

An Introduction to sight and hearing loss

Post course Information booklet

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See Hear Highland Education and Learning Service



Recognising people with sight or hearing loss

It may be obvious that a person has a sight or hearing loss; a person with a guide dog or carrying a white cane, using sign language, or wearing a hearing aid, for example. The list below offers other indicators that a person might have sight or hearing loss.

A person with hearing loss may:-	A person with sight loss may:-
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask you to speak a little louder• Fail to respond to the doorbell• Increase volume on TV or radio• Lean forward and look intently in the speakers face• Give an inappropriate response• Ask for repetition of what was said• Withdraw from social situations and group activities• Have difficulties joining in conversation in group situations or noisy places• Have unclear or unusual speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hesitates a lot when moving around or bump into objects• Have a stooped posture with head down looking at the ground ahead• Wear dark glasses, even on duller days• Pass friends by in the street• Have difficulty finding food on their plate• Overfill or under-fill cups• Put their difficulties down to being clumsy• Withdraw from social situations and group activities• Have difficulties joining in conversation in group situations or noisy places• Use a magnifying glass to read• Hold items very close to their eye

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Terminology

You may well have come across some of the terms used during the training course before, others are likely to be new to you. Acceptable terms to use are listed below along with their definition:

deaf people

deaf, with a small letter 'd' can be used as a general term to embrace the whole range of deaf people.

Deaf people

The use of the capital 'D', indicates people who consider themselves as belonging to a cultural and linguistic group, with British Sign Language (BSL) being their shared identity and first/preferred language.

deafened people

This group of people, whose hearing loss is total or profound, became deaf as adults, usually after having acquired spoken language. They identify mainly with hearing people. Hearing aids offer little or no benefit and they rely on lipreading, writing and speech to text for communication.

hard of hearing people

People in this group can have mild, moderate or severe hearing loss. The hearing loss may have been present at birth or acquired later in life, with its onset being sudden or over time. Someone who is hard of hearing is likely to have some useful hearing and will communicate through speech; possibly with the help of a hearing aid.

The vast majority of deaf people fall within the hard of hearing category. They identify with the hearing world and are likely to acquire their hearing loss as they get older.

Visually impaired people

Some people may refer to themselves as being 'visually impaired'. This widely used term may be used to indicate people who are either blind or partially sighted.

Blind people

This term is best used to describe people who have very little or no sight at all, rather than a whole range of people with poor vision. Many people who have been born without sight prefer this term.

Partially sighted people

Partially sighted indicates that a person's sight loss is severe enough to cause them difficulties in daily living, communication and getting around independently. Partially sighted people are likely to find tasks difficult because of the size of objects or text, poor lighting and lack of colour contrast.

Low vision

The term 'Low vision' may be used to indicate that eyesight cannot be fully corrected with spectacles and/or contact lenses so people still have a visual impairment.

Registered Blind or Partially Sighted

In Scotland, people can register significant sight loss, with their local authority. To do this, a clinical assessment of vision is carried out by an Ophthalmologist (eye specialist), to determine if vision has fallen to a level where being registered as either '**Partially Sighted**' or '**Blind**' is applicable.

Registered 'Blind' refers to people with severe sight loss as well as those who are totally blind. About 4% of people registered as blind see absolutely nothing. The majority retain some degree of residual vision, although this could be as little as telling light from dark, for example.

Registration as blind or partially sighted enables access to certain benefits and services

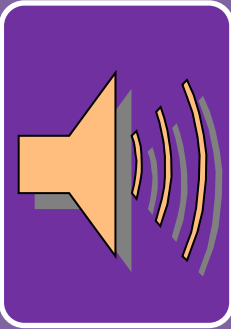
Deafblind or dual sensory loss

Deafblind is a distinct impairment that is more than simply vision loss and hearing loss. The difficulties created in communication, getting around and in access to information from the environment can be considerable. A person's ability to compensate for the loss of one sense with the other is reduced. The coping strategies and skills required change in their nature, as do the support services required. This can be accentuated when accompanied by additional disabilities such as physical and/or learning disabilities.

Some people who fit the definition of 'deafblind' prefer to describe themselves as having a 'dual sensory loss', or as being 'hard of hearing and partially sighted' or as having 'vision and hearing difficulties'. However, the use of a single broad term can be useful.

A person who is congenitally deafblind means they have a dual sensory impairment from birth. Someone who has an acquired deafblindness refers to dual sensory loss occurring later in life, as a result of a genetic condition (e.g. Usher), an injury, illness, accident or as a result of the processes of ageing. The impact of dual sensory loss varies according to the individual, with the age at which someone acquires such loss being a significant factor.

Statistics



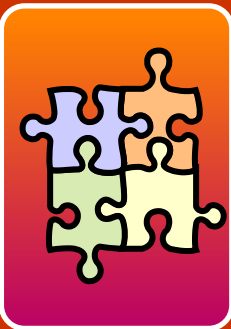
Hearing loss

- 40% of the over 50s have some form of hearing loss
- 70% of the over 70s have some form of hearing loss
- Many people with hearing loss also have tinnitus. This may cause difficulties with balance.



Sight loss

- 1 in 5 people age 75 and over are living with sight loss
- 1 in 2 people aged 90 and over are living with sight loss
- Nearly two thirds of people living with sight loss are women


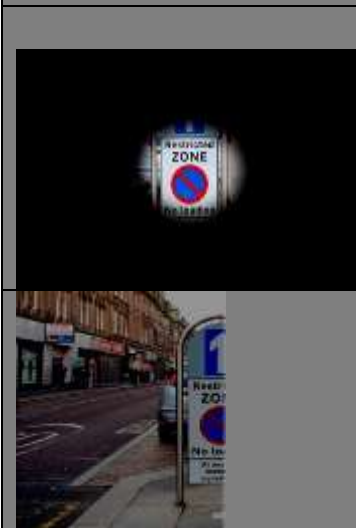



Predicting The Future

- By 2020 the number of people with sight loss will rise to over 2,250,000. By 2050, the number of people with sight loss in the UK will double to nearly four million.
- The number of people in the UK with hearing loss will increase by 40 per cent over the next 20 years. By 2035, it is estimated that one in five people will feel the effects of worsening hearing.

The effects of sight loss

People will experience sight loss in their own unique way. The table below summaries those mentioned during the course.

Street scene	Loss of vision Condition	Effects
	<p>Central vision loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macular Degeneration • Diabetic Retinopathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low acuity (the ability to see detail) • Difficulty with near vision tasks • Problems with glare • Poor colour definition • Mobility relatively good • Night vision relatively good
	<p>Peripheral (side vision) field loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glaucoma • Retinitis Pigmentosa • Hemianopia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced field of vision • Poor night vision • Difficulty with orientation and mobility • Near vision relatively good

	<p>Low acuity without field loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cataract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low acuity • Difficulty with near vision tasks • Reduced colour perception • Problems with glare • Possible problems with mobility
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The effects of hearing loss

The type of hearing loss a person experiences will depend on which part of the ear has been affected

Part of ear affected	The effect it has	Difficulties
Blockage of outer ear	Reduced volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing conversation
Blockage/damage to middle ear	Reduced volume Reduced clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing conversation • Distinguishing sounds from background noise • Hearing environmental sounds
Damage to auditory nerve	Unable to process sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding speech • Appreciating music • Environmental

		sounds
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Communication

The course highlighted the importance of your role in providing good communication. The following tips serve as a reminder.

People with sight loss	People with hearing loss
Introduce yourself. If you need to get the person's attention, use a light touch on the arm.	Make sure you have the person's attention before you start speaking.
Keep language simple and use short sentences.	Find a quiet place with good lighting.
Use verbal responses. Nods and head shakes may not be seen. Don't be afraid to use words like, 'look' and 'see'.	Face them, speak clearly, and use normal lip patterns and gestures. You may need to speak a little louder, but don't shout.
Be patient and allow for extra time.	Keep language simple and check that you are being understood.
Let people know when you are leaving.	Repeat or rephrase what you've said, if not understood.
Provide information in accessible format, e.g. Large print, audio, or Braille.	The use of amplification devices may help, e.g. Loop systems.

The environment

During the course we considered how the environment can either help or hinder people with sight or hearing loss. The table below offers suggestions for making the environment more accessible.

People with sight loss	People with hearing loss
Make best use of natural light and use blinds to manage adverse effects of natural lighting.	Make best use of natural light, where possible.
Make things bigger and use good colour contrast.	Use soft furnishings, for example, carpeted floors help absorb background noise.
Avoid highly patterned surfaces and furnishings.	Have quiet areas for conversation.
Minimise reflective surfaces and keep the environment clutter free.	Install induction loop system and keep them maintained.
Ensure signage is well positioned and offers good contrast. Use of braille and audio signage where appropriate.	Ensure signage and instructions are clear and consistent.
Offer support and guidance where necessary.	Offer support and guidance where necessary.

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Equality legislation

Sometimes people with sight or hearing loss suffer from discrimination because others do not recognise their needs, don't know how to address these needs, or simply haven't thought about them.

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates previous legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Under the Equality Act, it is illegal to treat someone less favourably, put them at a disadvantage, harass or victimise them because of their disability or something connected with their disability.

The law also requires that those offering goods and services make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that people with a disability are not at a 'substantial disadvantage' when accessing these services.

It is not permissible for public authorities or others with public functions to wait until something goes wrong to work out what to do better. Organisations performing public functions (e.g. governments, councils, NHS, police and others performing public duties) must be proactive in thinking about the effects of their actions on people with a disability, including those with significant sight or hearing loss. Regular reviews of policies and practices must include evaluations of their impacts on upon these groups of people.

Looking after your eye health

Evidence shows that over 50% of sight loss is preventable or treatable. Having a regular eye test (at least every two years) will check the health of your eyes, identify any eye problems before they become more serious and look for signs of other health problems. In Scotland eye tests are FREE!

Eye emergencies

The following symptoms may indicate an eye emergency requiring immediate medical attention.

- Black spots or flashes of light
- A curtain or veil moving over your vision
- Spider webs floating in your field of vision
- Eye injury or pain. Red, crusty or swollen eyelids
- Seeing halos or rainbows around light
- Loss of peripheral (side) vision
- Sudden hazy or blurred vision or vision loss in one eye

Useful organisations within Highland

NHS Highland Deaf Services & Hearing Support Team

Fodderty Way
Dingwall Business Park
Dingwall
IV15 9XB
T: 01349 868711
Text: 08457 023398
Fax: 01349 864438
Office mobile: 07887 833889

Sight Action

Beechwood House
69-71 Old Perth Road
Inverness
IV2 3JH
T: 01463 233663
F: 01463 242249
E: admin@highlandsensory.org.uk

Hearing and Sight Care

Wick Office
The Sensory Centre
Telford Street
Wick
KW1 5EQ
T: 01955 606170

E: hsc@sensorycentre.org.uk

Thurso Office
The Sensory Centre
9 Riverside Place
Thurso
KW14 8BZ
T: 01847 895636

Lochaber Sensory Care

Caol Shopping Centre
Caol, Fort William
PH33 7DR
T: 01397 704889
E: manager@lochabersensorycare.org.uk

National Organisations

Action on Hearing Loss (Scotland)

<http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/>

Blind Children UK

www.blindchildrenuk.org

Deafblind Scotland

www.deafblindscotland.org.uk

Guide Dogs

www.guidedogs.org.uk/

Hearing Link Scotland

www.hearinglink.org/hearing-link-scotland

Look (National Federation of Families with Visually Impaired Children)

www.look-uk.org

National Deaf Children's Association

www.ndcs.org.uk

RNIB Scotland (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

www.rnib.org.uk/scotland

Sense Scotland (For deafblind people)

www.sensescotland.org.uk

The Macular Society

www.macularsociety.org

The Partially Sighted Society

www.partsight.org.uk



Sight/hearing Loss Awareness courses are available free from SHHELS to staff working within NHS Highland/Highland Council and Highland Volunteering sector organisations.

13

See Hear Highland Education & Learning Services, 4 Fodderty Way, Dingwall Business Park, Dingwall IV15 9XB SMS: 07765898689 Email: shhels@nhs.net
www.shhels.net

If you or your team work with people with sight/hearing loss or older adults, please get in touch.

SHHELS also offer a range of other courses including; British Sign Language, Lip-reading, Sighted Guiding, Communicating Well to include People with Sight/Hearing Loss. We can also develop bespoke courses to fit your team's particular needs. Contact us on the numbers listed below.