

## Introduction:

This report aims to summarise our regional preliminary findings of service user experience and expectation to Sensory Impairment Services.

Sensory Impairment refers to people who are Deaf (i.e. members of the Deaf community who use British Sign Language), deaf or hard of hearing; blind or partially sighted, people who have combined sight and hearing loss (also known as dual sensory loss) or are Deaf/Blind.

People who have a sensory impairment often require a diverse range of support. These are delivered through the Council, the NHS and also local and national voluntary organisations.

The re-commissioning of services on a Liverpool City Region footprint aims to:

- Introduce a 'one stop' sensory service with a strong focus on prevention and enablement;
- Facilitate the integration of sensory provision across the Liverpool City Region;
- Explore new models of community based provision;
- Create a platform for the long-term development of a Liverpool City Region Joint Sensory Strategy.

Commissioners acknowledge the limited time available ahead of any procurement activity to carry out a wider and more in-depth programme of engagement and consultation with regards to developing sensory impairment services. Nonetheless, it is felt that the engagement has provided sufficient feedback to provide the City Region Councils with a clear indication as to what is working reasonably well and what further service developments we need to make.

Despite the time constraints, the engagement has proved successful and a meaningful exercise in laying the foundations required for on-going discussion with the community. This approach marks a new departure in engaging with the sensory impaired community to co-productively design, improve and deliver services.

The Liverpool City Region Commissioners would like to sincerely thank all who have engaged with us to date. Liverpool City Council would also like to extend their gratitude to members of the 'Making it Happen Group' who provided their time in facilitating the focus group discussions held within the City.

The LCR Sensory Impairment Strategy offers a framework to lever change for sensory impairment services and support, and provides a model care pathway to facilitate better working relationships and service provision for users and carers. The pathway acknowledges that not all needs are similar, and service users may have different, fluctuating needs and expectations.

At present, each of the Liverpool City Region Council's (Liverpool City Council, Knowsley MBC, Sefton MBC, Wirral MBC and Halton BC) provides distinct services for people with sensory impairment. Broadly speaking the range of interventions includes:

- Registration and assessments;
- Supporting access to the community for people with a sensory impairment by accessing and providing equipment and rehabilitation;
- Facilitating communication support;

St Helen's Metropolitan Borough Council currently operate services differently, they are however partner to regional discussions and reserve the right to join the collaboration more formally at any time.

### **Service User Engagement Approach:**

The Liverpool City Region set about capturing the experiences and expectations of service users and their carers in two ways:

- 1) Engagement through Focus Groups – the following 'prompts' were used to facilitate discussions:
  - i. Considering the services you may currently be in receipt of, which aspect of these is important to you?
  - ii. What parts of services have helped or may help you the most?
  - iii. How can we do things differently to improve your independence and experience of services?
  - iv. Are there any comments / concerns you would like to raise?
- 2) Survey by questionnaire, co-ordinated and hosted by Halton County Borough Council.

### **Reason for Change:**

Initial scoping and analysis by the partnership suggest that there are opportunities to improve outcomes for people who use services and also sustainability of service should we continue to develop a joint approach to this service area.

The City region has worked locally to engage with the community and on a regional level with service providers. This on-going dialogue is imperative to successfully develop and re-design services for the future in partnership with all stakeholders.

The ambition for a regional approach to delivering services would be to provide:

- A uniform service – with the same high standard of service and equal access across the City Region;
- Appropriate and sustainable resourcing with appropriate posts and mixed skill base in place;
- A service with a sound strategic development plan devised and influenced by people who use the services – A dynamic engagement and co-productive approach will be key to the delivery of a progressive, responsive and effective service;
- Volunteer delivered services building capacity and networks within communities and ensuring sustainability.

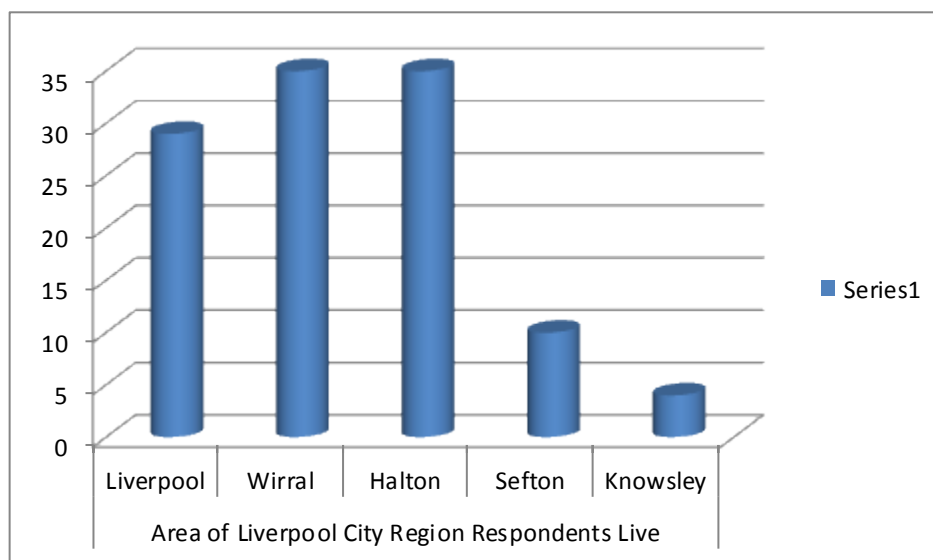
### **Response to the Liverpool City Region Service User Survey:**

A total of 116 respondents completed the questionnaire. 87% of the respondents were service users, 10% carer of an adult with a sensory loss and 4% family member of an adult who lives with a sensory loss.

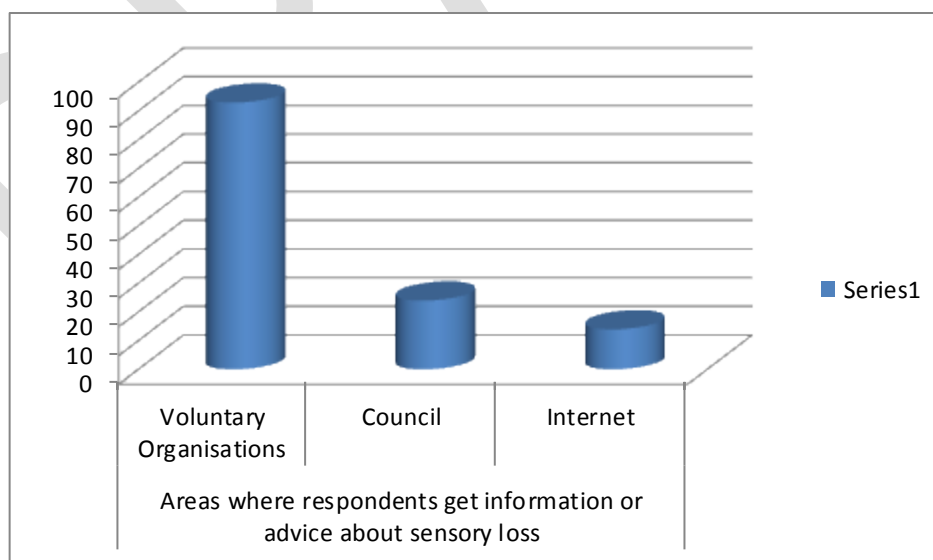
- 45 (40%) of the respondents were male
- 68 (60%) of the respondents were female

| Sensory loss                | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Blind / Visually Impaired   | 45                    | 40%        |
| Deaf / Hearing Loss         | 46                    | 41%        |
| Deaf / Blind (Dual Sensory) | 22                    | 20%        |

**Respondents' Area of Residence:**



**Source for information for individuals with sensory loss:**

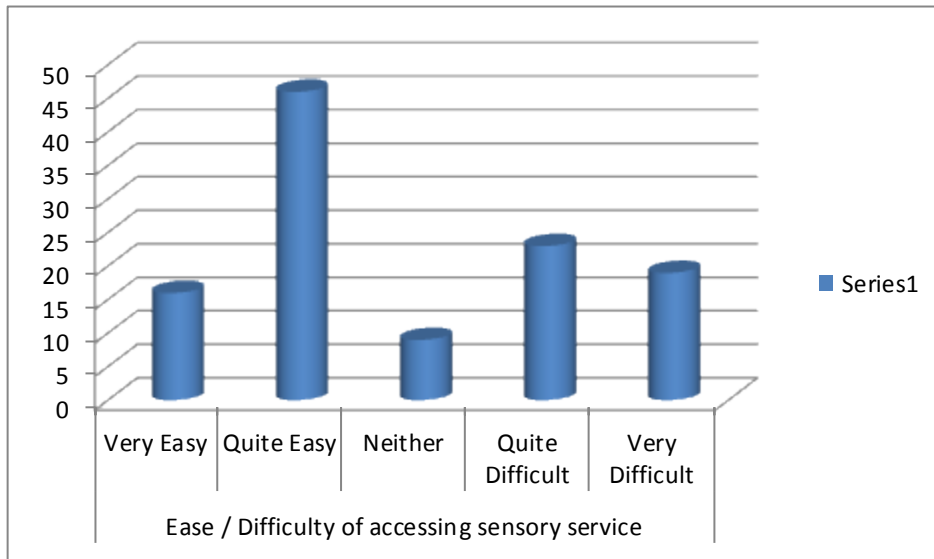


86% of respondents indicated that their main source for information was via the voluntary sector providers currently commissioned within the Liverpool City Region.

22% accessed information via the council – however during focused sessions with service users, comments were raised over accessibility e.g. council websites not having BSL videos etc.

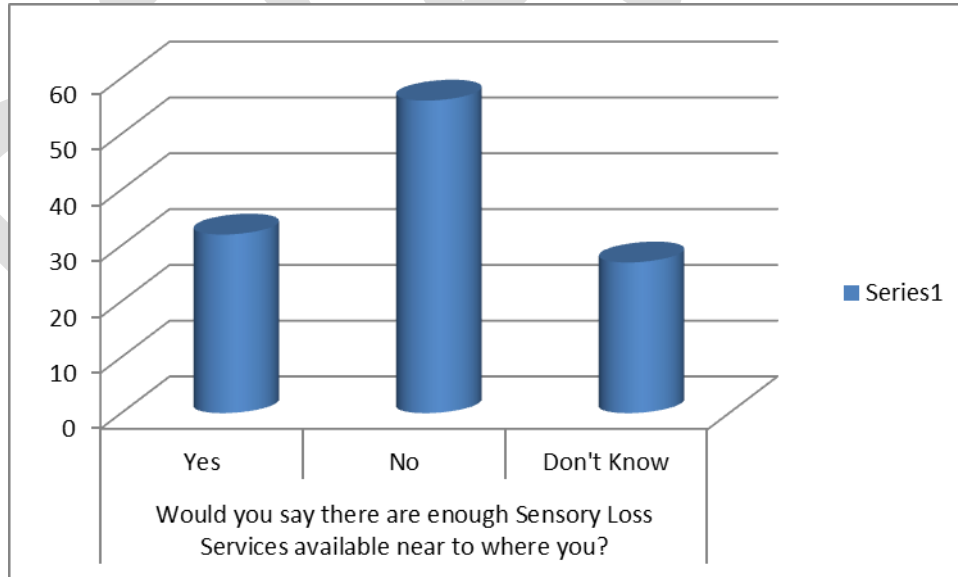
15% utilise the internet as a source for information.

**General response over accessibility:**



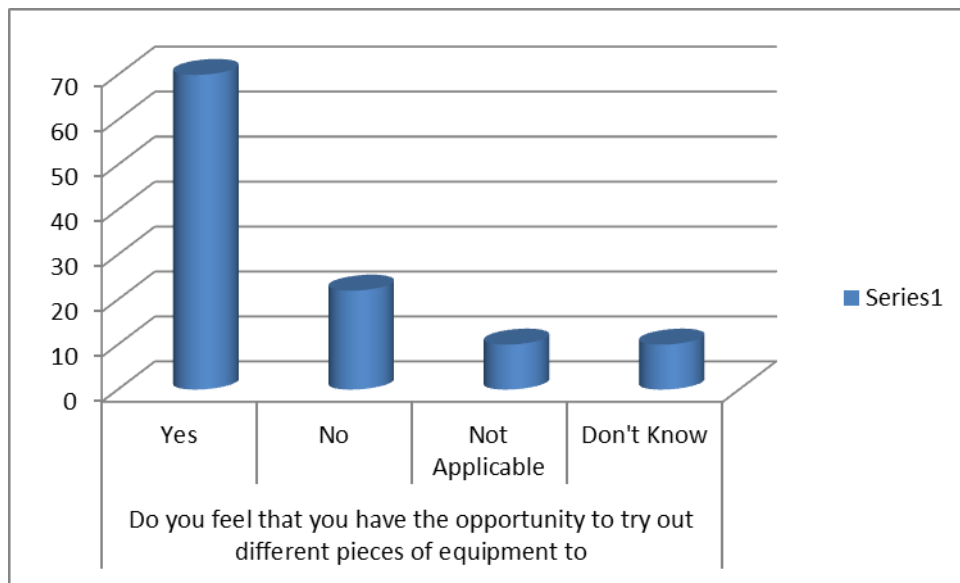
41% of respondents felt it was 'quite easy' to access sensory services. Over 30% of respondents reported it was 'quite to very difficult' to access services.

**Location of services:**



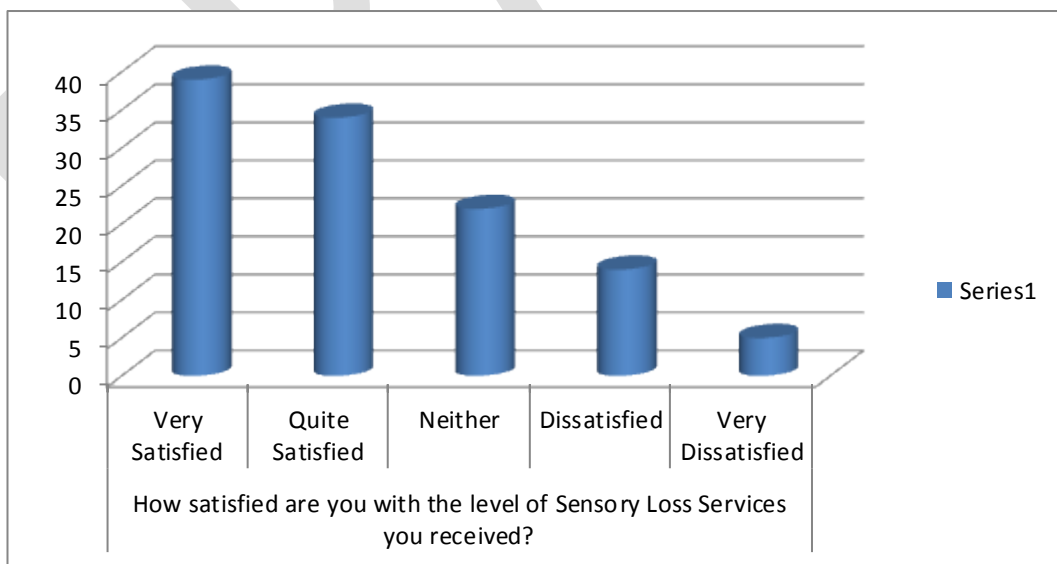
49% of the respondents don't feel that services are delivered locally. 28% feel sufficient services are delivered locally, while 24% don't have an opinion either way.

**Environmental Aids / Equipment:**



63% of the respondents felt that they were given the opportunity to try various environmental aids / equipment to support their sensory loss. 20% of the respondents did not feel they were provided with the opportunity.

**Overall satisfaction of current services:**



34% of the respondents felt very satisfied with the quality of support they currently receive  
 30% Quite Satisfied  
 19% Neither Satisfied / Dissatisfied  
 12% Dissatisfied  
 4% Very Dissatisfied

## Key Messages from Service User Engagement per Authority:

### Liverpool City Council:

A total of 9 discussion groups were held during January 2016. The sessions saw in excess of 90 service users currently in receipt of services from our existing service providers (MSDP, Christopher Grange and Bradbury Fields). We were also fortunate to capture the feedback of both the young people and parents of pupils who attend St Vincent's school for the blind.

11 Support Workers who are volunteers for our existing service providers and 9 carers were also party to discussions.

Two Liverpool City Council Officers and five 'Making it Happen' Group members co-ordinated and supported the sessions.

The expectations of service users for the future provision emerged under the following themes:

#### Reducing Isolation:

- Centre based services to provide peer support / knowledge sharing / friendship network
- "Buddy" support system for shopping / travelling / socialising
- Out of school and holiday time provision of activities for school age children
- Luncheon clubs for service users / carers
- External Activities e.g. organised day trips
- Group activities organised for minority groups (e.g. deaf / blind) who use the same communication systems
- Guide Dog Training

#### Accessibility:

- Co-ordination of services and one point of access e.g. centre / hub
- Adequate support services for children in transition
- Joined up working / communication between services
- Interpreting services should be more readily available in public and health care settings
- Drop in facility for transcription of documents to Braille
- Integration of visual and hearing impaired services

#### Information Technology:

- Use of technology to improve independence wherever possible – Apps on laptops / smart phones / iPad and Telecare Equipment
- Roll out Tablets for Health (replacement for Typetalk)

#### Transport

- Offer should be widened e.g. Merseylink ceases pickup at 10pm

#### Staffing Roles

- Availability of a counsellor / Rehabilitation Officer

- “Keeping in touch” arrangements after any period of rehabilitation for support / refresh of skills
- Floating / outreach support
- Support with home issues e.g. moving, problems with utility services, making living space safe
- Fact finding / signposting / problem solving
- Flexible in skills to communication with all service users
- Help with communication issues i.e. letter reading and writing / telephone calls

#### **Awareness Raising**

- GPs should have more knowledge of sensory support services in order to signpost adequately and appropriately
- Commercial Businesses / health care providers / general public etc. should be aware of the special requirements of service users
- Support network / education sessions for families / carers

#### **Training / Education**

- Training in life skills e.g. safe methods of cooking / use of cane
- Provision of different learning opportunities in one place to offer choice
- Skills taught via a “hands on” practical approach which is preferable to listening to a TV or radio
- Smaller groups in educational setting with one to one support
- Opportunities to learn braille and IT skills
- One to one training at home for deaf / blind services users for Braille and mobility

#### **Employment**

- Improve the employment offer from businesses to service users in respect of access and support
- Pursue Corporate Responsibility avenues of businesses for volunteering opportunities to gain experience

#### **Influencing Shaping of Services**

- Service Users / Carers should be involved with providers in decision making and also on-going monitoring of services

### **Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council:**

#### **Deaf / Hard of Hearing Consultation:**

Over 42 individuals attended an event co-ordinated on behalf of Wirral by MSDP. Hard of Hearing group felt disadvantaged as there was no Lip reader. Boo Stone (Commissioning Lead, Wirral MBC) agreed to stay behind and continue separately with them.

### **Access to support**

- More support required for customers during the week. Not enough Duty time from Social Workers or Support Staff. Only offered on a Tuesday (all day) and a Thursday morning. This was the main theme that the customers felt most strongly about in Wirral. Support worker time was thought of as most valuable.

### **Children's support**

- The children's group has gone and there feel like there is no support for children (it was explained that this was an Adults consultation but BS would feed back to that Department).

### **DWP and other services**

- Customers rely heavily on MSDP as DWP and other services like the One Stop Shops cannot cater for their communication needs. Deaf and Hard of Hearing people are suffering more due to this lack of access.
- Individuals felt that there was very little employment support for Deaf people and this needed to improve.

### **Communication & Technology**

- Communication is key for people – difficult to use the phone systems due to permission always being needed. Easier ways needed. Technology should help this. Better solutions for emergency support such as Telecare was needed. They felt it was no good having Telecare that had a speaking person on the other end as they couldn't communicate with them.

### **Access to Clubs and support**

- Both the Heard of Hearing and the BSL clients felt that there could be more sessions for the different groups. The hard of hearing group felt that their groups was dwindling and that they needed support to boost numbers as this was a very important group for them. Reasons for group numbers decreasing was discussed and options to help encourage new members was discussed.
- The BSL clients were willing to form themselves into a committee again and run some sessions themselves at the weekends at the centre. Lyn Evans said that she would need to take this back to the CEO of MSDP. – a big willingness to be more involved.

### **Building**

- People felt very strongly that they needed a base in Wirral and that they had heard rumours that the building was going to close. Boo Stone explained that the new tender process would mean that there was no guarantee that MSDP would win the new tender but DASS would make sure that customers views were represented and it was understood that some sort of base would be needed for the service moving forward.
- People felt that they had questions they wanted to ask MSDP about the building and they have requested a separate meeting with the CEO and Board to discuss this. They felt disheartened that there was no access to the upstairs of the building. They offered to help



and repair the building if needed and wanted access at the weekend. Offers to open up and run sessions.

- There were also other questions that they asked about the money that MSDP was spending. This was referred to MSDP. Cll John Salter in attendance said that he would take this up with MSDP on behalf of the customers.

#### **Other**

- An Access Bill in Scotland for Deaf People was mentioned. – Research required.
- Learning from other communities – Dublin was mentioned as a good example.
- Quality of Life is really key and Isolation is a problem.

#### **Additional Hard of Hearing group discussion:**

The group felt that they received limited support from MSDP. They felt that the social workers and support workers supported the profound community more than the Hard of Hearing. They were asked if they felt comfortable using the wider DASS social workers – some of the group had done this but had found it difficult.

They would like to see support with building up their Hard of Hearing group that was very important to them but they did appreciate and reflected that probably technology and stigma meant that not so many people were coming forward to the group.

They were a little concerned about discrimination and found it harder to integrate with general clubs as they struggled to hear and that then contributed to feeling isolated.

They mentioned the NADP – National Association of Deaf People/

They would like to see more support for environmental aids – wanted to know where they could go to view and try this equipment. They found using phones difficult – perhaps more information about what is available would be helpful.

They also would like more information on other clubs and activities that they might be able to access.

They thought main stream services needed to have more Hearing Awareness training. Some of the group had accessed POPIN service.

They felt strongly that they needed a base for their club/group although they acknowledged that it didn't have to be in a dedicated building it could be within another building – what was really important was staying together. They would appreciate support in trying to build numbers.

#### **Deafblind consultation:**

Two individuals were interviewed with the assistance of an interpreter.

The general view was that they were happy with the service they received although there was an issue with loneliness. Both felt that the Thursday club that they came to was a lifeline. The volunteers were excellent and they felt there should be more volunteers – particularly drivers. There were concerns about the cuts to services and Merseytravel was mentioned. Both thought they would like more support in the summer months to get out and about more. The support that MSPD provided in relation to shopping/news appointments etc. was greatly valued. There was a view that more access to information about Hearing loss would be appreciated. More assistance from Adult Social Services might be needed in the future but both individuals were very independent. Other groups were difficult to access once hearing loss was added to visual loss as the level of noise became inhibitive.

### **Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council:**

Two events were held, both of which co-ordinated by Bradbury Fields to meet members of the Active Vision Group.

One event was held at the Knowsley Centre for Independent Living (CIL) and the other at Bradbury Fields.

The groups understood the need for Council's to identify and reduce spending and although they all agreed it would not be good to join up services for visually impaired and deaf; however it would be good to have one place of contact for information, signposting or support.

The group raised their concerns should Bradbury Fields not be successful in bidding for the new contract and worry about developing trust should there be a new service provider

Residents have developed positive relationships with staff at Bradbury Fields and the CIL over time and the staff understands their needs.

The group find it very important to have regular meeting with each other as they share each other's knowledge around what services are available and support each other emotionally.

#### **Care Management**

- Mix feedback was received regarding social worker support.
- None could report any specific problems in this area other than not knowing who their social worker is. There was a feeling of frustration regarding yearly reviews as you don't always have the same person carrying them out therefore having to explain your needs all over again.

#### **Transport**

- Issues regarding transport links when accessing services was raised highlighting it would cost residents of Kirkby £24 return to Bradbury Fields.
- Some of the group were aware of the Ring and Ride Service provided by Mersey link which is free but felt it was difficult to use.

#### **Future Services**

- Accessible Information.
- It would help to have the same person co-ordinating your support and to contact regarding any issues. Have a direct number to reach services for those with sensory impairment.

- Services which used to be provided by Christopher Grange were very important to them e.g., rehabilitation skills – how to identify money, cookery, computers. Also practical skills / making things e.g., knitting, woodwork which makes you feel your achieving something.
- Assistive Technology / equipment – the group highlighted the ongoing advances in this area and how it is important to keep people updated with what is available although difficulties in meeting cost of equipment. Example given on how the talking microwave, radio for the blind, colour detector, pen friend which reads food tins, has helped keep their independence.
- Staff need more understanding / clarity around what services are available if deaf, blind, partially deaf/blind as currently getting confusing messages on what support you are entitled to.
- Many of the group reported other health needs which need to be taken into account when setting up future service
- The group felt sensory awareness training is required across Council / Health services for front line staff. Need joined up pathway across all services.
- Poor service from GPs – refusing to allow Guide Dog in surgery, information which is not accessible. Not aware of what services exist across the borough.
- KMBC website not accessible; timetables of bin collections, council/committee reports in pdf format.
- General lack of communication from Council for sensory impaired. There needs to be a regional database of services in accessible / audio format.
- Services need to be more widely publicised. More consultations need to take place with sensory impaired not just for those in wheelchairs.
- Transport issues – Services have to be accessible. Some service users have to get 3 buses to get to Bradbury Fields as don't provide mini bus / taxi service anymore. Example given re London transport who have audio system available.

#### **Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council:**

Please see attached consultation report compiled by colleagues at Sefton MBC.



Sefton Consultation  
report.docx

#### **Halton Borough Council:**

Data currently being compiled by colleagues at Halton BC.