

# deafscotland, Deafblind Scotland, Royal National Institute for the Deaf, Sight Scotland and The ALLIANCE

## Mental Health, Sensory Loss and Human Rights

### Transition Report calling for Sensory Literate Services



10 February 2021

## Easy Read



This report has been made by



- deafscotland



- Deafblind Scotland



- Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID)



- Sight Scotland



- the ALLIANCE



We have found some issues with

- policies
- funding
- services

for people who have hearing loss and sight loss.



Together, we want Scotland to have sensory services that work together and help with mental health issues.



We have seen the new report called Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland.

We are very happy that it

- has a human rights approach
- gives chances to work together
- suggests a national organisation for social care staff training and development



## 1. Introduction

This report will give information to help deliver the Scottish Government's mental health strategy.

We also believe that it will take the whole country to work towards better mental health.



Our current COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that disabled people are more likely to be very ill or die from COVID-19.



For people with hearing loss or sight loss, there are many other barriers too.

People with hearing loss or sight loss can struggle with communication exclusion.

This means not being able to connect with other people easily because of the ways that information is given.



This is a human rights issue because communicating is a human right.



Mental health problems can happen to anyone.

People with hearing loss and sight loss are even more at risk at having mental health problems.



Lockdown has made it even harder for many disabled people because they

- are on their own more
- find it harder to use devices to stay in touch



We advise about policies, services and funding.

We want Scotland to have 'Sensory Literate Services'.

This means services which are welcoming and useable by people with sensory loss.



One important way is to make sure that communication across society includes everyone.

This makes people with sensory loss feel

- less lonely
- more included



It means that their human rights are

- better respected
- better looked after
- better met



It will help build a fairer Scotland if people with hearing loss and sight loss are always part of the planning.

## 2. Understanding Sensory Loss and Poor Mental Health



The COVID-19 pandemic has shown everyone just how important our friendships and relationships are to us.

Many people have new worries now about things like

- no money
- no job
- feeling lonely



The way we used technology during lockdown has pushed us to use things like

- real time subtitles
- audio translation

These things make life more inclusive for people with sensory loss.





More than 1 in 4 people in Scotland live with sensory loss.

This can be:

- sight loss
- deaf
- deafblind
- deafened
- loss of 2 senses
- hard of hearing



Scotland needs to change because this is a big number of people.

These people have:

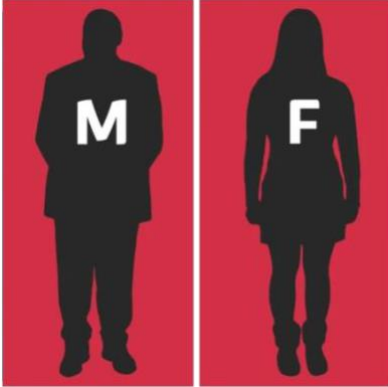
- experiences
- needs
- rights



We need to share information so that things get better for the wide range of people in this sensory loss group.



People are treated unfairly because they have more than 1 identity.



Identities can be things like

- disability
- gender
- ethnicity
- class

These identities can be complicated when people have more than 1 identity. Policies and services need to include these challenges.



When we talk about equal treatment, this doesn't mean that all treatment should be the same. It means that the treatment is changed to suit the person and get the same results.



It won't get fixed by using the same solution for everyone.

We need to remember that there are many different experiences of sensory loss.

Every service needs to be ready for a wide range of sensory loss needs.



We also need to deliver more Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

This means communication without needing to speak or write.



Assistive technology support – like talking keyboards – can help people to feel

- more confident
- more able to manage by themselves
- happier



## Conclusion



Sensory literate services are needed in Scotland.

This means services which are welcoming and useable by people with sensory loss.

If Inclusive Communication is used from the start, then no one needs to be seen as having this need.



We should make communication better instead of trying to fix the sensory loss.

Services that have Inclusive Communication are better for people's human rights.



Communication is a right for everyone and not just for some people.

Staff need

- knowledge of sensory loss
- the right skills
- to be aware of sensory loss

Inclusive Communication can help make mental health better.

### 3. Mental Health and Inclusive Communication



Mental Health law in Scotland is going to be changed and made better.

We don't think that people with sensory loss have had the support and the service they should have had. This needs to change.



If a sensory loss patient doesn't get offered Inclusive Communication, they have a harder time getting better.

## Re-defining Mental Health Strategy



The Scottish Government has written a plan called The Coronavirus Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan.

The Plan will help people in Scotland to make their mental health better after the pandemic.



**Rights**

We have written this report now because we want sensory loss rights put into new plans.



We think that poor mental health is just 1 of the problems when communication doesn't include everybody.

The Scottish Government's mental health strategy needs to be changed. It needs to have more about sensory loss.

It must look at these things:



## Communicate

1. All mental health services should communicate in a way that includes everyone's needs



2. It is very important to put actions in place

- soon after a diagnosis
- when there are problems
- by thinking ahead



3. The whole of our society needs to understand about Inclusive Communication.

It stops problems happening and fixes some problems too.



4. People need access to a full range of mental health services.



5. The whole social care workforce needs to have training in things like mental health.



6. More money should be spent on the third sector to help communities support everyone's mental health.





7. The whole mental health workforce and the health workforce need to be trained in Sensory Loss.



8. It is important to help people learn about looking after their own mental health and self-care.



9. There needs to be learning programmes for people with sensory loss to feel more confident with changes in their lives.



10. Services need to look at the mind and the body together.



11. The mental health strategy needs to have human rights all the way through it.

There needs to be mental health included in every policy.



12. Services need to offer different types of communication support.

Not every person or every part of Scotland can use digital technology.

## Social Care Reform



The social care system will be made better.

The advice from the social care inquiry is good because it's about human rights.



The new training programme must include sensory loss

- awareness
- skills
- advice

## Conclusion

It has been hard during lockdown for people with sensory loss to get outside and exercise.

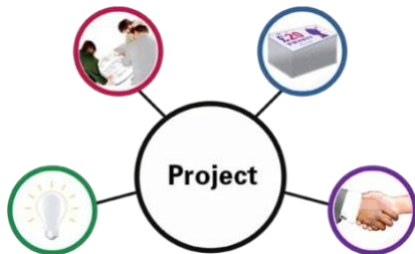


Blind and partially sighted people have found things hard - like 2 metre physical distancing rules.



We are all being told to get out more but for people with sensory loss this is harder.

We need to make this better.



New strategy needs to make it clear what action will happen.

Public Health Scotland has made mental health 1 of its 6 priorities.

The Scottish Government has a See Hear strategy.

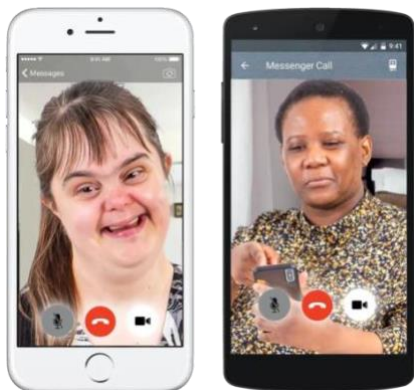
All these things need to join together for Inclusive Communication to work.

## 4. Human Rights and Sensory Loss

Being able to communicate is a basic human right.

Communicating helps all humans to

- connect
- listen
- share information
- share ideas
- feel happy





Everyone can find a way to communicate but this means other people need to be aware.

People with sensory loss need

- others to be aware
- to get to the services they need
- to get the funding they need

Inclusive Communication is not the same as accessible information.

Accessible information is things like Easy Read documents.

Inclusive Communication is a process that

- is ongoing
- makes people with sensory loss feel in control



The first challenge is to understand that Inclusive Communication means human rights are

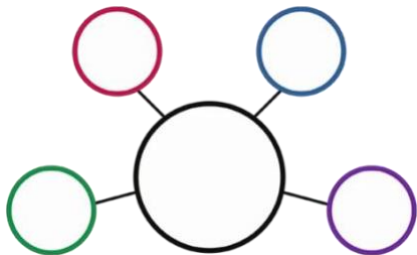
- respected
- looked after
- met

We want the new national social care service and a human rights approach to be the benchmark for all services.



The second challenge is understanding what rights mean and what the law says must happen.

There are many laws in Scotland to look after our day to day rights.



When we plan for the future, we should look at how rights connect.

We have a right to communicate. But we can't communicate if there is no Inclusive Communication.



Human rights laws in Scotland are changing to make it clearer to everyone what needs to happen and who needs to do it.



## Conclusion



At the moment life is twice as hard for people with sensory loss.

Some people were already feeling lonely. Now during the pandemic they have more loneliness and more worry.



There are too many gaps across all the services.

We really want to agree a way forward which makes the most of our services and makes mental health in Scotland much better.



Before COVID-19 there were already lots of ways that stopped people getting support.

These still need fixing.

We need to be sure that the policies and laws really reach people with sensory loss.



## 5. Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)



The United Nations and Scottish Government say that equality and human rights are key.

But the voices and experiences of people with sensory loss are not being heard.

People who work in



- health
- education
- housing
- social care

all need to have clearer roles to help make mental health services better.



**Rights**

A human rights based approach lets us all see the people who are most excluded from everyday life.

## Conclusion

Scotland wants to

- make human rights happen through local laws
- follow the same laws on rights as many other countries



**Confused**

But at the moment it's not working fairly because no one is clear about who does what.



We need to have mental health services and other services which are based on human rights.

We think that people with sensory loss can live their best life if their rights are looked after.



We are happy to see that the review of social care in Scotland is saying there should be a human rights based approach.



We are happy that the review has given 10 things that should happen.

We want to work together to make them happen.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**



The Scottish Government says

As we learn to live with the pandemic, we will carry on supporting good mental health and wellbeing.

We will help people to look after their own mental health and find the strength to feel better.

We will support people to have better mental health their own way and we will focus on their rights.

## Conclusions

There needs to be changes so that life is fairer for people with sensory loss.

1 in 4 people in Scotland live with sensory loss but it is often forgotten about.



The new strategy on mental health needs to include sensory loss.

It would be wrong to miss another chance to make life better for people with sensory loss.





The Scottish Government said that the pandemic has been hard for everyone's emotions.

Living with sensory loss is also hard for people's emotions.

So this is extra hard during the pandemic.

## Recommendations



1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) has something called Universal Design.

This is when things and places are designed to be used by all people without needing too many changes made. We should use universal design to make our Sensory Literate Services.



2. The plan called Fairer Scotland for Disabled People says that UNCRPD needs to be rolled out across Scotland.

We agree and we want focal points too. We think a new group could be set up to check on this happening.



3. It might help if we make a Board, like the Gaelic Language one, to organise Inclusive Communication and to deliver communication for all.



4. The Mental Health Plan called 'Scotland's Transition and Recovery' needs to have workers across many different parts of life.



5. There should be funded training for all staff in services so that services are made fair for people with sensory loss.



6. All policies and services in the future should have a human rights based approach, to make them fair for people with sensory loss.



7. We should think about calling Sensory Loss a 'linguistic minority'.

This is a community of people who use Inclusive Communication.



8. A group will be started led by people from

- deafscotland
- Deafblind Scotland
- RNID
- Sight Scotland
- ALLIANCE

to make sure that all this action happens.

