

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **JOINT LIFELONG LEARNING AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **THURSDAY, 4 JUNE 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (EDUCATION AND YOUTH), CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)**

SUBJECT: **HEARING IMPAIRMENT FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides Members with information regarding current provision of support to children and adults with a hearing impairment in Flintshire.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.1 It is estimated that in 2015, 26-32 children aged 9-17 years have a hearing impairment and 16,354 people aged 18+ are living in Flintshire with a moderate or severe hearing impairment. A further 360 people are predicted to have a profound hearing impairment.

2.2 As illustrated in Appendix 1, this prevalence is projected to rise significantly, due in part to the fact that people are living longer and a proportion of hearing loss is associated with the ageing process. The predicted total number of people aged 18+ to have a moderate or severe hearing impairment reaching 22,697 by 2030 and the number with a profound hearing impairment reaching 553 in the same time period.

2.3 Whilst many people who live with a hearing impairment or who are profoundly deaf, would not describe themselves as living with a disability, many would be protected under the Equality Act 2010 as:

- any individual who is profoundly deaf and uses British Sign Language, are likely to fit the definition within the Act of having a disability; and
- any individual who wears a hearing aid may also fit the definition.¹

<http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/supporting-you/rights-and-benefits/disability-discrimination-and-the-law/what-is-the-equality-act.aspx>

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The following table shows the total number of people by age group who were actively being supported by Social Services in early May 2015, who are noted as having a level of hearing impairment, although it is important to recognise that this may not be a factor in the individual's eligibility for services.

0-18 years	18-64 years	65-74 years	75-84 years	85+ years	Total
7	84	46	116	289	542

3.2 As demonstrated above, the vast majority of people with a hearing loss do not come into direct contact with Social Services and would not meet eligibility criteria for social care.

3.3 However, the local authority has a legal responsibility to consider the effect of its decisions and impact of service delivery on all of those covered under the Equality Act, 2010 as a protected group.

3.4 Social Services currently have contracts in place until September 2015 with two providers within the Third Sector; North Wales Deaf Association and the Deafness Support Network, to provide a range of support and services to people who have a hearing impairment or who are profoundly deaf.

3.5 North Wales Deaf Association (NWDA) provide a liaison service for people with a hearing loss or who are profoundly deaf through the provision of advocates, lip readers and British Sign Language interpreters to facilitate improved communication with a range of services.

3.6 NWDA also offer a drop in service once a week for people to seek assistance with correspondence for example, they facilitate the quarterly meetings of the Deaf Forum and the Mold Deaf Club. They also provide training in how to speak in a way that allows others to lip read more easily when you communicate with them.

3.7 The Deafness Support Network provide a range of services for people who are hard of hearing. Funding by the local authority enables a Technical Hearing Advisor to work in Flintshire for 2.5 days per week to undertake individual assessments, provide appropriate signposting and advice, access to equipment, or help to set up a text communication routes in emergency situations for example.

3.8 Within each assessment, the Advisor also considers the mental well-being of residents in response to work that has been undertaken at a national level that demonstrates that people with a hearing loss are under-represented within Mental Health Services. If there are any indications that the individual has a low mood for example and with

their permission, an agreement has therefore been reached with Community Mental Health Teams that a direct referral can be made into the service rather than via a GP for example.

3.9 Through this contract, Flintshire residents are also able to access a specialist centre in Chester that offers each individual the opportunity to try a large range of equipment to find that which best meets their specific needs.

3.10 Between January 2014 – January 2015, the Technical Hearing Advisor visited 186 people, of which 104 were issues with equipment to assist with their communication needs and others were supported to get their equipment repaired for example to avoid a replacement being needed.

3.11 A significant proportion of referrals are made from audiology departments and through word of mouth within the community and demand for support is such that the waiting time for an assessment is currently 4-5 months.

3.12 A review is currently underway to consider which arrangements should be in place after September 2015. To this end, the local authority and Third Sector partners are hosting a co-production workshop on 30th June to provide opportunities for anyone who has an interest in how services and support is offered in the future to share their views and be part of the development of future plans and approaches.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.10 That Members consider, comment on and endorse the development of the services.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Contracting arrangements between Social Services and the North Wales Deaf Association, in place until September 2015 is for circa £23k per annum.

5.2 In addition, the local authority currently has a Core Funding Agreement with NWDA for circa £9k per annum. These arrangements are also being considered as part of the review referenced in paragraph 3.12 above

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.1 No direct impact as a result of this report. The work that is undertaken by the North Wales Deaf Association includes advice and support relating to maximising income and reducing costs through checking and changing energy tariffs for example.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.1 No direct impact as a result of this report

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 No direct impact as a result of this report

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 No direct impact as a result of this report

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.1 No direct impact as a result of this report

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.1 No direct impact as a result of this report

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 - Predictions for current and projected prevalence of moderate or severe, or profound hearing impairments in Flintshire.

12.02 Appendix 2 – Flintshire Hearing Support Service for Children and Young People.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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