



Equality. Fairer Scotland. Children's Rights. Impact Assessment Report

Assessing and devising options for change to the Deaf Action contract covering
Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership

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Description

Title of proposed work

Assessing and devising options for change to the Deaf Action contract covering Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (Midlothian HSCP).

Purpose/objective of proposed work

To discuss and assess the equality and children's rights impacts of two suggested change options to the Deaf Action Specialist Social Work & Support Services for People with Hearing Impairment contract covering Midlothian Health and Social Care and to invite additional ideas for options from the ECRIA team.

The contract covers the following areas:

1. Social Worker services – BSL skilled
2. Equipment
3. Community Care Assistant (CCA) services
4. Visiting support

The proposed changes apply to the Social Work Services part of the contract only.

Midlothian Council have a contract with Deaf Action which aligns with other neighbouring Lothian HSCPs in the commissioning of specialist support services for Deaf, British Sign Language Users, Deafened, Deafblind or clients who may be Hard of Hearing and their families and Carers.

In January 2024 discussions between Edinburgh, East and Midlothian HSCPs and Deaf Action highlighted a desire by the HSCPs to consider the future commissioning of Specialist Social Work Services from Deaf Action. Following that time East Lothian HSCP undertook an engagement session with members of the community who directly use, or members of their family use Deaf Action Services, about the Social Work Service provided by Deaf Action. East Lothian HSCP also undertook an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) considering changes to funding/services. City of Edinburgh HSCP undertook an IIA meeting in June 2024, decisions subsequently being taken through their Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement Board governance route to end the Social Work service and duty interpreter aspects of the contract from end September 2024. Updates above and information that arises as part of this meeting may influence the options considered.

The suggested options are:

1. Make no changes to service.
2. Remove Specialist Social Worker role from service.
3. Remove Specialist Social Worker role and Community Care Assistance (CCA) role from service.
4. Develop new model not previously identified.

Who will be affected by this proposed work

People living in the area covered by Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership services that use British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate and require social worker or CCA support to access and participate in their health and social care.

The primary group identified as affected by the proposed change is the D/deaf and Deafblind community, British Sign Language users. Discussions within the meeting identified that this was the group primarily supported by Deaf Action, though the contract also currently refers to Deafened, Deafblind or clients who may be Hard of Hearing and their families and Carers. The d/Deaf community are considered a protected group under Equality Act 2010, Disability. We note that some users of British Sign Language are not deaf, do not identify as deaf or identify another way and we respect their unique experiences and identities and consider them equally to deaf British Sign Language Users. Individuals affected by the proposed changes may

also belong to other protected characteristic groups, therefore the ECRIA team will consider each point listed in this ECRIA report table individually and consider the potential impacts.

Other Relevant Information

Service Activity - The Specialist Social Worker left Deaf Action on 2/1/24. The position was advertised to ensure minimal disruption to the service, and the new worker took up the role on 25/03/24. This number may change in the future but offers past context to the level of need required in the past year.

Social Work Service

	Apr – Jun 23	Jul – Sep 23	Oct – Dec 23	Jan – Mar 24	Total
Total number of referrals received	1	0	0	0	1
Number of referrals requiring assessment	1	0	0	0	1
Number of assessments completed	1	0	0	0	1
Number of 12-month reviews completed	0	0	0	0	0
Number of people on assessment waiting list at end of quarter	0	0	0	0	
Number of people on 12-month review waiting list at end of quarter	3	3	3	3	
Number of duty tasks completed in the quarter	40	24	50	9	123

Deaf Action Social Care Team (Midlothian) - The Social Care Team at Deaf Action is comprised of a Social Worker, a Senior Community Care Assistant and a Community Care Assistant. The Team is overseen by the Deputy CEO for Deaf Action. Supervision is provided to the Social Worker by an independent and experienced supervisor. The Social Worker seeks support from Midlothian locality team as needed. The Social Worker provides supervision to the Community Care Assistants.

The Social Care Team have a workload that is reflective of all areas of Social Care. Examples of the current workload include assessment and review of care needs at home, assessment and review of care needs within residential/sheltered living accommodations, involvement in planning and support for Adult Support and Protection cases, promotion of an individual's rights and sign posting within legal or financial matters, support to access universal benefits, support in housing matters, emotional support to individual's facing challenging times. In all areas the Social Care Team promote the rights of those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing to ensure that they are able to access to the services and advice they require and that they are involved in the decision that affect them.

Evidence

Evidence used:

- **National/Local Guidance:**
- British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015
- British Sign Language National Plan 2023 - 29
- Midlothian British Sign Language Plan 2024-2030
https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/3705/british_sign_language_plan_2024-2030
- Equality Act 2010
- See Hear Strategy 2014-24
- Census 2022 - BSL users in Midlothian
- Q16 gives an indication of BSL main language users in Midlothian (scotlands-census-2022-household-questionnaire.pdf (scotlandscensus.gov.uk)).
Q16 “What is your main language?” (tick one box only) English or Other (BSL and Tactile BSL are mentioned specifically as something that might be put down in the ‘other’ free text box).

Midlothian residents reporting their main language as BSL/ Tactile BSL – **74 people.**

Female - 30

Male - 41

under 16 - 25

60 and over – 8

Largest single age band 30-34 – 11

Summary of ECRIA

It arose during the ECRIA that one of the other partners on the Deaf Action contract, Edinburgh HSCP, would be changing their contract with Deaf Action to remove the BSL social worker from October 2024. As Edinburgh HSCP pays 70% of the costs for the social worker, we were advised by the Deaf Action representative that unless the remaining partners (East Lothian and Midlothian) were in a position to cover the costs previously covered by Edinburgh HSCP, they would not be able to supply a BSL skilled social worker. Given financial pressures being experienced across health and social care, it was briefly discussed and noted that it unlikely that the remaining partners would be able to increase their budgetary contributions to cover the costs of the social worker role.

This changed the options explored by the ECRIA as it diminished the number of viable options. **We chose to concentrate on the impacts of removing Community Care Assistants and how to meet BSL user needs without the resource of a Deaf Action managed BSL specialist social worker.**

1. Make no changes to service – This option was no longer viable given the partner that contributed the majority of budget had decided to remove social workers services from their Deaf Action contract (Edinburgh HSCP).
2. Remove Specialist Social Worker role from service – This option was now almost certain to take place due to Edinburgh HSCP removing the social worker role from their Deaf Action contract, and Deaf Action advising that they cannot provide a social worker resources unless the full cost of one can be covered between the remaining partners (East and Midlothian).
3. Remove Specialist Social Worker role and Community Care Assistance (CCA) role from service – Consideration of the Social Work and Community Care Assistant service highlighted that there was support for the Social Work Service to be brought in-house by the partnerships with mitigations (e.g. training; BSL/Deaf awareness for staff; communication to the public; pathways for interpretation services, etc). The existing Social Care Service provided by the Community Care Assistants was identified as helpful to service-users, and valuable in providing a connection between service-users and partnership teams following proposed changes to the Deaf Action Social Work Service.
4. Develop new model not previously identified – No other options were identified by the group.

Major equality/fairness concerns:

- It was identified that the removal of Community Care Assistants had potential to negatively impact BSL users as Community Care Assistants provide a suite of practical supports and signposting that were considered by the group to be essential in maintaining equal access of BSL users to health and social care services.

Other concerns/key comments:

- The group was keen to ensure that any social worker working with BSL users that was not a BSL skilled specialist was appropriately upskilled to meet the needs of the BSL user.
- Availability and skill level of BSL interpreters was also discussed.

More on CCAs

The Community Care Assistant role was highly valued by the Partnerships (East Lothian, Edinburgh and Midlothian HSCPs) and would perform a significant role in connecting BSL users requiring access to a Social Service if required. The interlink between the Community Care Assistants and social worker is such that they work closely together to coordinate who supports people at different stages of their required care. The Community Care Assistants also utilise skills in International Sign Language to engage with d/Deaf service users whose first language is a non-BSL signing language. It was noted that Deaf Action have a Community Care Assistant only contract with West Lothian HSCP. It was recognised that the Community Care Assistants were currently supervised by the Deaf Action contracted Social Worker, but that this supervision could be provided by alternative staff members.

If the contracted BSL social worker element is removed from the contract, it was recognised that non-BSL skilled social workers would require training in deaf awareness (not just BSL but also awareness of issues these clients might face e.g. potential issues gaining employment) and other mitigations so they can support BSL users with overcoming barriers encountered in that community at the same level that BSL skilled social workers did.

Visiting Support - visiting support, a 'help at home' service accounting for around 200 hrs / quarter and will remain part of the contract at this time.

Making a difference

Changes	What difference this will make
<p>Remove the specialist SW role from the service.</p>	<p>Due to impact of change by Edinburgh ceasing funding for the Social Work element of the service, and without offer of increase of funding from East or Midlothian, communication from Deaf Action was that this aspect of the service was not viable (they cannot supply a BSL skilled social worker).</p>
<p>Devise jointly with the other contract partners (East Lothian and Edinburgh and Deaf Action) a programme of training in deaf awareness and BSL to upskill Midlothian HSCP social workers that will work with BSL users.</p>	<p>The upskilling of Midlothian HSCP social workers working with BSL users is intended to preserve or improve current levels of service and access offered to Midlothian BSL users.</p>
<p>Advise that the Community Care Assistant service remains unchanged.</p>	<p>The provisions of CCAs through the Deaf Action contract, plus other mitigating factors such as upskilling Midlothian HSCP social workers working with BSL users will preserve current levels of service offered to Midlothian BSL users.</p>
<p>Equipment</p>	<p>The nature of the Community Equipment Loan Service (CES) was discussed. Options for streamlining available kit options may impact on what is available to clients. Deaf Action and BSL users will be kept abreast of ongoing discussions and a further ECRIA will be conducted if required.</p>

Sharing with decision-makers

This ECRIA, proposed changes and mitigations will be shared with the Service Lead and Midlothian HSCP Senior Management Team for final agreement, and as a courtesy with leads at Edinburgh and East Lothian HSCPs and Deaf Action. The Chair of this ECRIA will ask for feedback on the decision and this ECRIA and will offer an update to those that participated.

Monitoring the impact

What information will you start or continue to collect and report on?	What impact are you measuring
<p>Client feedback from those that use social workers/CCAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture, if possible, opinions on experiences from BSL users that used/are using the BSL skilled social worker when in post. • Capture, if possible, opinions on experiences from BSL users that used/are using CCAs whilst the BSL skilled social worker is in post as their supervisor. • Capture opinions from BSL users that use social workers and CCAs once the BSL skilled social worker is no longer in post. 	<p>A comparison of BSL user experiences with BSL skilled social workers and CCAs to measure the impact on service users of the presence of a BSL skilled social worker role and the absence of one (with mitigating actions undertaken).</p>
<p>Deaf Action Social Work Service reporting data. Existing: Number of people accessing Social Work Service</p>	<p>Considering current data and if baseline numbers are transferring to HSCP services in Midlothian.</p>
<p>Deaf Action Social Care Service reporting. Existing: Number of issues supported by Community Care Assistants. New after change: Number of referrals to Partnership Social Work Teams.</p>	<p>Considering ongoing service delivery and if more or less tasks are being dealt with as a result of the change to remove Deaf Action Social Work services. Considering if there are access issues preventing engagement with and access to community teams.</p>
<p>HSC Partnership referrals. New after change: Number of people connected via Deaf Action Community Care Assistants. Number of referrals from other services. Number of self-referrals.</p>	<p>Considering if similar/increased/decreased referral rate to Social Work services in the community.</p>

Impact on equality & socio-economic disadvantage

Negative impacts

Using the evidence you have collected, explain if your proposal could be discriminatory and/ or put a group of people sharing one of these characteristics at a disadvantage for a reason connected to that characteristic.

Note – answer yes/ no and if yes provide brief reasons.

Relevant group	Could your work result in unlawful discrimination?	Could your work put people at a disadvantage/ make their lives worse?
People in different age groups	All clients are adult and age wise can be any age from 18 to 100 however the nature (and degree) of support required for will vary. As reference, Edinburgh is increasingly focusing more contracted work on BSL clients rather than the wider range of hearing health related conditions that might need support.	None specific.
Disabled people	<p>Social work is a statutory service so any decisions around this contract with Deaf Action shouldn't ignore the wider context.</p> <p>Proposals are not recommending the complete removal of Social Work services to d/Deaf people but are focussed on delivering the services that is currently provided via Deaf Action by HSCP Social Work Teams.</p>	<p>If considering a proposal to remove Deaf Action SW services, then mitigating actions would be required to ensure any potential disadvantage was addressed.</p> <p>Midlothian HSCP are in agreement with Edinburgh and East Lothian in investigating and taking forward (potentially shared) mitigating actions, including training and upskilling Social Workers within teams; awareness training for staff; effective public communications; interpretation services; remaining</p>

Relevant group	Could your work result in unlawful discrimination?	Could your work put people at a disadvantage/ make their lives worse?
		Deaf Action services can be utilised to support access and pathways into community teams for existing or new clients.
Trans and non-binary people	None specific.	None specific.
People who are pregnant or on maternity leave	None specific.	None specific.
People from different ethnic backgrounds	None specific.	None specific.
People with religious or protected beliefs	None specific.	None specific.
Men and women [This may include carers, because many are women.]	None specific.	None specific.
People who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual	None specific.	None specific.
People who are married or in a civil partnership [only in employment situations]	None specific.	None specific.

Relevant group	Could your work result in unlawful discrimination?	Could your work put people at a disadvantage/ make their lives worse?
Care experienced people	NOTE - there is no legal protection from discrimination on basis of care experience. None specific.	None specific.
People experiencing health inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage	NOTE - there is no legal protection from discrimination on basis of socio-economic disadvantage.	None specific.
People experiencing employment inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage.	NOTE - there is no legal protection from discrimination in employment on basis of socio-economic disadvantage. British Sign Language (BSL) – these clients potentially face higher risks for unemployment etc. so SW's need to be adequately trained to recognise the barriers experienced by this group and work with them and employers to overcome these barriers where possible.	Refer to previously noted mitigating actions and suggested ongoing connecting to Deaf action Community Care Assistant service.
Carers	NOTE - there is no legal protection from discrimination on basis of caring responsibilities. None specific.	None specific.

Positive impact

Using the evidence you have collected, explain if and how your proposal could have a positive impact on reducing inequalities experienced by groups of people sharing these characteristics.

Relevant group	Can your work advance equality of opportunity? [reduce disadvantage, meet needs, increase participation]	Can your work foster good relations? [reduce prejudice + increase tolerance]
People in different age groups	None specific.	None specific.
Disabled people	Access for Social Work services proposed to be delivered by HSCP Social Work Teams, so same point of access as others accessing services.	Will require/result in upskilling and training of staff; clear pathways for referral and support; good connection between Deaf Action and SW Teams, as Community Care Assistants supporting that link.
Trans and non-binary people	None specific.	None specific.
People who are pregnant or on maternity leave	None specific.	None specific.
People from different ethnic backgrounds	None specific.	None specific.
People with religious or protected beliefs	None specific.	None specific.
Men or women	None specific.	None specific.

Relevant group	Can your work advance equality of opportunity? [reduce disadvantage, meet needs, increase participation]	Can your work foster good relations? [reduce prejudice + increase tolerance]
People who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual	None specific.	None specific.
Care experienced people	None specific.	None specific.
People who experience health inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage	Removing Social work support but retaining Community Care Assistant role enables service users to retain support to access a range of HSCP/Council Services, including welfare rights and other services.	None specific.
People who experience employment inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage.	None specific.	None specific.
Carers	None specific.	None specific.

Impact on UNCRC rights

If your proposal does not affect children and young people do not complete this section.

The ECRIA affects a contract for BSL related support for adults (18+ years). The UNCRC does not apply to this scenario.