW ?

Respondents indicated by postcode the suburb in which they lived. Postcodes enabled the researcher to cluster people into areas. Suburbs were grouped into areas in accordance with Australia Post classifications.

The table indicates the percentage of Deaf Seniors by area as indicated by the study.

POPULATION BY POSTAL REGION	TOTAL RESPONSES	
Metropolitan Areas	Nos.	%
SYDNEY and EASTERN SUBURBS	0	0
NORTHERN SUBURBS	7	5.5
NORTH WESTERN SUBURBS	27	21.1
SOUTH WESTERN SUBURBS	23	18.0
SOUTHERN SUBURBS	11	8.6
CENTRAL COAST	4	3.1
HUNTER REGION	12	9.4
Sub Total	84	65.6
Rural Regions		
CENTRAL WEST	5	3.9
SOUTHERN TABLELANDS	0	0
MID NORTH and NORTH COAST	14	10.9
NEW ENGLAND	0	0
WESTERN PLAINS and BROKEN HILL	0	0
RIVERINA and MURRAY	5	3.9
SOUTH COAST	7	5.5
Sub Total	31	24.2
Nil response	13	10.2
TOTAL	128	100

Question 2: HOW MANY MEN AND WOMEN WERE INVOLVED IN THE STUDY ?

The gender question is a standard inclusion within demographic studies. The following table shows the numbers by gender as a percentage of the total number of study participants.

Overall, there was a good gender balance in the study.

GENDER OF RESPONDENTS	TOTAL RESPONSES NO.	%
Nil response	1	0.8
Female	74	57.8
Male	53	41.4
TOTAL	128	100

Question 3: WHAT AGE WERE THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS ?

It was thought that people may prefer to respond as fitting a particular age range rather than recording their exact age - this also allowed for easier classification of results.

AGE GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	%
Nil response	1	0.8
50-55 years	17	13.3
56-60 years	38	29.7
61-65 years	21	16.4
66 years and over	51	39.8
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on the findings:

In the 50 to 60 age bracket females accounted for 71% of the respondents, many of them indicated that their partners were still working and had not yet retired. These respondents also commented that whilst they did not see themselves as retired seniors, they still enjoyed the social interaction and information sharing that took place at seniors' gatherings.

In the older age bracket the sexes were more evenly represented with females accounting for 48.6% of respondents.

Question 4 WHAT DISABILITY / DISABILITIES DID THE RESPONDENTS HAVE ?

It was assumed that all respondents to this survey were Deaf, therefore, deafness was not included as a possible response to this question. The aim of the question was to determine the number and various types of disabilities experienced by Deaf people.

RESPONDENTS' TYPE OF DISABILITIES	TOTAL RESPONSES	%
No disability	107	83.6
Blind	10	7.8
Physical	3	2.3
Other	1	0.8
Intellectual	6	4.7
Psychiatric	1	0.8
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

Individuals indicating “Blind” had a range of blindness within the legally blind range. Some were totally blind while others had limited usable sight during daylight but were nightblind or had no peripheral or central vision.

Those indicating “Physical” had a range of physical disabilities including cerebral palsy, amputation, paraplegia and other physical difficulties in walking.

It would appear that the categories for “Intellectual” & “Psychiatric” have been confused and the results should, from the Society’s observations, be reversed.

Question 5: WHAT ARE THE RESPONDENTS' PREFERRED WAYS OF COMMUNICATING ?

The history of educational systems and various communication modes to which Deaf people have been exposed is rather complex. Respondents were therefore asked to freely indicate, in order of preference, as many communication systems as they felt comfortable using and especially those that they felt were effective in their every day lives.

The following table shows how the various communication systems scored:

RESPONDENTS' PREFERRED WAYS OF COMMUNICATION	FIRST PREFERENCE	%
AUSLAN (AUSTRALIAN SIGN LANGUAGE)	95	74.2
ORAL	6	4.8
WRITING AND READING	1	0.8
FINGERSPELLING	20	15.6
OTHER (incl. Irish Sign, Deafblind, Braille)	3	2.3
NIL RESPONSE	3	2.3
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

It was interesting to note that:

- As many as 3/4 of the respondents indicated Auslan as the preferred way of communicating with Fingerspelling as the next highest ranking preference. It is important to point out that the sign used for “Fingerspelling” for many Deaf seniors is often taken to mean “talking on your hands” or “to sign”. As the name Auslan is a fairly new term it is possible that respondents indicated Fingerspelling instead of Auslan to show their preference for signing.
- Many respondents indicated more than one way of communicating. Most individuals indicated that using a combination of communication methods was most effective.

Auslan, Oral, Reading and Writing and Fingerspelling was the most common combination of communication methods.

Auslan was not taught to any of the respondents during their schooling yet it ranked the highest as a preferred way of communicating. Auslan was indicated by 33 respondents as their only / preferred way of communicating. The remaining respondents who indicated Auslan also indicated other communication methods suggesting a combination of communication methods was preferred rather than one method in isolation.

It is important to note that Auslan was recognised as a Community Language by the Commonwealth Government in its National Policy on Languages in 1987, this was later confirmed in the federal government’s White Paper on Language and Literacy in 1991. The first Auslan Dictionary was published in 1989 with a second edition and CD Rom being released in 1998.

Oral communication methods have dominated the education of deaf children worldwide since the Milan conference of 1880 which resolved that the oral method was the only way deaf children should be taught. Many of the respondents have consequently been educated in an oral setting. However it is interesting to note that only 4 respondents indicated use of oral communication exclusively.

Question 6: DID RESPONDENTS HAVE A PARTNER / SPOUSE AND IF SO ARE THEY DEAF OR HEARING ?

RESPONDENTS' SPOUSE	NUMBERS	%
Deaf	72	56.2
Hearing	6	4.7
Unspecified	1	0.8
No spouse	49	38.3
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

These findings are in line with the Society's experience that most Deaf people have Deaf partners / spouses. The "No spouse" finding included people who had never married or were divorced or whose partner had died.

Question 7: DID THE RESPONDENTS HAVE CHILDREN AND IF SO HOW MANY ARE DEAF AND HOW MANY ARE HEARING ?

RESPONDENTS' CHILDREN	NUMBER
Deaf children	19
Hearing children	85
No children	36
TOTAL	140

Comments on findings:

The number of Deaf children initially may seem higher than expected however it should be remembered that many of the respondents were in fact married to each other resulting in a number of the children being recorded twice. Some respondents indicated that they had a mixture of Deaf and Hearing children with only 7 people indicating they only had Deaf children. Again it must be remembered that some of these parents could in fact be married to each other thus resulting in the incidence of Deaf people having Deaf children appearing to be higher than it really is.

Question 8: WHAT WAS THE RESPONDENTS' RELIGION ?

RESPONDENTS' RELIGION	NUMBER	%
Protestant	68	53.1
Catholic	25	19.5
Other	3	2.3
No religion	31	24.3
Unspecified	1	0.8
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

This information was sought to serve as a guide to the organisations that might be approached for the future provision of “Deaf friendly” aged supported accommodation options.

Question 9: WHAT WAS THE EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS ?

The following table shows the various income sources of respondents.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS	TOTAL RESPONSES	%
Nil Response	0	0
Work (Full time, Part time, Casual)	11	8.6
Unemployed	4	3.1
Home Duties	34	26.6
Retired	79	61.7
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

Of the respondents indicating they had some type of work they were people under the age of 65. Some respondents indicating work were actually retired but were working in voluntary capacities or in sheltered workshops. Respondents indicating they were unemployed were those still of working age. Respondents indicating home duties were females who commented that their partner / spouse was still working..

Of those employed, what was their status of employment ?

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF EMPLOYED RESPONDENTS	TOTAL RESPONSES	%
Full time	5	45.4
Part time	3	27.3
Casual	3	27.3
TOTAL	11	100

Comments on findings:

This table serves to distinguish the numbers of respondents with Full time, Part time or Casual work.

Question 10: WHERE DID RESPONDENTS DERIVE THEIR INCOME FROM ?

For the purposes of this study, sources of a respondent's income were defined as:

A = Unemployment benefits, B = Government pension C = Private income,

D = Superannuation, E = Wage.

RESPONDENTS' INCOME SOURCE	NUMBERS	%
A (Unemployment benefits)	5	3.9
B (Government pension)	101	78.9
C (Private income)	3	2.3
D (Superannuation)	3	2.3
E (Wage)	5	3.9
B & C (Government pension & Private income)	4	3.2
B & D (Government pension & Superannuation)	2	1.6
B & E (Government pension & Wage)	3	2.3
C & D (Private income & Superannuation)	1	0.8
D & E (Superannuation & Wage)	1	0.8
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

The findings indicate that a government pension is the only source of income for almost 80% of respondents. Only 7% of respondents are receiving income by way of a wage, whether that be in part or in full.

Question 11: WHAT TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION / HOUSING DID THE RESPONDENTS LIVE IN ?

This question sought to establish the types of accommodation in which the respondents were living.

RESPONDENTS' CURRENT HOUSING	TOTAL RESPONSES Nos.	%
Own your own home	82	64.1
Live with your family in their home	8	6.3
Pay rent- private	16	12.5
Pay rent – housing commission	11	8.6
Live at *Mullauna Village, Blacktown	6	4.7
Live in other hostel (hearing)	0	0
Retirement Village (hearing)	3	2.3
Other	2	1.5
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

The findings show that approximately two thirds of the respondents own their own home with a further 21% renting accommodation either on the private market or through the Department of Housing. From the Society's experience this is an expected outcome. Many Deaf people work towards owning their own home just as has been the tradition for many Australians.

**Mullauna Village, Blacktown is a retirement complex being run by the Uniting Church of Australia. In the supported accommodation section there are 24 beds identified for Deaf people. Deaf people are also able to buy into the Self Care units which are also on site. Staff are given training in Auslan, Deafness Awareness and various communication strategies which enables them to work with the residents.*

Question 12: WHERE DID RESPONDENTS WANT TO LIVE IF IN THE FUTURE THEY WERE UNABLE TO FULLY LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES ?

RESPONDENTS' FUTURE ACCOMMODATION PREFERENCES	NUMBERS	%
Own home with help	79	61.7
Live with family	15	11.7
Retirement Village (hearing)	4	3.1
Mullauna Village – Blacktown	11	8.6
Other	3	2.4
Nil response	16	12.5
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

It is interesting that the findings indicate that the majority of current Deaf Seniors would prefer to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible even if that involves community based assistance. The second most favoured option, whilst small in number, was for respondents to live with their family. There were only 5 additional people to those already living at Mullauna Village that indicated they would move there and only one other that indicated they would move to a hearing retirement village.

Question 13: DID THE RESPONDENTS THINK THEIR FAMILY WOULD SUPPORT THEM IN RETIREMENT / OLD AGE ?

WILL FAMILY SUPPORT RESPONDENT IN OLD AGE	NUMBERS	%
Yes	46	35.9
No	42	32.8
A little	27	21.1
Nil response	13	10.2
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

A little over half of the respondents indicated that their family would support them to some degree in their old age. The support did not only involve living with the family but also support to ensure that their daily business matters and community supports are taken care

of so that the Deaf person can remain in their own home for as long as possible. From the comments and questions asked during the survey meetings those who responded **NO** would either be respondents who did not have children or a partner or whose children have their own lives and families and have grown distant to their Deaf parent/s.

Question 14: DID RESPONDENTS THINK IT WOULD BE WORTH WHILE HAVING “DEAF FRIENDLY” IDENTIFIED HOSTELS IN THEIR LOCAL AREA ?

RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON IDENTIFYING LOCAL “DEAF FRIENDLY” HOSTELS	NUMBERS	%
Yes – in favour	85	66.4
No – not in favour	43	33.6
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

Clearly two thirds of the respondents felt it would be of benefit to have an aged accommodation facility that was known to be “Deaf friendly”. This is to say that there is a facility targeted such as Mullauna where there can be small clusters of Deaf people living together and where the staff are able to communicate with the Deaf residents. Being able to communicate with staff and other residents was the biggest concern that was expressed by the respondents during the consultations. They did not want to be isolated or find themselves in a place where they could not be understood.

Question 15: WOULD RESPONDENTS LIVE IN “DEAF IDENTIFIED” HOSTELS IF THEY WERE ESTABLISHED IN THEIR LOCAL AREA ?

WOULD RESPONDENTS CONSIDER LIVING IN A LOCAL “DEAF FRIENDLY” HOSTEL	NUMBERS	%
Yes	30	23.4
No	33	25.8
Maybe	57	44.5
Nil response	8	6.3
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

Many of the respondents found it difficult to answer this question given that they could not predict what the future would hold for them. They indicated that they wanted to live in their own home for as long as was possible but if they had to they would consider moving to such a hostel.

RESPONDENTS' COMBINED VIEWS AND CHOICES ABOUT LOCAL "DEAF FRIENDLY" HOSTELS	NUMBERS	%
Yes & Yes	27	21.1
Yes & No	7	5.5
Yes & Maybe	45	35.2
Yes & Nil response	6	4.7
No & No	26	20.3
No & Yes	3	2.3
No & Maybe	12	9.4
No & Nil response	2	1.5
TOTAL	128	100

Comments on findings:

This combination of responses still indicates that a higher number of respondents think that a local identified accommodation facility is an option they would consider if the need arose.

Question 16: OTHER COMMENTS RESPONDENTS WISHED TO WRITE ?

This question was an open ended question and respondents were encouraged by the facilitator to write anything they thought, felt or wished.

Comments were grouped into similar types and tallied. The following table shows the whole range of responses.

RESPONDENTS ADDITIONAL COMMENTS	TOTAL RESPONSES
Nil response	103
Hard to say what I will do for myself in the future / I will decide later / I don't know / Depends on each individual	7
Need social groups – Deaf Seniors groups to be supported for the future	4
Need for aged care workers to be Deaf aware and to have skills in Auslan when working in hospitals or people's homes / Employ Deaf people to assist in care of aged Deaf	4
Ensure interpreters are provided for all life important services & situations. Eg hospitals, doctors, police, fire etc.	1
I prefer being in an area where I can stay in touch with my family and friends / Mullauna is too far away / Stay in my town	3
Supported accommodations should be spacious & comfortable without restrictions / Centrally located centres close to shops and transport are preferred	2
It will depend on my health, I think it is too expensive to live in a hostel	1
I use a motorised scooter due to my physical disability. I would like to live in a catholic village in the future. Physical access is important too.	1
I am a self funded retiree and want to have the same privileges as people have on their health card.	1
Please send me any further information on retirement villages	1
TOTAL	128

Comments on findings:

Only 20% of respondents had comments to make to this question. This may be at least partly due to the limited literacy of many of the respondents and their concern about their ability to adequately express themselves in writing.

A number of the respondents at the various consultations indicated to the facilitator that they could not think of anything extra that they wanted to say. This may also reflect Deaf people's lack of opportunity / experience to express their ideas particularly in relation to service provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In consultation with the NSW Association of the Deaf and other relevant agencies The Deaf Society of NSW is to:

- make representations to the Ageing & Disability Department to lobby for appropriate services to meet the expressed needs of Deaf people.
- make approaches to agencies providing aged care services to ensure that they are aware of how to meet the needs of Deaf people.
- consult with Deaf Seniors groups and continue to provide up to date information and support in line with their needs.
- lobby the relevant departments of the Commonwealth and State governments & local authorities to ensure that Deaf people are able to stay in their homes for as long as possible.
- lobby appropriate government departments and other organisations for resources to ensure that the needs of Deaf people with a disability are met.
- visit Deaf Seniors groups regularly to provide information & promote information exchange.
- examine ways to overcome any difficulties experienced by Deaf people in accessing services.