Deaf Mental Health Charter

The term 'deaf' is used in this charter as a shorthand for all deaf and hard of hearing people, including deafblind people

10 important issues

1

Information should be easily understood, and made available in different formats (eg. subtitled BSL video clips, CD ROMS, DVDs, plain English, face to face explanations, hands on signing, etc.)

2

Health and social care environments should use visual alerting systems or vibrating pagers to warn of hazards, such as fire.

3

All deaf people should have the right to professional communication support of their choice, including deaf carers of people with mental health problems.

4

Health promotion programmes should be accessible and deal with how deaf people's mental wellbeing can be achieved.

5

All meetings about assessment, treatment or care planning should be accessible and enable the deaf person to contribute fully.

6

If a deaf person has to go for treatment, into specialist accommodation or care, they should be in a service where they can communicate with other people and staff.

7

Direct payment schemes should be promoted and made accessible for deaf people with mental health needs.

8

Deaf people should have the right to independent specialist advocacy in health, mental health services, education, employment and social care.

9

Mental health forums, consultation documents, service user research and meetings should fully include deaf people and their experiences.

10

Complaints processes should be clear and fully accessible with comprehensive signposting throughout the whole procedure.

Deaf people should be enabled to make contact through a variety of means

- Email
- Text messaging
- Text and video phone
- Typetalk
- Fax

Communication support includes

- BSL interpreters
- Lipspeakers
- Speech to text transcribers
- Communicator guides
- Hands on manual deafblind interpreters
- Cued speech transliterators for deaf people who use English enhanced by handshapes.

Why have a charter?

Despite the Disability Discrimination Act and Human Rights legislation, deaf people still face discrimination in health, mental health and social care. This leads to stress and has a bad effect on people's well-being. Deafness, especially sudden or age-related, can cause isolation, anxiety and depression.

Many mental health problems can be prevented and dealt with if deaf people are better included in services and if professionals have a good understanding about deafness. Services will also improve when deaf people are clearer about their rights and what they can expect.

The key to good services for deaf people is effective and appropriate communication. This is the responsibility of health and care services.

The Deaf Mental Health Charter is aimed at promoting the mental well being and rights of deaf people by reducing barriers to services. It is for anyone involved in health, mental health and social care.

Sign
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Mental Health Foundation
Registered Charity No: 801130