



NHSGGC Staff Guidelines -

Accessible Services for People who
are Deaf, have Hearing Loss or are
Deafblind

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Legislative Context

The Equality Act 2010¹ serves to combine and improve upon the measures contained within the equalities legislation of the forty years preceding it. Individuals with a range of protected characteristics are afforded protection from discrimination across a range of areas including employment, access to services and day to day life.

NHSGGC's commitment to equalities legislation is explained within its equality scheme document, "A Fairer NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde 2020 – 2024"²

Alongside the equality scheme. NHSGGC also has a range of policies and guidance which take account of what an individual requires in order to access any service in an equitable manner. In relation to people who are Deaf, have hearing loss or are Deafblind this includes:

- NHS Greater Glasgow And Clyde British Sign Language Plan³
- Accessible information Policy & Clear to All ⁴

¹ Legislation & Policy: The Equality Act 2010 <https://www.nhsggc.scot/your-health/equalities-in-health/meeting-the-requirements-of-equality-legislation/legislation-policy/>

² A Fairer NHSGGC 2020 – 2024 <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/260193/eih-a-fairer-nhs-accessible.pdf>

³ NHS Greater Glasgow And Clyde British Sign Language Plan - <https://www.nhsggc.scot/downloads/nhs-greater-glasgow-and-clyde-british-sign-language-plan/>

⁴ Accessible Information Policy (Clear to All) <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/270932/accessible-information-policy-2021-final-1-1.pdf>

- Interpreting Services⁵
- Assistance Dog Policy⁶

What do we mean by deafness?

deafScotland⁷, (now works with the ALLIANCE as part of the Scottish Sensory Hub⁸) explain deafness as existing across a spectrum of four key pillars⁹;

1. Deaf / Deaf Sign Language Users
2. Deafened
3. Deafblind

Clear To All - <https://www.nhsggc.scot/hospitals-services/services-a-to-z/clear-to-all/#:~:text=Accurate%2C%20effective%20and%20accessible%20information,on%20the%20healthcare%20they%20receive.>

⁵ Interpreting And Language Resources - <https://www.nhsggc.scot/your-health/equalities-in-health/information-resources/for-staff/interpreting-and-language-resources/>

⁶ NHSGGC Assistance Dog Policy - <https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/262658/jfassistance-dog-policy-may18.pdf> - **need link to 2022 reviewed version**

⁷ deafScotland - <https://deafscotland.org/>

⁸ The Scottish Sensory Hub - <https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/policy-into-practice/sensory-loss/about-us/>

The Scottish Sensory Hub: A platform for people living with sensory loss in Scotland - <https://ijic.org/articles/abstract/10.5334/ijic.ICIC22179/>

⁹ Understanding the Four Pillars of Deafness - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1hluRB6NUE>

4. Hard of Hearing.

The distinction between the four pillars is indicative of the different levels/types of hearing loss someone can experience and, consequently, the different barriers individuals may have to overcome in relation to language and communication.

Please note NHSGGC realises language can be a contentious issue. For example whilst the phrase “hard of hearing” is used within the four key pillars, many people would prefer the term “person with a hearing loss”. It is also true that many Deaf people (including some deafblind people) do not consider themselves to be disabled but rather to be part of the Deaf community). If in doubt about appropriate language, check with the individual concerned.

Deafness – two main types

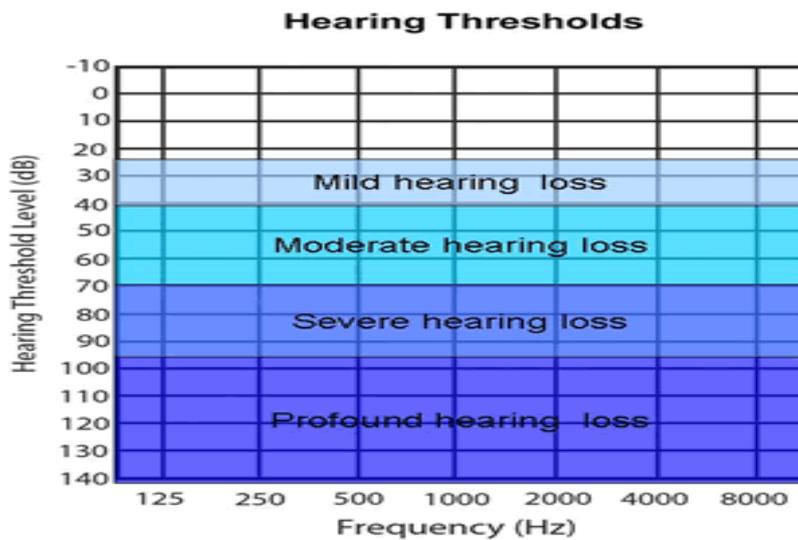
People can experience a lack of sound signals reaching the brain in two main ways;

- Sensorineural hearing loss is the result of damage to the hair cells inside the inner ear or damage to the hearing nerve (or both). It changes your ability to hear quiet sounds and reduces the quality of the sound that you hear. It is permanent.
- Conductive hearing loss happens when sounds cannot pass from your outer ear to your inner ear, perhaps due to a blockage. Sounds become quieter and sometimes sound muffled. This hearing loss can be temporary or permanent.

People can have a combination of the both sensorineural and
conductive hearing loss ¹⁰

Levels of Hearing Loss

Whatever the cause of a person's hearing loss (sensorineural,
conductive or a combination) the effects manifest themselves at different
levels. The chart below indicates this:



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Deafblindness

“Deafblindness is the combined loss of both vision and hearing.
For some people this may be a complete sensory loss whilst for

¹⁰ RNID <https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/hearing-loss/types-of-hearing-loss-and-deafness/>

¹¹ http://www.sciponline.co.uk/sitepix/page_pix/hearing_loss_graph.gif

others there may be some residual sight or hearing that can be used”¹².

Deafblindness has been defined in many ways but to understand the lived experience of deafblind people it is vital it is not considered as two separate sensory losses but rather as a uniquely disabling condition i.e. it is more than the sum of its parts.¹³

Such combination of sensory losses can result in significant difficulties in everyday activities such as:

- accessing information and learning;
- mobility and navigating the physical environment; and
- communicating and building and maintaining relationships (social connectedness).

It is also important to remember that deafblindness can occur at various life stages and that this can affect how a person is able to communicate.

Deafblindness may occur due to:

- Congenital reasons
- Acquired reasons
- Genetic reasons

¹² An Inclusive Communication Guide for Engaging with Deafblind People - <https://dbscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Inclusive-Communication-Guide-for-Engaging-with-Deafblind-People-accessible-final.pdf>

¹³ Deafblind Scotland - <https://dbscotland.org.uk/>

Deafblind UK¹⁴ estimates there are nearly 400,000 deafblind people in the UK and, due to our ageing population, by 2030 this is expected to increase to over 600,000.

Barriers to Accessing Health Care for People who are Deaf, have hearing loss or are Deafblind – NHSGGC Responses

People with lived experience of being Deaf, having hearing loss or being Deafblind struggle to make sure they are understood by healthcare professionals on a daily basis.

2018 research by RNID (then known as Action on Hearing Loss or AOHL)¹⁵ questioned 597 people from across each of Scotland's 14 regional NHS health board areas supported this;

- 3 in 5 respondents said they do not always get all the information needed at GP appointments
- Half of those who don't always get all the info needed at health appointments said it's because the doctors/nurses didn't check if they were understood
- Only one in five respondents said hearing loops are available at health service receptions

¹⁴ Deafblind UK - <https://deafblind.org.uk/>

¹⁵ Equal treatment? <https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/how-we-help/information-and-resources/publications/research-reports/equal-treatment-scotland>

Deafblind people also report difficulty accessing services. Such difficulties are often compounded by a lack of staff understanding with regards to the combination of both sight and hearing loss¹⁶.

NHSGGC Responses –

NHSGGC has provided funding to relevant third sector organisations and has a history of working with communities with sensory impairment to assess health needs.¹⁷ It also looks to its own services to learn lessons for service improvement. For example, The Equalities & Human Rights Team undertook an Audiology Services Patient Survey Report (8 NHSGGC audiology departments, 734 respondents from 800 questionnaires) and learnt that many of the respondents described a lack of understanding and a lack of information as being central issues¹⁸ (NHSGGC established a feedback mechanism and an Audiology Patient Group to feed into services in response to this which oversaw service improvements).

¹⁶ Mental Health, Sensory Loss and Human Rights A transition report calling for sensory literate services 2021 <https://dbscotland.org.uk/resources/publications/>

¹⁷ Health Needs Assessment - Deafblind and Deaf communities: Summary Report November 2017

https://www.nhsggc.org.uk/media/255878/nhsggc_equalities_health_needs_assessment_deafblind_and_deaf.pdf

¹⁸ Audiology Services Patient Survey Report September 2018 is available via NHSGGC Equality & Human Rights Team.

The Equalities in Health web pages of the NHSGGC website also provided information on work being done and on how to access further support.¹⁹

Role of NHSGGC Staff

The outline of the barriers faced by people who are Deaf, have hearing loss or are Deafblind, given above, means that members of staff within NHSGGC require an awareness of what good communication with people with sensory loss looks like in practice.

This requires an acknowledgement of the barriers which may be in the way of someone accessing services properly. It also requires the skills and knowledge to mitigate the effects of such barriers and a commitment to work toward their removal. Staff need to have an;

- awareness of the range of sensory loss (contact NHSGGC Equalities & Human Rights Team for advice/information - equality@ggc.scot.nhs.uk | 07970 006 631)
- awareness of different good communication techniques and how to access relevant language and communication supports (see foot note 19 above).
- patience and understanding with which to offer people clear explanation and reassurance in relation to their care.

¹⁹ British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan & info on relevant services (e.g. Interpreting Service) - <https://www.nhsggc.scot/your-health/equalities-in-health/areas-of-work/british-sign-language-bsl-national-plan/>

Communication Support - <https://www.nhsggc.scot/your-health/equalities-in-health/areas-of-work/communication-support/>

All members of NHSGGC should;

- treat Deaf people, people with hearing loss and Deafblind people with dignity and respect.
- have awareness of the barriers to communication often experienced by patients who are Deaf, have hearing loss and who are Deafblind - Check that patients have understood any information given (see appendices 2 & 3).
- document a patient's sensory loss - display this in case notes and/or at beds, if an inpatient (with patient's permission).
- actively inform patients of their entitlement and availability to language and communication support and be aware of how to book the necessary interpreter or other language and communication professional e.g. note taker (see foot note 19 above).
- offer an extended appointment time for patients who require communication support.
- be aware of relevant information in accessible formats
- check patients' hearing aids if communication appears to have deteriorated or is difficult. Often it is a simple change of battery that is required. For further advice contact the audiology department.
- be aware of existing FIRE procedure - patients affected by deafness or those who are deafblind will need alerted in the event of a FIRE evacuation.
- Ensure relevant equipment (e.g. portable loops) is routinely available at staff meetings, training and any consultation events.
- Consider awareness training in relation to deafness and deafblindness as part of ongoing development.

- be able to signpost patients to specialist organisations who can offer additional support, for example, RNID, Alliance Scotland Sensory Hub (see also appendix 5).

Appendix 1 - Summary of Guidelines for Practice

All members of NHSGGC staff should;

- Treat all those who experience deafness or are deafblind with dignity and respect.
- Always check the barriers to communication experienced by an individual. This should include asking work colleagues /staff with deafness too.
- Communicate with patients about their appointments in an appropriate format
- Actively inform patients of their entitlement and availability to communication support and information in different formats
- Check that the patients have understood the information given
- Record patients' language and communication needs (with their permission) so that the relevant information is clearly visible in the person's case notes and/or at their bedsides
- Ensure the relevant awareness training is part of continuing training/development plans.
- Be able to signpost people with deafness or who are deafblind to specialist organisations who can offer additional support.

Appendix 2 – Deafness and Communication

- Always face a Deaf person 3-6ft apart
- Don't move around or turn away
- Even if someone is wearing a hearing aid it doesn't mean they can hear you - ask if they need to lip read
- If you are using communication support always remember to talk directly to the person you are communicating with, not the language and communication professional
- It is important to make sure you have face-to-face or eye-to-eye contact with the person you are talking to
- Make sure you have the listener's attention before you start speaking
- If there are several people in a room, don't all speak at once
- Speak clearly but not too slowly, and don't exaggerate your lip movements - Do try to articulate well.
- Don't shout. It's uncomfortable for a hearing aid user and it looks aggressive. It also distorts the lip pattern for those who can do some lip reading
- If someone doesn't understand what you've said, don't keep repeating it. Try saying it in a different way instead.
- Find a suitable place to talk, with good lighting and away from noise and distractions. Don't stand in front of a light or window
- Check that the person you're talking to can follow you. Be patient and take the time to communicate properly
- Provide visual aids where possible
- Use plain language and don't waffle. Avoid jargon and unfamiliar abbreviations

APPENDIX 3 - Communication with people who are Deafblind

As deafblindness can make communicating by speech and writing difficult, alternative forms of communication may be necessary.

However, speech and writing can still be used depending upon the level of hearing and sight a person has.

The main communication systems used by Deafblind people include:

- **clear speech** – speaking clearly is one of the most effective and common ways of communicating with deafblind people who have some remaining vision and hearing
- **deafblind manual alphabet** – a tactile form of communication where words are spelt onto the Deafblind person's hand using set positions and movements (<https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/information-and-advice/communication/tactile-alphabet/>)
- **block alphabet** – a simple tactile form of communication where a word is spelt out in capital letters that are drawn onto the Deafblind person's palm (<https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/information-and-advice/communication/tactile-alphabet/>)
- **hands-on signing** – an adapted version of British Sign Language where the Deafblind person feels what's being signed by placing their hands on top of the signer's hand
- **visual frame signing** – an adapted version of BSL where the signs are adapted to be signed in a smaller space to match the position and size of a Deafblind person's remaining sight

- **braille** – a system that uses a series of raised dots to represent letters or groups of letters
- **moon** – similar to Braille, but uses raised, adapted capital letters that are simpler to feel

When communicating with Deafblind people directly;

- Make sure you have the person's attention before trying to communicate with them. Gently touching the top of the person's arm is a common way of attracting their attention without startling them, but bear in mind this may be inappropriate for individuals who have sensory processing difficulties. It is good practice to use vibration, for example tapping the floor, table or chair before offering touch. For those who have some vision and hearing, you should always begin interaction by first saying the person's name; this should be done at their level and within their visual field.
- Identify yourself clearly. This may be by saying or signing your name or offering your hand/face for the person to feel. You can also introduce yourself by offering a personal identifier for them to feel, this could be a distinctive bracelet or keyring that you always have with you to identify you. For some individuals, spelling out your name using the [Deafblind Manual](#) may also be appropriate.
- Check that you are in the best position to communicate.
- Try to make a connection. If eye contact is difficult offer your hands for the person to touch. Respectfully mirroring the person's facial expressions, gestures and movements can be a way of showing a person that you are listening. Show an interest in what they are doing, looking at or holding.

- Be aware of the environment and adapt the conditions to suit the individual you are communicating with. This will be different for different people, but may include avoiding noisy places with excessive background noise or environments that are visually busy or have poor lighting/overly glaring light, as these can make it difficult to concentrate when communicating.
- When signing consider your clothing. Where possible wear high contrast colours to your skin tone. Also, avoid wearing patterned tops as this can make it more difficult for the person to define your signs.
- Speak clearly and a little slower, but don't shout.
- Make your lip patterns clear without over-exaggerating.
- Keep your face visible – don't smoke, eat, or cover your mouth whilst speaking.
- Use gestures and facial expressions to support what you are saying.
- Repeat phrases or re-phrase the sentence, if necessary.
- Be aware that communicating can be hard work. Take regular communication breaks.
- Try writing things down. You might need to experiment with different sizes of letters and different coloured paper and pens. You can also use pictures, photos, drawings or objects in the environment as props to help explain or reinforce what you are saying. Tablets or phones are another good way of offering images to support communication.

- For phone conversations, consider using a text relay service such as Next Generation Text (see appendix 4).

For further advice regarding communicating with Deafblind people including working with guides (one to one support for Deafblind people) contact;

- Deafblind Scotland 1 Neasham Drive, Lenzie, Kirkintilloch, Glasgow G66 3FA Telephone 0141 777 6111 Mini com 0141 777 5822 Text 07715421377 Email us at info@dbscotland.org.uk
- Sense Scotland Head office: TouchBase, 43 Middlesex Street, Glasgow G41 1EE Tel: 0300 330 9292 info@sensescotland.org.uk

Appendix 4 – (i) How to use Next Generation Text

(ii) How to use a Portable Loop System

(i) Next Generation Text (<https://www.ngts.org.uk/>)

- In 2014 BT launched the Next Generation Text service – a text relay service for Deaf, those with hearing loss, and speech-impaired people. They run this service for everyone on behalf of all UK landline and mobile phone providers.
- Using your phone or mobile you can now easily call someone who can't hear or can't speak over the phone.

(i) To begin a call - Call 18002 or their TextNumber. Many NGT app and textphone users have TextNumbers. These are unique numbers that connect callers to the Deaf or speech-impaired person and a Relay Assistant without having to dial **18002** first. TextNumbers start with **03306** or **07777**.

If the number does not start with 03306 or 07777, dial **18002** followed by the full phone number (including the dialing code).

You'll hear an automated message to let you know that the other person has connected while you wait for a Relay Assistant to join. When the Relay Assistant is connected, they'll act as a relay between you and the Deaf or speech-impaired person.

Further information about Next Generation Text and what to expect when using it can be found at ;

<https://www.ngts.org.uk/how-to-use-ngt/ngt-for-hearing-people.html>

(ii) Portable Loop Systems

A portable induction loop system is used to assist people who have hearing loss. It transmits a sound system directly to a hearing aid equipped with a telecoil or "T" position. Loop systems can help reduce or cut out background noise, helping to hear sound far more clearly. They

work when the hearing aid is switched to the “T” position: some hearing aids automatically tune to this frequency.

Portable Induction Loop Guidance

If a patient requests the use of the induction loop please note the following;

- There is an on/off button and dual colour on the unit.
- To turn the unit on, press the green ON button. The LED will illuminate green to indicate that the unit is operational
- Place the unit in a suitable location between the patient and staff, turn on and talk normally
- The unit can be placed both vertically and horizontally
- A flashing light will flicker orange to indicate the unit is receiving speech or other sound
- To turn the unit off, press and hold the red OFF button until the LED goes out
- The range of the unit is 1.5 metres
- Ensure that the unit has been appropriately charged i.e. at least 16 hours. However, the unit can be operated whilst charging
- A constant light is illuminated during charging
- The unit will operate continuously for 4 hours fully charged

Appendix 5 - Useful Contacts

- British Deaf Association (BDA) Suite 58 Central Chambers
93 Hope Street Glasgow G2 6LD T: **0141 248 5565**
<https://bda.org.uk>
- National Deaf Children Society Scotland - Empire House 131
West Nile Street, Glasgow G1 2RX · 0141 354 7850
<https://www.ndcs.org.uk>
- East Dunbartonshire Sensory Impairment Team Social Work
Department, Kirkintilloch Health and Care Centre, 10 Saramago
Street, Kirkintilloch, Lanarkshire, G66 3BF 0300 123 4510
- East Renfrewshire The service aims to provide information,
advice and practical support to adults and children who are
experiencing a sight loss. Single Point of Access (SPOA)
Tel: 0141 451 0866
- deafScotland (formerly Scottish Council on Deafness)
Care of the ALLIANCE, the Venlaw Building 349 Bath St Glasgow
G2 4AA Tel (v): 0141 248 2474 SMS: 07925 417 338 Email:
admin@scod.org.uk
- Deafblind Scotland 1 Neasham Drive, Lenzie, Kirkintilloch,
Glasgow G66 3FA Telephone 0141 777 6111 Mini com 0141 777
5822 Text 07715421377 Email us at info@dbscotland.org.uk
- Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership, Centre for
Sensory Impaired People 17 Gullane Street, Partick, Glasgow
G11 6AH - 0141 276 5252
- Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living 10-16 Gibshell Road
Greenock PA15 2UP Telephone 01475 714 350

- Sense Scotland Head office: Touch Base, 43 Middlesex Street, Glasgow G41 1EE Tel: 0300 330 9292
info@sensescotland.org.uk <http://www.sensescotland.org.uk>
- Renfrewshire Council offers a range of services to residents with a significant sensory impairment - Adult Services Referral Team (ASeRT) Single Point of Access (SPOA) 0300 300 1380
adultservicesreferral.sw@renfrewshire.gov.uk
- RNID Empire House, 131 West Nile Street, Glasgow G1 2RX.
Telephone 0141 341 5330 Text message: 07388 227407
Email: scotland@rnid.org.uk
<https://rnid.org.uk/about-us/rnid-in-scotland/>
- West Dunbartonshire Sensory Impairment Team 16 Church Street
Dumbarton G82 1QL 01389 776499