

# Easy Read: Deaf Community Experiences in Health & Care “Why Aren’t We Being Heard?”

March 2026



SCAN ME



## Making Information Accessible

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- It is hard to make information accessible for Deaf people.
- Deaf people communicate in different ways, so one format does not work for everyone.

## Why Is It Difficult?

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- Good BSL information needs:
  - A trained interpreter
  - Filming and editing
  - Checking for accuracy

This takes time, money and skilled people

## What We Found

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- Healthwatch tried to make information accessible but found:
  - Guidance was unclear
  - Standards were different
  - Work took a long time
  - There were practical barriers

Deaf people face these problems every day.

## The Big Question

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If Healthwatch finds this hard...

### How hard is it for Deaf people who rely on clear information?

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The system is often:

- Underfunded
- Inconsistent
- Focused on hearing people

### What Needs to Change

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We believe:

- There should be national rules
- Organisations need proper funding
- Staff need training
- Services must meet different communication needs

Accessibility needs time, money, skills and clear standards.

Good intentions are not enough.

**‘Good intentions are not enough’**



# What is this report about?

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**This report shares real stories from deaf people in Stockton-on-Tees and nearby areas. It shows how hard it can be for deaf people to get good healthcare.**

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## What are the problems?

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### 1. Hard to Communicate

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- Many services rely heavily on phones for booking appointments or leaving messages, excluding deaf patients entirely.
- This leads to missed appointments, delays in care, and increased stress.

### 2. Phones Only

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- Many services only use phones.
- Deaf people miss appointments because they can't hear phone calls.



# What is this report about?

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## What are the problems?

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### 3. No Interpreter

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- Interpreters are not booked or don't show up.
- Deaf people have to ask family or friends to help, even for private health issues.

### 4. Hospitals and GPs

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- Names are called out with no visual signs.
- Some people leave early because they feel left out.
- A few places like Elm Tree and Specsavers were praised for being helpful.

### 5. Pharmacy Mistakes

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- Deaf people get the wrong medicine because of poor communication.



# How Does This Make People Feel?

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**“Like I’m bottom of the pile.”**



**“Just forgotten about.”**



**“Like a second-class citizen.”**



# What Needs to Change?

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## ✓ Use Plain Language

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- Interpreters are not booked or don't show up.
- Deaf people have to ask family or friends to help, even for private health issues.

## ✓ Use Visual Signs

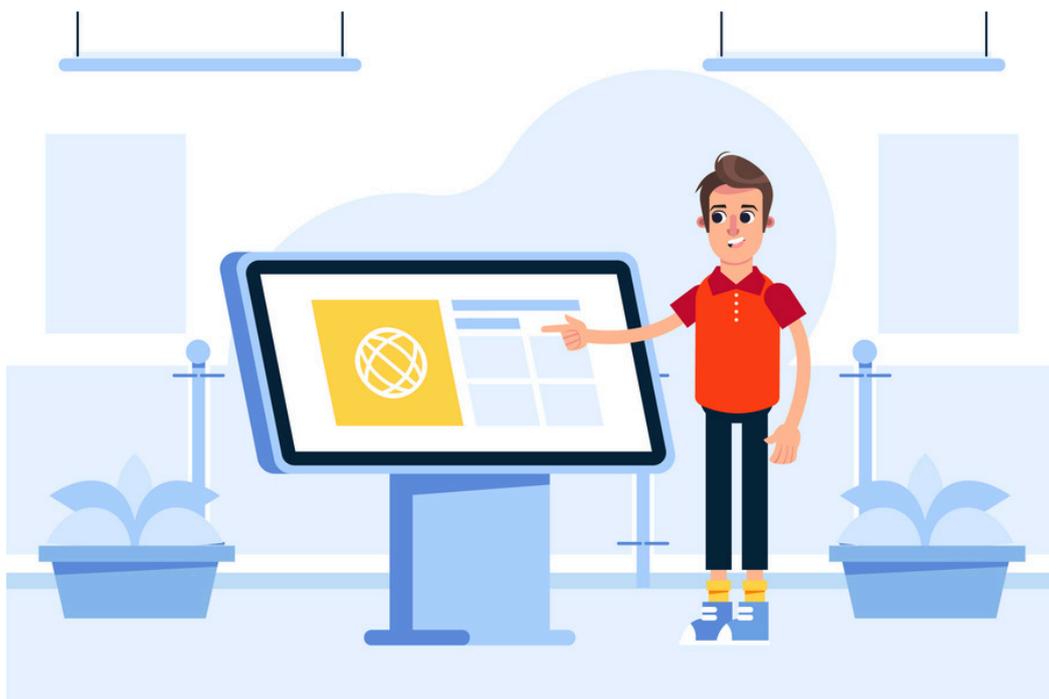
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- Screens with subtitles.
- Flashing lights or signs when calling names.

## ✓ Train Staff

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- Teach staff how to talk to deaf people.
- Show how to book interpreters.



# What Needs to Change?

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## ✓ Deaf Liaison Officers

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- Have someone in each service to help deaf patients.

## ✓ Communication Support Files

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- Keep a file with tips on how to help deaf people.

## ✓ Visits to Learn

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- Let deaf people visit hospitals to learn how things work.

## ✓ Follow the Law

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- Services must follow the Equality Act and Accessible Information Standard.



# Who Books The Interpreter?

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## GPs

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- The local NHS team or ICB should help book interpreters.

## Hospitals

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- The hospital must book interpreters. Patients should not have to do this



# What's Next?

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## Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will:

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- Visit health and care places with deaf people.
- Share what works well and what needs to improve.

# Want to Help?

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**If you are deaf or have hearing loss and want to share your story, contact:**

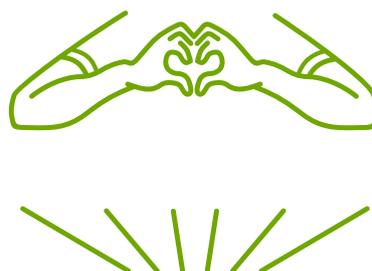
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✉ Email: [info@healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk)

# Thank you

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Thank you to everyone who shared their story. Your voice matters. Together, we can make health and care better for deaf people.





**healthwatch**  
Stockton-on-Tees

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