

See Me! Hear Me!
Event for Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people

Thursday 26 November 2009
Building 2, North London Business Park

Event report

Introduction

In early 2009, the Physical and Sensory Impairment Board carried out a consultation with the deaf and hard of hearing community in order to develop services to meet their needs.

A survey was developed asking questions about areas of particular importance to people with a hearing impairment, including access to and quality of health and social care services, other council services and advocacy services in the borough, as well as accessibility of doctor's surgeries and hospitals.

The consultation lasted for six weeks, from the beginning of September until 16 October 2009. People were able to complete the survey online on the Barnet Council website, or fill in a paper copy of the survey. Publicity for the consultation was displayed in libraries, council offices, local voluntary sector organisations buildings and hospitals. Just over 200 completed surveys were received.

Around 45 people attended the follow-up event, with a mixture of communication support needs. These were catered for with the attendance of three British Sign Language Interpreters, two lipspeakers and a palantypist.

Aim of event

The aim of the event was to feed back to people on the results of the consultation, and give them the opportunity to contribute further to service development.

It was an opportunity to get people's ideas about how **they** thought that any issues arisen from the consultation could be best resolved. When gathering people's ideas, attendees were split into groups according to the communication support they required so that they could discuss the issues relevant to them that have arisen from the survey.

Event Programme

- **6 -6.30pm** Registration and refreshments
- **6.30-7pm** Looking round stalls
- **7-7.05pm** Welcome by Councillor Cornelius, Cabinet Member for Communities
- **7.05-7.10pm** Opening and by Irene Findlay, Director of Adult Social Services and introduction to changes to Adult Social Services by Marie Bailey, Service Manager in Adult Social Services
- **7.10-7.15pm** Presentation of survey results and next steps, David Pearce, Co-Chair of the Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board
- **7.15-8.15pm** Workshops
(based on 2 issues which have arisen from survey results)
- **8.15-8.45pm** Feedback and close
- **8.45-9pm** Networking

The event

The evening began with some introductory speeches. Dave Pearce, Director of the Middlesex Association for the Blind and Co-chair of the Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board, opened the evening by welcoming everyone and inviting Councillor Richard Cornelius, Cabinet Member for Communities to say a few words to start the event.

Councillor Cornelius took the opportunity to thank everyone in attendance, and shared his personal experience of how someone can be isolated from a community due to the lack of understanding of others of the problems faced by people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.

Irene Findlay, Director of Adult Social Services then said a few words to emphasis her gratitude for people coming out to share their views. She also expressed her desire to provide excellent services, and the importance of the council being self-critical when looking at the services provided to people, so that people get the services they deserve. She added that it is for this reason that the contribution people make is so important, and improvements must be made working in partnership with people who use social care services.

Marie Bailey, Service Manager for Enablement and Rehabilitation for Adult Social Services, spoke briefly about the restructure which had taken place within Adult Social Services. She said that the aim of the restructure was to ensure that people who use services are at the centre of the structure, to make sure that they have choice and control over the support they receive. The restructure means that there is now one single way to access Adult Social Services for people with a sensory impairment, through the Social Care Direct team. An information pack with contact details for this team was given out to all event attendees. This team joins the former Older Adults Duty Team with the Physical and Sensory Impairment Service, to help give equity across all services. She urged attendees to share their views in the workshops about how services should be developed.

David Pearce, Director of the Middlesex Association for the Blind and Co-Chair of the Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board spoke briefly about what his role on the Partnership Board entailed. He mentioned his role in creating a strategy for services for visually impaired people in Barnet, and stressed that this work has yet to be carried out for deaf and hard of hearing people in the borough. The purpose of the survey being sent out to people was to find out what the gaps in services are, and to use this to create an action plan to present to the Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board, to start improving services available to deaf and hard of hearing people.

David Pearce then gave a brief summary of some of the results gathered from the survey. He mentioned that communication support in places such as GP surgeries and council departments was picked up as an area which needs improvement, and that only 4% of those who completed the survey had used Advocacy services. It is important for the Partnership Board to find out why people are not using advocacy services, which are important to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. The lack of information available in Audiology departments about equipment to help hard of hearing people was also remarked upon.

Mr Pearce re-emphasised that once all the information had been gathered following the workshops on the evening, a strategy for services would be developed and consulted on, and an action plan put together. Hopefully this process would take around six months.

Workshops

In the workshop groups, people were asked to come up with suggestions for improvements to different services, such as GP surgeries and Adult Social Services, based on their experiences and the data gathered as a result of the See Me! Hear Me! survey. The groups discussed different topics so as to get a wide range of feedback on a variety of areas.

1. British Sign Language (BSL) users workshop group

Topics: GP surgeries and Hospitals / Adult Social Services / Advocacy

Key recommendations:

GP Services and Hospitals

- Flexible ways of making appointments
 - SMS
 - Email
 - Typetalk
 - Fax

- Quick access to qualified interpreters
- Video interpreting service in GPs and hospitals
- Staff who have British Sign Language skills (nurses and doctors)
- Reception staff who are deaf aware
- A team of duty interpreters for health 24/7
- A patient calling system using numbers, not names
- On site interpreters for sensitive appointments
- Better system for booking hospital interpreters, which includes receiving confirmation of all bookings and being able to express a preference between a male or female interpreter
- NHS Barnet to ensure that interpreters can be booked for dental and opticians appointments, for example
- Single booking of interpreters for both hospital and GP appointments
- Information in visual form – LED screen or hand written notice to inform patients of changes, for example if appointments are running late

Adult Social Services

- Dedicated social worker who is a fluent BSL user – available during all office hours
- Ensure that BSL interpreters are provided for Adults Social Services if staff cannot sign
- Deaf outreach worker to work with the deaf community and provide information, support such as with letter translation, form filling help, and to ensure that interpreters are provided for people at relevant events, such as at education events (for deaf parents).
- Want to be able to contact Adult Social Services by:
 - Email
 - SMS
 - Minicom
 - Videophone
 - Fax
- Provide understandable information on what the department will provide to deaf people
- More choice about equipment provided, such as flashing doorbells, and choice about who fits it (currently installation may be poor).
- More accessible venue for people to visit (Barnet House more accessible than North London Business Park)

Advocacy

- Advocacy workers should be fluent BSL users working 1 day per week, for example – such as in Enfield and Islington (the Jewish Deaf Association could be 1 place to host this)
- Deaf outreach worker could have duty day in advocacy service
- Dedicated outreach worker for deaf people

Council Services

- Videophones in libraries and other council offices, as well as advocacy services

2. Hard of Hearing workshop group, with support from palantypist and lipspeakers

Topics: GP surgeries and Hospitals / Adult Social Services

Key recommendations:

GP surgeries

- More telephone lines in GPs surgeries to allow for booking of appointments, and more staff available at the surgery
- Staff at GP surgeries should have training in using a Minicom system (such as Typetalk).
- Surgeries should have a text telephone for direct connection
- Surgeries should have prominent notices for everybody to read, to ask people who are deaf or hard of hearing to inform staff before they see their doctor
- Surgeries should also have a notice for staff to say that if somebody is hard of hearing, please raise your voice but do not shout, which can interfere with the reception on hearing aids
- Each practice should send one representative to deaf awareness training, to pass on to rest of the practice. Deaf awareness should be a general policy in each practice
- Numbering system when people arrive at reception so that they know when it is time for their appointment (number shown on screen)

Hospitals

- Need big notices about the hours of the PALS service
- A pager in hospital departments to call deaf people for their appointment
- In every hospital department, patients notes should be clearly marked to show that they are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Notices on the reception points saying if you are deaf or hard of hearing, please tell us
- Need an internal system in each hospital department or clinic so the hospital has to determine how deaf and hard of hearing people are called in those clinics.

Adult Social Services

- A leaflet through every door to let you know what is going on what's available.
- Phone systems should allow you to speak to someone immediately rather than having to select from different options.

Audiology

- Continuity of audiologist, for consistency of advice and information
- Hearing aids should be tested in a more natural environment
- Home visits for people with hearing aids who are housebound

3. Hard of Hearing workshop group

Topics: GP surgeries and Hospitals / Audiology Services

Key recommendations:

Audiology

- Access to specialist services need to be improved
- Communication training for staff
- Need a visual aid when being called for appointments
- Should provide direct access to other information such as about other services (tinnitus support, for example), in the form of leaflets
- Should be able to book follow-up appointments directly, without going through a GP.
- Reduce waiting list for servicing hearing aids
- Home visiting service for housebound people
- Disability equality/awareness training should be ongoing, staff performance should be monitored against this

GP surgeries

- Communication training for staff
- Disability equality/awareness training should be ongoing, staff performance should be monitored against this
- Extra time should be allowed for appointments for people with a hearing problem
- Visual alerting system needed
- An advocate to accompany people with hearing difficulties in appointments

4. Barnet Independent Living Service workshop group

Topics: GP surgeries and Hospitals / Advocacy Services

Key recommendations:

GP surgeries / Hospitals

- It is essential to have a reliable interpreter for **every** health-related appointment, including dental appointments, for example, so that the individual does not miss important information or have to rely on family members
- There should be a system where interpreter is booked automatically whenever a deaf person makes an appointment, so that they do not have to do this separately
- Interpreters need to be appropriate to the level of understanding of the individual (for example, a relay interpreter may be required)
- Need to provide a variety of ways that people can book appointments – people currently have to rely on support workers to do this for them.
- Information should be provided to people to explain how they can access services they need when their usual support network is not available, as well as information about what services are available – currently there is a critical reliance on the Barnet Independent Living Service to support people to access health services
- Doctors need to take the time to explain things clearly

Advocacy services

- Awareness of advocacy services needs to be raised amongst deaf people, and appropriate services provided to them
- Needs to be a dedicated deaf social worker to help with these issues

Event Close

David Pearce thanked everyone for their contributions, and stated that the aim would be to have a first draft of a strategy for deaf and hard of hearing people ready in six months time, and then have a feedback forum so that people can look at the strategy document and comment on it. This document will also be made available on the Barnet Council website. If anyone had any further feedback or questions, the Physical and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board provides this opportunity.

Irene Findlay reiterated a word of thanks to all attendees, and to David Pearce for taking this work forward on behalf of the Partnership Board. David followed this with his own vote of thanks to Mira Goldberg, Chair of the Barnet Deaf Forum for driving the discussions around a strategy for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Stalls

There were 12 organisations represented with stalls at the event, all of which provide a service to deaf and hard of hearing people living in Barnet. These were:

- Adult Social Services
- Advocacy in Barnet
- Audiology Services
- Barnet Independent Living Service
- Barnet Police
- CommUNITY Barnet
- Disability Action in the borough of Barnet (DabB)
- Hearing Connect (at the Jewish Deaf Association)
- Jewish Deaf Association
- NHS Barnet
- Sign Video Service
- Telecare

Attendee evaluation

A limited number of evaluation forms were completed on the evening, but feedback received was extremely positive. Attendees said that they found the workshops and the opportunity to share problems they have encountered very useful, and would like to have a follow-up event. Suggested topics were deaf awareness of staff, and an update on which of the recommendations made at the event were to be implemented.

Partners

Organisations involved in planning the consultation and event include Adult Social Services, Barnet Deaf Forum, Jewish Deaf Association, CommUNITY Barnet, NHS Barnet, Disability Action in Barnet, and Royal Free Hospital Audiology Department.

Special thanks

To the Milly Apthorp Charitable Trust who provided funding for the communication support required at the event, and to Barnet Community Transport and Barnet Independent Living Agency (BILA) for supporting with transport.

Further questions

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