

HENCEL Deaf Inclusion project

Overview

The Deaf Inclusion Project saw 12 Local Healthwatch across North, Central and East London working in partnership with The British Deaf Association and NHS Health Education England to improve deaf inclusion in their work and increase the involvement of London's deaf community in the improvement of health and social care services across the capital.

Deaf people's health is poorer than the general population and they are more at risk of preventable ill-health. In response to an investigation by The London Assembly Health Committee, 12 Local Healthwatch, the BDA and NHS Health Education North, Central and East London (HENCEL) worked together to support NHS Trusts in improving access for deaf service users and meeting their requirements of the NHS England Accessible Information Standard, The Equality Delivery System (EDS2) and duties under the Equalities Act.

A key part of the project was recruiting and supporting volunteers from the deaf community in London and training them to be Authorised Representatives and mystery shoppers. The British Deaf Association (BDA) was a key partner in the outreach, helping recruit the volunteers.

Once trained, the volunteers conducted Enter and View Visits looking at deaf access and pathways through 3 London Emergency Departments; Queen's Hospital Romford, University College London and Newham Hospital.

A conference organised by partners in May 2015 was attended by 68 representatives from NHS Trusts, CCGs, local authorities, voluntary sector providers and members of the deaf community; the project raised awareness of the barriers faced by deaf patients and service users. The conference helped partners share the findings from the Enter and View Visits and good practice identified through the project, and enabled a constructive dialogue between deaf residents, service providers and commissioners.

Six short films with British Sign Language (BSL) signers, audio and subtitles were produced through the project, some targeted at staff training in the NHS and sharing good practice.

Impact

For a six month project, the collaborative approach has already had a big impact on NHS and local authority services.

- Bart's Health NHS Trust are addressing the weaknesses in deaf access at Queen's Hospital Romford and as Whipps Cross Hospital was identified by deaf delegates as having very poor deaf access at the conference, Trust Directors are feeding recommendations from the project into the hospital's improvement plan.
- Redbridge Council have approached Healthwatch Redbridge for assistance in improving deaf access across all areas of activity.
- University College Hospital is using the Enter and View Report to feed into the rebuild of the Emergency Department to improve deaf access.
- Haringey Council have engaged the deaf volunteers to help improve access and use their stories and experiences for staff training and development.
- The short film featuring good practice in deaf access across health and social care services is being used as a staff training tool in the trusts involved in the project.
- Local Healthwatch in the sub-region have a pool of trained deaf volunteers engaged in their work, as they are a seldom heard part of the community.

The partnership has been so successful, HENCEL are investing further funds to continue the collaboration and broaden its focus to other disability groups. This will ensure more trusts meet their duties under the Equalities Act.

