

THE DEAF HEALTH CHARITY SIGNHEALTH

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Claire Murdoch
Director of Mental Health
NHS England
Skipton House
22 London Road
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12 July 2022

Dear Claire

RE: NHSE's regard for the mental health of Deaf people

SignHealth is very proud to be delivering the IAPT BSL contract which began in November 2021 and is already proving to be very successful. All of us in the Deaf community were overjoyed to see NHS England commission this service as it recognises both the importance of mental health services for Deaf people and that we often need leaders and commissioners to behave differently when considering our needs.

For many years we have been attending the Clinical Reference Group for Deaf mental health, which has most recently been part of the Specialised Mental Health CRG.

We have been advised that, as a result of the clinical leadership review, Deaf mental health is to be classed as a "Respond and Advise" CRG. The communication that was circulated to us as members confirms that CRGs in this category will not hold meetings and that this classification is because "there is no agreed active programme of work for the CRG".

There is a very urgent need for a transformation of Deaf mental health services in this country.

The specially commissioned NHS Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health service is currently the only service available to Deaf children and young people, with no lower level mental health service accessible to Deaf people anywhere in England.

The Year 2 report (2021) for the READY study (Recording Emerging Adulthood in Deaf Youth), a prospective longitudinal study of deaf young people in England, Scotland and Wales has found that deaf young people are experiencing significantly poorer mental well-being than their peers in the general population. The READY cohort registers only 3% of high well-being compared to 15% in the general population of the same age. 49% of the cohort have probable or possible depression which is a major cause of concern flagged by the study. Another worrying picture highlighted is that over 40% of participants registered in the two most lonely categories and over 15% had nobody to turn to if they felt depressed, unhappy or lonely.



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For the past three years a coalition of charities, private sector organisations and NHS Deaf CAMHS have been trying to engage with NHS England about transforming this provision, most recently through the provider collaborative structure, but we have been unable to make progress. Recently, colleagues from Deaf CAMHS presented a proposal to extend the Deaf CAMHS service to 18-25 year old Deaf people and this received support from the Programme of Care Board yet there is no clarity on how this might actually be progressed or funded.

NHS England's own review of adult secure services in 2019 confirmed that more than 90% of Deaf adults in low and medium secure settings are ready for discharge yet there are no community services being commissioned and therefore nowhere for people to be discharged to.

We have been working with your colleagues on providing access to 24/7 mental health crisis lines. These services are not accessible to Deaf people who use British Sign Language and no consideration has so far been given to ensuring that they are. This is despite BSL access to 999 emergency services having just launched across the UK.

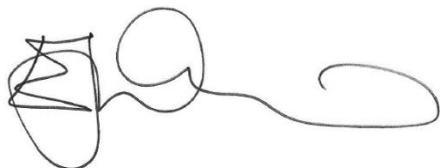
In 2020 NHS England commissioned a rapid review of BSL Interpreting across the NHS and you approved the 17 recommendations made by the review yet none of these has been actioned and there is no action plan in place or process of governance to ensure their implementation. One of these recommendations includes the broadening of BSL access to NHS 111 to ensure that Deaf people can access health provision in a similar way to the BSL Health Access service which SignHealth launched at the start of Covid. That service was forced to close in March 2021 due to a lack of funding, despite receiving 8,000 calls in its final month of operation, and no service has replaced it since.

In the meantime, as Deaf people, we are fighting for our rights and raising the profile of our beautiful community. This year we have won Oscars and BAFTAs and we have finally seen proper recognition of British Sign Language with the passing of the BSL Act.

It has never been more urgent or important that we work together to transform the provision of mental health services for Deaf people. We urge you to reconsider the classification of the Clinical Reference Group and thereby provide the framework for us to move this work forward.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Watson-O'Neill', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James Watson-O'Neill
Chief Executive

Co-signed by:

Dr Sophie Roberts, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, National Deaf CAMHS and Clinical Lead for National Deaf CAMHS

Dr Alex Hamilton, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist and Clinical Director – Medium Secure Division, St Andrew's Northampton and Clinical Lead for National Deaf Adult Mental Health Services

Issy Belither, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist for National High Secure Deaf Service Rampton Hospital

Dr Steve Carney, Consultant Psychiatrist, National Deaf Mental Health Service, Birmingham

Emmanuel Chan, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Mental Health and Deafness Service, Stockton on Tees

Lucy Gilbert, Team Manager, Deaf Service Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Dr Mary Griggs, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Specialised Deaf Service, Bristol

Rachael Hayes, Deaf Service Consultant, National Deaf CAMHS

Dr GS Kaler, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, National High Secure Deaf Service, Rampton Hospital and Deaf prison in-reach service

Catherine Lock, Charge Nurse, Elysium Healthcare

Jason Lowe, Clinical Nurse Practitioner, Rampton Hospital and Deaf Prison in-reach service

Dr Sodi Mann, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, National Deaf Mental Health Service, John Denmark Unit

Dr Omar Nasiruddin, Consultant Psychiatrist, National Deaf Mental Health Service, Deaf Adult Community Team, South West London and St George's mental Health NHS Trust

Lenka Novak, Deaf Advisor, South West London and St George's mental Health NHS Trust

Shadreck Seke, Lead Nurse, All Saints Hospital Elysium Healthcare

Heather Thomson, Community Practitioner, Mental Health and Deafness Service, Newcastle

Dr Jo Turner, Deaf Adult Mental Health Service

Dr Rob Turner, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, John Denmark Unit

Copied to:

Steve Barclay MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Wes Streeting MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Gillian Keegan MP, Minister of State (Minister for Care and Mental Health)

Rosena Allin-Khan MP, Shadow Minister for Mental Health

Lilian Greenwood MP, Chair of the APPG on Deafness

Rosie Cooper MP

Catherine McKinnell MP

Dr Bola Owolabi, Director, Health Inequalities, NHS England

Dr Neil Churchill, Director for Experience, Participation and Equalities

Dr Michael Brady, Deputy Director, Patient Equalities, NHS England

Dr Mike Hunter, Chair of Clinical Reference Group for Specialised Mental Health

Marlon Brown, National Lead Commissioner, Specialised Mental Health CRG