

Deaf in the Covid Aftermath

A project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund

Lead: Gloucestershire Deaf Association
Partners: Centre for Deaf People, Bristol
Deaf Studies Trust

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Summary

Drawing on Deaf Studies Trust's Lottery and government-funded community-representative national research e.g. Deaf People in the Community (1997-2002), BSL Access in Scotland (2007), and Deaf Health (2014), we have found problems of deaf access to existing health and social services, poor community interaction, lack of recognition by society and lowered quality of life. Our concerns on this have been further increased by the experiences of service providers GDA and CfD during the pandemic. The pandemic disrupted deaf people's gatherings, their person-to-person interaction and their ability to interact with hearing people wearing masks. The extent of the damage to community life has not been established – without this data, deaf-led and deaf-focused services are unable to operate meaningfully and efficiently. Deaf in the Covid Aftermath will supply the data to rebuild community life and re-construct service provision.

The framework

We will carry out a qualitative and quantitative interview programme to reach a target 120 deaf people in Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and Bristol. Participants will be chosen to match age, gender, ethnic background, location in the general population. For many of those chosen we will also have previous data records on health and social interaction. Uniquely, our interview data is collected by researchers who are deaf themselves and is analysed in native sign language. We will include data from diaries of personal life (in a format we supply) and from questions about extent of contact with, and effectiveness of, services supplied by deaf agencies. We will be able to draw a picture of deaf life today, post-pandemic.

The Outcomes

The effects of the pandemic, and the current concerns over inflation and costs of living, have almost certainly hit those vulnerable people hardest. For deaf people relying on visual communication and person to person interaction, the impact has been and continues to be even greater. The extent of the problems can be estimated but to deliver services and to re-enable a community, we need hard facts and better evidence of daily life and community needs. This project is the first fully deaf oriented examination of these issues. Its outcome will form the basis of intervention, of guidance and ultimately of fulfilment of deaf aspirations for the immediate future.



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