



Consultation Report: Review of Sensory Services Provision in Sefton



Consultation Report

Review of Sensory Services

What is Sensory Impairment?

Sensory Impairment includes people with varying degrees of hearing loss, sight loss and also with loss of both senses. Both hearing and sight loss can be present from birth, but for the majority of people a sensory loss will occur later in life, and can range from a relatively low level loss to a much more profound loss.

What Services does the Council currently provide for people with a Sensory Impairment?

The Council currently delivers, and/or commissions, a number of services from a variety of providers to support people with hearing and visual impairments. Sensory services are currently delivered through a mix of internal provision, commissioned external providers, and grant funded groups. However, this model is not providing a consistently reliable or high quality service.

In order to address the concerns raised by the visually impaired community the Council carried out a review of sensory services. Linked to the Council's Cabinet considered recommendations regarding savings following from the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector review and agreed a budget reduction of £152,769 relating to small grants paid by Adult Social Care to the VCF sector. This budget reduction impacts upon several of the organisations that provide services that support people with a sensory impairment. Thus it was decided to decommission current services and commission a single Hearing Impairment/Visual Impairment service and provide a service that provides a clear and consistent Pathway. In addition it was agreed that the service will be commissioned on a Merseyside City Region basis to ensure that by aggregating council budgets with other neighbouring local authorities, and jointly contracting a single contract to cover all sensory services, we will secure a better, more flexible and cost effective service.

The Plans for a New Sensory Service

The main objectives of the new sensory service will be to deliver the following outcomes which are built on the principals laid down by the UK Vision (2013) Strategy. It is considered that these are outcomes that fit across both sensory impairment communities.

- Objective 1:** Citizens understand the importance of looking after their sight and hearing
- Objective 2:** People living with a sensory impairment will be supported to regain and maintain their independence for as long as possible
- Objective 3:** People living with a sensory impairment will have a positive experience of care and support.
- Objective 4:** People living with a sensory impairment will have access to information and support to manage their health and wellbeing.
- Objective 5:** People living with a sensory impairment will shape future services
- Objective 6:** People living with a sensory impairment will be supported to participate fully in the wider community

There are three main groupings that the service will be for:

- People with a recognised sensory impairment;
- People at risk of sensory loss due to a range of factors;
- People that are likely to be living with a 'hidden and untreated' sensory loss, e.g. people who have had a stroke, have a learning disability or dementia.

The Consultation and Engagement Plan

A consultation and engagement plan was developed in order to determine the views of the visually and hearing impaired communities. The purpose of the consultation was to enable people who use the service to have an input into shaping a new all encompassing sensory service

The purpose of the consultation and engagement activity was:-

- To develop a better understanding of the needs of the visual and hearing impaired community
- To Determine the quality of existing sensory services
- To explore alternative forms of service delivery
- To share best practice

Consultation and Engagement methodology

The following consultation and engagement activity took place:-

- A joint provider engagement and consultation event took place 10.00 am – 12.00 pm on 26th November 2015 at the Quaker House Liverpool.. Existing and potential service providers were engaged with via a joint local authority event organised by Liverpool City Council. The information gathered from these workshops will be used to form the service model and specification which will be shared with the client groups prior to ITT.
- Two consultation sessions with people with visual impairments and their carers were held during January 2016. Two established groups for people with visual impairments were used in order to engage with people. The consultation and engagement activity took the form of a series of discussions around what was working well with the current service, what people valued, what wasn't working quite so well and what people would like to see in a new service. The sessions were facilitated by Council officers and notes of the discussion were taken to inform this consultation report.
- Because of the particular needs of people with a hearing impairment, a separate session was held at Southport Centre for the Deaf in January 2016. Officers from the Council attended and facilitated a session, using the same approach as for people with a visual impairment. They were supported by a BSL Interpreter.

In addition, the other Merseyside Authorities used a questionnaire to gather the views of people in their areas, and residents in Sefton were given the opportunity to also complete this if they wished.

It should be noted that bearing in mind the specific needs of the groups being engaged with, and previous comments made by people with sensory impairments around the difficulties they can face in accessing written material, Sefton decided not to develop its own questionnaire for this consultation and engagement activity, preferring instead to adopt a more face to face methodology of collecting people's views..

Key themes emerging from what people told us

These are the key themes from the consultation:-

- More information is needed on the services that are available for people with sensory impairments. They suggested that there should be a "welcome pack" that gives information on where to go for help, what equipment is available, and signposting to groups such as Galloways, and Southport Centre for the Deaf.
- People value the services they get from the VCF organisations such as Galloways, Southport Centre for the Deaf, and so on.
- People rely on equipment to give them independence and to undertake daily tasks but there are issues with the maintenance and upkeep of it. There also needs to be information about what is available.
- They have some concerns about the Mersey-wide service and whether this will reduce what is available to them, but recognise that it could be an opportunity for the service to improve.
- The VI Forums should be publicised more.

What People with Sensory Impairments Told Us about the Service

People with Visual Impairments

Officers from the Council attended the Visual Impairment Consultation Group on 14th January 2016 at Formby Library, and the Visual Impairment Self Help Group held at SING Plus, on 15th January 2016. Notes of the discussions were taken. The session at Formby Library was advertised in the local Talking Newspaper as well as to the group's normal membership.

The background to the proposed new service was explained and what the likely impacts would be for service users.

These are the comments made by people with Visual Impairments at the VI Consultation Group:-

What they think of the current Service

- When I first moved into Sefton from another town I didn't know where anything was. I made contact with Galloways very quickly and they helped me a lot. I found the local talking newspapers and there is lots of information in there. I had no information at all from Sefton Council although the rehab officer did come and take me round the block.

I have a big issue with bins – they are very dangerous to blind people. The smaller food waste and recycling boxes are dumped ~~anywhere~~ on anywhere on the pavement and blind people who use sticks quite often don't find them in time. They are supposed to be put back where residents leave them but they are just left anywhere. In my experience a lot of disabled people don't complain.

Road signage is also an issue. Some signs are at a height where you can walk into them and hurt yourself.

- Galloways in Southport is good. There is somebody there to help you to fill in forms and so on and you don't have to take up time at the CABs. They have social groups too which are good.
- We did have to ROVIs but now there is one and the service is poor.
- The Blind Veterans Service is good but it is specialized and the only look after people who were in the armed forces. They give good services – 100% better than Sefton.
- There were places we could go to in the Council to get things free of charge such as self-threading needles, liquid indicators and so on, but over the years services have been taken away. We have to go to RNIB or Galloways but they want money and not everybody can afford it if they are on a fixed income. Shouldn't have been taken away from us. A talking watch costs £25 which is a lot of money to some people.

- We have to fight for everything – if we don't qualify then we just don't get it.
- There is a hand held sat nav that can take you safely from A to B. This is a piece of equipment that is available elsewhere but we can't get it in Sefton. It is essential for giving us independence.
- Is there a register of blind people? This is essential for Merseytravel for disabled person's travel pass and dial a ride. People need orientation training to use transport systems. There is still no real time information available for the buses. Transport is a gateway to a lot of other services for us.
- Some people (at Bradbury Fields) are told that they don't qualify to go on the register. There is a need for organisations to make sure that if people are eligible to be on the register then they are on it.
- When I registered I did receive a phone call – (she) asked me what I needed and explained what being registered meant and what you might get from Sefton. But I've had nothing since.
- Can you put a leaflet or package together for newly registered blind people so that they know what is out there? Could this be included in the specification for the new service? It could be done via download on the pc which would be easy to update. It needs to be available in different formats such as CD, audio etc.
- Need to provide information in audio format – including health and travel information. If the Council has the facility to do this it could sell it to other providers.
- The VI forum is valuable for holding officers to task.
- Problem is that not everybody knows about the Forum. Only the people who attend know about it. Signposting to groups such as the VI Forum and Ability needs to be improved.
- The service was good in the past when more staff were available – we used to get a lot of help.

What do they think could be improved or part of the new service

- As part of the new service ask the providers to promote the forums more. Perhaps it could be expanded.
- Registration is important as it helps other organisations to provide services to this cohort.
- Need to be made aware of what's out there.
- If the new service covers 5 areas may increase awareness of services that are available in other Council's that we don't get.
- Will services be universal across all 5 areas?
- Improved accessibility of information – more available on line and in audio format.
- Depending on where you live you may use hospitals outside of the Liverpool City Region area such as Ormskirk and Southport. Will the new service operate there? I have an ELOW there and she gives me all the information I need. I think there should be more of them.
- Need more signposting to services and information. People are finding out things from third parties.
- It is difficult to get a place at Christopher Grange (intensive rehab service based in Liverpool) and it is hard to get to, particularly if you live in the North of the Borough and don't have any training to use public transport.
- I rely on support from Galloways and Peer Support.
- Is there a central point where people can ring to get information on where to go for advice and support?
- I don't like to ring the One Stop Shop if I have a problem. They will take a message and get somebody to ring you back but this doesn't always happen. Could we have a special number to ring direct?

- Digital technology is very important and is the biggest help to me and Galloways helped me to use it. It turned things around for me.
- Need support for the VI Forum. Need to make it more visible and obvious. Nobody told me about the Forum – I thought you had to be a member of another society to join.
- The Forum needs to be more than just a Council meeting – should include other services too.
- The equipment supplied by the service needs to be updated such as communications. A simple mobile phone that isn't too technical would be a great help. Give us equipment that we can use. We could do away with some of the outdated equipment being provided.

These are some of the problems that people with Visual Impairments experience

- Street furniture is a big problem.
- Cars parking in unacceptable locations such as on the pavement.
- There are problems with the pedestrian crossing at Sussex Road/ Derby Road/Ashley Road in Southport – it is very dangerous and not just for people with a VI.
- Brownmoor Lane, Crosby – no crossing there apart from school crossing patrol at school times. If you are travelling by bus you have to get off at a bus stop further down the road so that you can find a safe place to cross. Causes social isolation.
- 20mph zones are unenforceable.
- Shops and cafes put chairs, tables and A Boards outside which cause obstructions. Could the new service ask for dialogue with street scene services to enforce this. Also to include road crossings.
- There is no crossing in Birkdale Village.
- The Council should tell shops and cafes to put their A boards against their shops. Cafes don't follow the rules and there aren't many enforcement officers. Needs new rules and regulations.

- May need some awareness raising sessions with shops and cafes to make them aware of the problems.
- Will the new service be able to influence Council departments on these things?

Do you think a service operated across the Liverpool City Region will be better for you?

- If handled properly the pooling of resources could be an effective tool. If the ROVI is off another would be available.
- There needs to be good communications – listen to what people want.
- If it's right for us it will work.
- Concerned that one service provider might be too big?
- If the service improves will there be more demand?
- Would be happier if we could stay as a local service and not have to go through a call centre. Want to deal with people in our area.
- Local Services are better so we can talk to them. Will the new service know the local area?
- How will it work – will there be more than one provider?
- If we have problems or issues now we contact Sefton. In future who will we have to contact?
- Will we be fighting for resources against the other areas? We won't know who to deal with. Will we get bounced between different officers?
- We need an accessible service in our locality.
- We will have nobody to talk to in our area who can deal with issues.
- Point of contact and responsibility should remain as local as possible.

- Before the new contract is agreed can we meet with possible tenderers to talk about the contract so that they understand what we face as people with visual and hearing impairments?

These are the comments from the Visual Impairment Self Help Group

- We need to know what is available.
- I would prefer a smaller service.
- The coach that brings us to the meeting is the most important thing. I wouldn't come out in the daylight if it wasn't for that.
- I have had some adaptations – handrail and shower.

What do you like about the ~~services~~service?

- Entertainment
- I got the red dots (bump ons) on my machinery.
- ~~It's~~It's good to get something from somebody that you know.
- Getting out – helps to avoid social isolation. Half days out would be good to places such as the Atkinson in Southport.
- ~~We have~~We have to buy our own gadgets. Would be good to know what is available free of charge.
- We need more information – a direct telephone number so that we can contact somebody that we know.
- I don't have a computer or a mobile phone so I can't access services if they are on line.
- I was assessed a long time ago and had nothing since.

What problems do they face?

- Parked cars on the pavements, street furniture, bicycles riding on the pavement are obstacles that make it difficult for me.
- Please brush leaves off the pavements and remove the dog dirt – I ~~can't~~can't see it and stand in it.

- I get the bus occasionally but the bus shelters have the glass at the front that gives me problems with the fumes.
- Temporary closures of bus stops causes issues for people with VI.
- Day Centres aren't on bus routes making it difficult to get there as you have to get a taxi.
- I am very independent but do find buses and obstructions on the pavement to be an issue.
- I am worried about pavements and hazards/kerbs. Wheelie bins are difficult.

Do they think that the new service will be better?

- I think it's a good idea to merge all the pots of money so we may get more things.
- Good idea as long as we get something out of it.
- Will be good to have a service that covers hearing and visual impairments.
- Social activities would be good.
- I'm not sure – a bit worried about how the service will operate over a bigger area.
- Not happy – when ~~the hospital~~the hospitals merged service went worse. We had to travel further. Hope it won't be the same. Needs to be a personal service.
- Needs to be fair distribution across all the areas. Some areas have more people with a VI. There are lots of people not registered may be a chance to get them onto it.

People with a Hearing Impairment

Officers from the Council attended the Southport Centre for Deaf People on ~~9th February~~ 9th February 2016. A BSL Interpreter also attended to translate.

What do people think of the current service?

- Minicomms and text phones help people to communicate
- Visual doorbells and smoke alarms are essential.
- Equipment is essential to help improve a deaf person's social life.
- Police provide personal alarms and alarms in the home
- Need information on what people can get to help them. People don't know what is on offer.
- The telephone is difficult to use. I have a speaker to help me. I have difficulty with foreign callers from call centres. Is there anything we can do to block calls?

What problems do people face?

- ~~I have~~ have had equipment from the service but they don't provide it any more. I am worried about what will happen if it breaks. I will have to pay for it myself.
- My minicom is broken. We have to buy it ourselves now and it costs £300-£400. It means that I can't make calls by myself and I have to ask somebody else to do it for me.
- My telephone is also broken – I need it to stay in contact with my mum who lives in Preston. I can't use text on mobile phone as my mother has a VI.

What would people like to see in the new service?

- Needs to provide telephone equipment – and repairs. ~~It's~~ It's frustrating to have to ask somebody else to do it for you. If you speak to the bank they won't speak to a helper unless you give permission but I can't use the phone!

- There needs to be more contact with SDC – this is the first contact we have had with the service for a long time.
- We need more information and signposting to where we can get equipment such as doorbells and alarms. If services exist we need to know about them.
- The textphone is a lifeline for us. Technical problems need to be sorted. I needed to ring the emergency services and they understood me and came straight away. If I hadn't have had the textphone I would have been in difficulty. I don't want to rely on other people.

What do you think about the service being across the Merseyside Region?

- Sefton has a bigger % of people with hearing loss and people who use hearing aids. Will we ~~get less~~ get less service because we have more people with hearing loss?
- I use Ormskirk hospital to get help but they have a phone system where you have to press 1 for something, 2 for something else and so on. I have left messages and people haven't got back to me.

Responses to Mersey-wide Questionnaires

Six questionnaires were completed by Sefton residents. These were included in the analysis of the questions across the Mersey region.

The responses were:-

Where do you go to get Information or Advice about your sensory impairment?

	No. of responses
The Local Council	5
Internet	2
Voluntary Organisations	Galloways RNIB Sefton Pensioners' Advocacy Centre

Other

The Hospital

How easy do you find it to access services to help you with your sensory impairment?

	<u>No. of responses</u>
<u>Very easy</u>	
<u>Quite easy</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Neither</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Quite difficult</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Very difficult</u>	<u>2</u>

Do you have enough information about Drop-In Centres or social activities for people with hearing impairment in your area?

	<u>No. of responses</u>
<u>Yes</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>No</u>	
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>3</u>

Would you say that there are enough sensory impairment services available near to where you live?

	<u>No. of responses</u>
<u>Yes</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>No</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Don't know</u>	

Comments

Find it difficult to access

Insufficient staff to cover area

Greater choice in Liverpool for those with more mobility

Council is dreadful. Galloways good, but not good enough

Need to travel to either Southport or Liverpool

Do you feel that you have the opportunity to try out different pieces of equipment to help out with your sight or hearing loss?

	<u>No. of responses</u>
<u>Yes</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>No</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Don't know</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Not applicable</u>	<u>2</u>

Comments

But limited by what local voluntary society has
Council no. Galloways some.
I usually contact the seller

Please tell us if you have any equipment to support your sensory loss that was:

	<u>No. of responses</u>
<u>Provided by social services</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Purchased by yourself</u>	<u>5</u>

Comments

Items of small equipment provided by authority. Major equipment self purchased.

How satisfied are you with the level of sensory impairment services you have received

	<u>No. of responses</u>
<u>Very satisfied</u>	
<u>Quite satisfied</u>	
<u>Neither</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Very dissatisfied</u>	<u>1</u>

Comments

Cannot access easily

Find getting services difficult

Not enough rehabilitation staff to cover Sefton for mobility, braille training

More staff to cover the area would help for mobility, etc.

Form not accessible! Why not emailed in doc or docx format. No information from Council. Do get braille but very poorly delivered. No other help or input.

Very little contact with local authority on personal needs

What would you score your current sensory impairment services out of 10?

	<u>No. of responses</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>

If you didn't score a 10, what would make it a 10?

More rehab staff

More help from social services

Improved staffing, better access to services

More staff to cover the area. Also I have had to ask someone else to fill this form in for me because the print is too small for me to read it. It could be on audio.

Need accessible form

Regular contact from ROVI ongoing through the years NOT just when newly registered in order to keep up with latest developments on services available.

The print on this questionnaire is so small it is difficult to read for someone with ordinary eyesight

Postcodes of respondents

PR9

L21

PR8

PR8

PR9

L31

Gender

<u>Male</u>	<u>3</u>
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<u>Female</u>	<u>2</u>
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Do you have

<u>Sight Loss</u>	<u>5</u>
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Hearing Loss

Both

Preferred method of communication

BSL

Lip Reading

<u>Braille</u>	<u>2</u>
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<u>Audio</u>	<u>2</u>
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<u>Large colour print</u>	<u>2</u>
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<u>Email, Doc, Docx, PDF</u>	<u>1</u>
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Age

18 or under

<u>19-64</u>	<u>3</u>
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65-79

<u>80+</u>	<u>1</u>
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Have you been assessed by Social Services?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>3</u>
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<u>No</u>	<u>2</u>
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Don't know