

PRESS RELEASE - *Embargoed until Tuesday 9th January 2018*

8th January 2018

Healthwatch Sheffield launches new report:

Not equal: The experiences of Deaf people accessing health and social care in Sheffield

Healthwatch Sheffield, in partnership with Citizens Advice Sheffield and Disability Sheffield has carried out an investigation into the experiences of Deaf people accessing health and social care services in the city.

Approximately 75 Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing people shared their views during three workshops. Common themes emerged, including:

- The communication needs of Deaf people are not routinely recorded and flagged by providers of NHS or Adult Social Care.
- The communication needs of Deaf people are not routinely shared between GPs and hospitals.
- Provision of British Sign Language interpreters is inconsistent and unreliable, causing people to disengage from services and to suffer unnecessary distress.

Margaret Kilner, Chief Officer for Healthwatch Sheffield said, 'The experiences shared during the course of this investigation have left us in no doubt that Deaf people face many continual barriers to accessing health and social care in Sheffield. These are not isolated incidents, and we hope that in presenting our findings to local commissioners and providers, they will take steps to ensure equal access for Deaf people.'

'We have made five recommendations, using the powers given to local Healthwatch, and based on the findings of our investigation. Our recommendations are for local commissioners and providers, including NHS Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust, Sheffield City Council and local GPs. We will ask each organisation to provide a response to the recommendations.'

Since August 2016, there has been a legal requirement for providers of NHS or adult social care services to apply the Accessible Information Standard in full. The Standard aims to 'make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can access and understand, and any communication support that they need from health and care services'. The findings of the investigation suggest that local Deaf people are yet to experience improvements that the act aimed to embed.

Please go to the Healthwatch Sheffield website www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk to read the report in full.

A BSL video summarising the recommendations and the responses from providers will be uploaded to help Deaf people understand what they can expect.

Notes to Editors:

For more information please contact:

Grace Edwards
Operations Officer (Communications)
Healthwatch Sheffield
T: 0114 2536687
E: g.edwards@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

About us

1. The vision of Healthwatch Sheffield is for health and social care services to be designed, commissioned and delivered using the views of Sheffield's people. We have the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by local government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.
2. The Citizens Advice Sheffield - Deaf Advice Team is a specialist team of Deaf and hearing staff and volunteers all of whom are fluent in BSL. Originally established in 1987 by members of the Sheffield Deaf community offering the following advice provision;
 - Drop-in advice on Monday and Wednesday 10am-2pm.
 - Peer Support appointments Tuesdays 10am-2pm.
 - Skype advice on Thursdays 10am-2pm.
 - Advice appointments Fridays 10am-2pm.

<https://citizensadvice-sheffield.org.uk/get-help/local-advice/deaf-advice-team/>

3. Disability Sheffield Centre for Independent Living (CIL) is a pan disability organisation, managed by disabled people and fully inclusive of all disabilities. Established in 2003, they promote independent living by supporting disabled people across Sheffield.

<http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk/>

4. There is more information about the Accessible Information Standard on the NHS England website <http://www.england.nhs.uk/accessibleinfo>