

# **ELDERLY DEAF PEOPLE in their words(in sign)**

## **Interviews carried out by Deaf interviewers 1996**

(note: the report is presented as expressed by the deaf interviewers/interviewees and not as polished /translated English)

The interviews have been completed and reached 12 Deaf Elderly people which had been interviewed at the Elderly Deaf Club in Bristol each Wednesday. The males are less number than females because the numbers of people there are mostly women.

### **DEAFNESS**

All are Deaf except one who is Hard of Hearing and other is Partially Hearing. All went to Deaf school and two of them went to Hearing school then went to Deaf school in later age at about 12 years and another about 11 years. The average of ages they learnt sign at 5 years old to 17 years olds. They also said that they are all preferred to use sign language and found that lip read is difficult for them and they do not understand their speech clearly, excepted one who is Hard of Hearing as his speech is sometime understood by hearing people and able to understand his doctor.

The average that they live in their homes for many years. One of them had to moved because of security - broken into five times. If it wasn't happened, she would not move out at all. Only two of them lives in one bedroom flats and three of them lives in flats and one live on shelter home and the rest lives in their houses.

All their children are all moved out of the nests and one of them accepted his daughter and her family living with him and the house is in his name. Few of the children of Elderly people are living outside of Bristol, mostly of the children are still living in Bristol. The children mostly visit their parents at average once a fortnight but if their children lives outside Bristol, visit either at their parent's or children's homes every once a month. Seeing their grandchildren are mostly once a month and one see them every week and other see once a year.

Communication with their children and grandchildren are mostly in sign or sign and speech two of them speech only. Their children's partners communicated with them are more likely speech and gestures but very few of them are learnt signing with speech. Grandchildren when they were little they learnt some signing and fingerspellings then when they grew up and not using fingerspellings and some of them continue sign and speech and the rest speech only with some gestures. Those grandchildren who do not live in Bristol, forgot the signs because they do not see them too often but they still give them kisses and hugs and "thumb up". and asked their child to interpret what they want to say to their grandchildren. Those other grandchildren who still live in Bristol they can communicate better because seeing them often. One of Elderly people explained that he

do not getting on well with their grandchildren because they do not respect him and found out that they only want things out from him. When their grandchildren bring their friends to their houses and did not always introduce to their grandparents. Those Elderly people who have Deaf grandchildren are more closer to them and able to communicate about their schools and their friends and generally things. They are proud to have Deaf grandchildren because they show their interests to them. Two of elder people who have Deaf children are more closer and seeing them almost everyday. One of them who has two deaf children and some deaf grandchildren and hearing grandchildren, it was explained that they have their text phone and contact everyday with news with the families and friends. She pointed out that she do not feel odd out and they keep her young and often do the baby-sits for their children. Another person who has one Deaf daughter said the same and able to offer to their child and feel closer compare with those who do not have Deaf children. Another who do not have deaf children and said that when they were kids and he and his wife always use signing to their children and now they are grown ups and still use signing to them and also their grandchildren do the sign and speech and feel close family.

## **NEIGHBOURS**

Most of them do not always getting well with their neighbours and also communication are vital and unable to get information what is going on in their area. Very few of them get well with their neighbours and said they tried to talk to them with gestures and tow of them said that one or two of their neighbours wrote down the paper with information to them, something like someone who going to move out or passed away and someone who went into hospital or baby had arrived but the rest of these people do not receive information like this two elderly people. Two of them actually understood them but the rest find it difficult to understand them. Four of them try to talk with them or “just hello”, the rest were ignored. They explained that their neighbours are not very important for them because of communication problem, but if they need help they has to put their brave face, asking for help specially to use their telephone for doctor or contact their child/ren. They also said sometimes the neighbours did offered when they are in a good mood but later they seems not bother with them. only two of them said that their neighbours see them everyday but the rest of them said it’s possible to see them once a month or longer.

## **SHOPPING**

They goes shopping at least once a week, mostly on their own and either with or without transports, they are relaying on their shopping trolley, without their shopping trolley they shall unable to cope to become independent. Only one of them has an home help doing the shopping for her and mostly said no one shall do the shopping for them unless it’s urgent as they do not want to ask their children to help them because they has their own family to look after, also feel that if they gave it away and they might think that their parents could not cope on their own and gave them wrong idea about them. Those who live with partners, they support each other and do the shopping in turns or one who is unwell and partner go out shopping. The avege of them do not travel in buses to shopping centre, only going to their local supermarkets. Only of them use dial-ride but this information is not clear to others because they are not aware of using dial-ride and were asked “how to apply for this transport”. I asked them if they would like to use this

transport and they said if they can come to their local and would welcome this idea. Two of them said it would be safer to use this transport because their partners are taking their risks by driving on their own vehicles. Only one of them said that family give them lift to shopping but the rest of them do not have some offers from their children or friends. Most of them do the walking distance to shopping but few go on buses. I asked why the walking distance instead of buses and were replied were simple and clearly that the problem is in the busses services do not have support person to lift the shopping trolley into the buses so they found it easier to walk all the way home. They also said they often make sure that they shall stay home after a long distance. The average said they go shopping depend on weather did not help them, most of them go shopping all times to pass the boredom, to avoid heavy shopping on the shopping day, to get out of the house to see interesting things better than staying home with four walls.

## **CONTACT WITH FRIENDS**

Most of them has friends since they went to same schools and keep contacts ever since. Mostly has a real good friend but not often visit their homes but meet them outside their homes either at Deaf club or other places such like in shopping centre and having cuppa together. Five of them said their friends visits their homes. All of them go to Deaf club every week to meet their friend and other friends and this gives them something to look forward on each Wednesdays afternoons as they knew that their friends shall be there. Not many of them go to Deaf club for problems. The most responds are they enjoying talking with other Deaf people more than activities.

The average using buses as their transport to Deaf club, the journey averages taking them 15 minutes - 30 minutes and one said 45 minutes. They all explained that they all missed the mini-bus as they find it useful and able to stay longer in Deaf club and able to join the social evening and enjoyed better than now, as the mini-bus is gone now so they has to travel on the buses or they shall be isolates at their homes and it is not a good idea to refuse to get on the buses because they have no way round. Of course they are concerns about getting mugged but has to live with it Most of them said they has to leave Deaf club before it get dark. Few of them get lifts from other Deaf people in Deaf club but not always. Some of Elderly people who have cars does live the same area or the same way to Deaf club did not offer them lifts With all the interviews I had , there are only three car owners. Three of them said it is easy to get to Deaf club and only two of them live nearby and found it easy to go to Deaf club at any time.

## **CHILDREN AT DEAF CLUB**

Very rarely their children go to Deaf club because they has their own families and go to different ways but they did go there when they all are little. Those who has Deaf children still going to Deaf club and their Deaf grandchildren too. Those who have hearing children explained that they preferred them to not come to Deaf club as they want to enjoy with their own friends and they can see their own children and grandchildren at their homes or their children's homes. Those who have hearing brothers and sister do not visit Deaf club unless if they have their party there. They also said it is not important for their hearing brothers or sisters to go Deaf club because of communication problem. Two of the interviewers has their Deaf sister and Brother who still go to Deaf club and they just see each other as friends in Deaf club but outside Deaf club they see themselves as

family. They find it socially and relaxing with their friends and to arrange some trips to shopping etc. with their friends during the week or weekend. They knew that they can see their friends more than once a week.

## HEALTH

Three of them said their health at the moment are very good and most of them said they are okay or good health. Six of them went to see their doctor in last month and the rest of them last saw their doctor either six month or last year. Seven of them explained that they did not go to hospital for years. Five of them did not see their doctor for a few years. Only two of them has District nurse coming to their homes one of them last saw her District nurse six months ago and other still seeing now. Communication with District nurse are problem as one said that lip read are not understood fully but watch the movements so they shall understand what is going on (visual) and other said that District nurse use her speech and wrote down and she show the notes to her son to clear the misunderstanding information and sometime she use her nephew as interpreter as he lives upstairs and he can sign well and if he go to work and sometime his wife comes down to make sure I got right information and then explained to her husband when he get back from work then he come down and explain me clearly what is going on. Interpreter for District nurse is very difficult because no one seem to know what time she will arrive at their homes and it is difficult for an interpreter to wait for her to arrive and only stay for 10 - 15 minutes with the District nurse.

If they are unwell and send for their doctor or make an appointment for visit their doctor. Five of them ask their neighbour to ring their doctor for either to send for doctor or making an appointment to see their doctor. Two of them use their fax to direct to surgery and wait for their reply from them. One of them use their text phone to Deaf Centre then they rang to their doctor and the Deaf Centre staff rang back with information. One of them who live with daughter so she will ring to doctor but other who have partner has to go to surgery to make an appointment for her or him or wait for their children to visit them.

Communication with doctors, Six of them sometimes understood their doctors but the rest of them do not understand their doctor and use their children to go along with them. One of them said understood his doctor well. Five of them did not been to hospital apart from birth of their children. Four of them said that they had family and friends visited them while they were in hospital but they really preferred to have Deaf friends because they has more news than their own children. Their children explained them what is wrong with them. Two of them had interpreter with them when they had operation. Communication in hospital are suffering as no one noticed unless they call for the attentions. They feel so lonely while they stay in hospital and found that they were looking forward for someone to visit them with their own communication. It is very upsetting situation for them.

## HEALTH

All of them would like to have deaf friends or deaf families visit them in hospital or at home because of communication and able to get some news from Deaf community which shall make them feel well quicker, as there are no communication skills in the wards in hospital. All of them said that Deaf people visit in hospital is very important and can make them feel comfortable and able to express their real feelings to Deaf health workers and able to get information clearly. It is very important to see Health Authority to encourage Deaf people to work in hospitals and to understand and a straight - way information (not the same as hearing people talking too much for a little thing). The training available are very important and want to see it happen very soon.

Six of them would like to have someone to cook for them as they are getting bored to cook the food and often making simple food as they do not bother to have various food every day as they do not keep up with different food nowadays and sometime found it difficult to stand in the kitchen all day as they used to be. Most of them uses frozen meal prepared for them and they just warmed them up and said feel guilty and sometimes their partners do the cooking in turns but often urge with. Those who lives on their own are different because they often not having hot meals but just simple food until they arrange with their friends go out and had hot meals. All of them would like to see Deaf club to provided a meal every day and are keen to go there everyday but with no mini-bus could be difficult. They would like to share some company while they are eating better than on their own at homes or with same old partner's faces. They think their health food shall improve if they eat the good food as they do not keep it up at home and shall make them more healthier. They also would like to see Deaf people working in kitchen, cooking the meals so they can ask them how to cook or to get some information about the food. They all are sure that their children shall be happy to know of they go to Deaf club for the meals but transports can be problem but if they can provide dial-ride and this might solved the problem and this shall be success in their lives and much happier than at the moment.

Two of them said they do not want to learn other hobby because they have several hobbies at the moment. All of them would like to learn new things and would like to attend the classes to improve their knowledge but if the classes shall be on day time and they would like to go in the morning and stay there all day included with the meal and make it a day worthwhile. Some of them suggest that they need some information about the benefits which are available and they all do not fully understand and been seeing their social worker for translation but still not understood because of communication problem and also they feel bad about asking their social workers because they seems too busy for them. They knew that one duty each Wednesday but it did not help them.

Home help - they all are fully welcome the idea of Deaf people become home help and need some company too and shall be welcome if these Deaf people has their training's and one of them who still have home help coming to her home and she is not happy with her because they do not understand each other. She also having problem with home help because she gave her a shopping list and tried to explain what actually she want from the shop etc. but in the end the home help came back with the wrong items which she is not happy and waste of her money she noticed that the home help decided for her to get for her instead of getting things from her shopping list or also she do not want to go shops too far. If Deaf people becomes home helps and sure that it would not happen like that but of course want them to get some training's and also learn some confidently. Deaf people working in Care homes - all of them said yes and must do something very soon because more and more deaf elderly people has to go into Care homes and became very lonely and no communication there to keep their minds up and no news around the place and then went down very quick depend on person who is stronger than others as very few of them goes to see their old friends in Care homes and noticed that they do not treated them good as they just looked at them talking in sign language and talk to each other then came to person when ready to go home and asked about sign language courses or ask how to sign this or this. They are fed up as being deaf in this country since years ago..... people still do not know or are not aware of Deaf ness etc. which they are not happy about this attitudes of hearing people working in the Care homes which has put them off about thinking about going in when they can not cope in their lives later on, if Deaf people get some training's to become Care assistance in Care homes and they shall be happy go into Care home and knowing they shall be safer and communication shall be better off than living on their own at home and sure that their children shall not worry about them and they all can enjoying with their Deaf friends there before they go. Having Deaf Carers working in Care homes and they shall not worry about their children visit them so their children can carry on looking after their own families as their visits are not always important but the communication shall improve their health and happiness. One asked whether this shall happen soon and want to see it happening next year instead of several years ahead as she is old now and knowing that she might need someone to look after her and want Deaf people to get some training's very soon and let everyone know which Care homes who have some Deaf staff working there and shall become like a Deaf club there and no worries and hope her dream shall come true before too late.

All of them think they have a good life and had a family etc. only one is not sure how to improve?

- a **To improve information and share information for Elderly people**
- b **To get information about their pensions**
- c **To share information about health issues**
- d **To have various training's for Deaf people become working in health situations**
- e **To train Deaf people to become home helps**
- f **To train Deaf people to become Carers in Care homes**

- g **To get more information about dial-ride**
- h **To get meal provide in Deaf Centre**
  
- I **To give more awareness about Deaf issues in hospitals**
- j **To improve interpreters services specially for Elderly people**
- k **To train Deaf people in nursing so they can become District nurses**

All these things above could help to make life easier for them because they have to cope on their own in shopping and communication outside their homes and no one ask them about themselves because the things has been improving in education of deaf children and young people has lot of achievements better than them and they are waiting for their turn to improve their lives and they do not want to depend on their children because they do not want them too feel torn between them and their families. Their children had done a lot when they live with them but they need to get on with their lives and want them to see their parents to cope well with their lives and if Care homes improve and they shall not worry at all not the same as today they are concerns what shall happening to them. They also said that social workers are not important role because they felt that the social worker should visit them weekly at either at their homes or at Care home to find out if they are okay . Social workers could give them details what is going on with Social Service. They want to see more and more deaf people become professionals working closely with them so the communication shall be more healthier than today.

They feel that hearing Elderly has some problems but not the same what they are having as they can use normally telephone in their houses and can seek for help when they are unwell. We all can't do that but only use fax to doctor and wait for the answer and or looking out for their neighbours if they are at home to get doctors for them. They are fed up depending on hearing people and put it up with their attitude toward Deaf Elderly. They want to depend on deaf people because sign language is very important and are aware that hearing people can learn sign language but not the same as Deaf people and the timing is takes too long as hearing people need to understand fully in sign language and Deaf's way as it takes them years to achieve but they do not have much time left. Deaf people understood what is happening in Deaf community. It is cheaper to have deaf people working closer with them and they all understand each other not the same with hearing professionals. Those who need some helps in their homes and they send hearing home helps it is good but not for them because they do not understand them better also with district nurses visit their homes and again communication problem and no interpreter available so they still struggling all the years so they all hope that the things shall all improve after this research completed.