

Quality and Care Survey Report – April 2017

Background information

Deafblind Scotland's guide/communicator service has a joint registration with the Care Inspectorate Housing Support and Support Services Care at Home which both work to ensure people can remain at home for longer with some extra support, promote independence and delay/prevent admissions to hospital and care homes. The provision enables deafblind people to meet a wide range of outcomes including improving health and wellbeing, physical fitness, keeping in touch with family, support to live at home, for example, help with paying bills, shopping, banking, reading mail, making a complaint, as well as support with personal care to meet their needs.

With the Integration of health and social care in some geographic areas there is evidence of more joined up systems of support improving services for people who use health and social care services and for others who may need these services in the future promoting a more seamless process. This will be especially beneficial for people with long term conditions and disabilities, many of whom are older people. It is embedded in the ethos of the guide/communicator service of encouraging independence, reducing social isolation, improving physical and mental wellbeing and promoting early intervention and prevention.

Deafblind Scotland shapes its service around the needs of deafblind people and we value their feedback which is used to inform areas for development. The organisation's core principles include regular liaison with social work and other agencies regarding services for deafblind people. Deafblind Scotland sees service user consultation and involvement as essential to the success of our services. We are committed to involving service users in all aspects of the organisation including staff recruitment, projects, influencing service delivery and quality assurance and as active participants on Board of Trustees and Finance Sub Committee.

The annual consultation is an important process for developing and shaping the guide/communicator service and receiving essential feedback from people experiencing dual sensory loss or deafblindness. In order, to build up a clear understanding of their views an important part of the process is to consult with service users to ensure that these are reflected and taken into account in the design of the service.

Consultation with service users is in their preferred format of communication and seeks comments regarding choice and control, suggested improvements, support needs, comments from family and friends and views regarding the quality of the service. The outcomes from the consultation to ensure service user needs are met in a person centred way are measured against the standards and guidance set by: The Care Inspectorate, The SSSC codes of practice, Reshaping Care of Older People, Joint Health and Social Care Strategy and DbS policies and procedures.

This consultation carried out in April 2017 was sent to 98 service users who were contacted in the format of their choice. We received 22 replies representing 22.5% response. We would point out that in addition Deafblind Scotland uses a range of ways to allow this hard to reach group to express their views and opinions.

The consultation exercise focussed on 6 main questions:

- 1. In what way does the service give you choice and control about how you live your life?**
- 2. Do the guide/communicators give you full information to help you make decisions, if not, how can this be improved?**
- 3. What additional support do you want the service to give you?**
- 4. What would you family/carers/friends say about the quality of the guide/communicator service?**
- 5. How does using the service make you feel?**
- 6. How could we improve the quality of service you receive?**

Summary of responses and Findings

When service users were asked in what way the G/C Service gives them **choice and control** about how they live their life they all responded positively confirming that the guide/communicator service enabled them to maintain independence and make choices. What is highlighted is that clear communication is key. Guide/communicators provide information in the individual's preferred communication method, for example, clear speech, British Sign Language, Deafblind Manual, Hands on Signing allowing them to make informed decisions and having choice and control over how they live their life. One service user said "I always make the choices, the guide supports me in my choices which results in my being in control of what I want to do".

83% of replies from service users said that they received **full information** from the guide/communicator to enable them to have control of their life. Information may be to advise the deafblind person they have a dirty mark on their top or that their floor needs to be swept or when out shopping being informed about the layout of the store, prices, offers etc and one commented that "this allows me independently to make good decisions".

In terms of **additional support**, all except two of the deafblind people who responded feel the support they presently receive is enough. Of these one would like additional hours to learn to use iPad and the other would like to get involved in more activities as at the moment he has limited hours to go to gym. In our partnership working with other organisations we will support the service user to make links and be involved with their online technology project for support. Via a small pot of Health Board funding we will provide additional guide/communicator support for the service user to access more health improvement activities.

Deafblind Scotland encourages **feedback from family, friends and carers** and some comments received are:

“My family are happy that I am getting out. Without the service I wouldn't be able to get out. I want my family to live their own lives and not to be responsible for my life”.

“The family think it is a very good service and pleased it has promoted independence and raised my morale”.

“My family would say service G/C is second to none. I could not do without them”.

“My family think good and me much improve”.

“Definitely, my family can see how I have improved by the quality of the G/C service. They don't worry about me as they know I am safe and doing what I want to do with G/C's”.

There are a variety of opportunities to seek comments from friends, family and other professionals. To ensure this is as easily accessible as possible we have developed a web link to a feedback form, we are reminding service users and encourage them to promote to family and friends to use. Also when in contact with social work and other professionals we refer them to this online tool.

Improvements were evidenced to the overall mental wellbeing of those who responded.

When asked “**How does the service make you feel?**” feedback included:

“Comfortable, relaxing. Can trust the guides are qualified and trained to a good standard”.

“Guides give me confidence I have no issues. Office and admin can make me feel frustrated”.

“I feel safe when out and about with a G/C”.

“Very happy. I feel happy now as I can do more things and socialise better”.

“I'm okay now, but concerned what will happen in 6 months when my hours are reduced. This is affecting my mental health”.

When asked “**How could we improve the quality of service you receive?**” service users consistently said they were very satisfied with the quality of service they receive overall although some had individual preferences which the service will discuss directly with them.

An outcome from the consultation has reinforced the necessity for a skilled workforce and highlights how valued the guide/communicator service is to their lives'. From the practical and essential support of going shopping and paying bills, the importance of having appropriate communication for meetings and attending doctor and hospital appointments and being engaged with their community and being able to be healthy and active. The importance of the delivery of a consistent service and the impact on deafblind people when no guide/communicator is available was also highlighted. In areas where gaps have been identified we have increased recruitment drive. There is a constant challenge to identify and recruit suitable candidates, particularly when specialist skills are required.

We know from the responses that guides receive sufficient training to do their day to day work but it is indicated that some guide/communicators are better than others. We have always included deafblind people in training where possible, with more service users expressing interest in taking part we are better placed to increase involvement, the training manager himself is deafblind. Deafblind Scotland is committed to ensure guide/communicators have access to ongoing training and personal development opportunities and have an ongoing programme of training available. We hold four in service days each year which focus on providing training opportunities and sharing of best practice, helping to ensure a high quality service is maintained. Where other issues arise these are discussed at supervision and a robust supervision process is in place, delivered by 6 Senior Guide/communicators who have all completed SVQ Level 3 and a PDA in supervision. For those deafblind people who are in employment the guide/communicator service supports them to continue to work and enables them to undertake the duties of their job.

We don't always get things right but we are focused on using service user feedback to improve the quality of the service.

We asked for suggestions on **how we can improve the service**, service users commented:

"I would like a specific G/C to visit me once a month".

This request can be managed

"Not giving me new guides as I don't feel safe or supported in what I choose to do. The guides I choose I feel confident with and will be in control of what I want to do. Those guides do an excellent job in supporting me"

Service users are involved in training new guides and are encouraged to support them as they settle into their role. This practical support is critical for their development and we will continue to persuade service users to be involved and support their learning.

"I feel it is a waste of money and time training up new guides for them just to leave. Maybe DbS could look into this".

We presently operate an ongoing recruitment process which is currently being reviewed to improve retention of newly trained guide/communicators.

"Better clarity, sending information in the correct format, texts in upper case (at all times). Emails in large font (bold)".

This was a problem encountered by one service user, after discussion to clarify his preferred communication method this has been resolved.

"Short notice availability when required".

Guide/communicators are employed on a sessional basis, funding is not available to employ someone on standby.

It was commented that Deafblind Scotland should communicate better with service users, this related mainly to late cancellations. With ongoing reviews of our systems, improvements are being implemented to our guide/communicator database and more advance notice is given to deafblind people about who their guide is which will be closely monitored and updated.

In conclusion, we know from responses that overall deafblind people feel we deliver a professional, well trained, reliable and flexible service which helps them feel supported, safe and confident to cope with the challenges of everyday life. Almost everyone would recommend the service to other people.