

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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New report highlights shocking service for Deaf patients in Enfield

A new report lays bare the state of access to health services for Deaf people in Enfield. Healthwatch Enfield and Enfield Disability Action talked to Deaf patients over the course of a year and heard repeated stories of

- Lack of awareness of the communication needs of Deaf patients among health staff
- Failure to provide British Sign Language interpreters
- Patients missing GP appointments as they didn't know their name had been called
- Deaf patients not being made aware of participation opportunities

Particularly shocking examples include cases where patients were not told they were diagnosed with diabetes, or even a heart attack. One patient was unable to order food as there was no sign stating he was deaf above his bed, and another patient had to wait 6 hours for a British Sign Language interpreter after being knocked down by a car and taken to A&E.

Lack of interpreters has particular implications on the ability of patients to give informed consent to treatment. A friend of Deaf patient recalled challenging a doctor over whether they had truly understood the 'no further treatment' form they had signed, as no interpreter had been provided. An interpreter was subsequently called and arrived within half an hour.

The report also highlights examples of good practice and makes a number of recommendations of measures that could improve access to health services for Deaf patients.

Healthwatch Enfield Chief Executive, Lorna Reith, said "The experiences local Deaf people told us about were shocking. It is clear that many of them face considerable barriers to health care and are getting a poor service which puts their health at risk. We are calling on providers to act on the recommendations in this report, most of which involve little, if any, extra money."

Liane Burn, EDA Chief Executive, said "We have been working with Deaf residents for many years and know that many of these issues have been raised before. It is now 20 years since legislation outlawing discrimination against disabled people was passed and completely unacceptable that Deaf residents should still be struggling to access services"

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

The report is available online [here](#). A British Sign Language translation video of the report is [here](#). Please email Joe Lee at joe.lee@healthwatchenfield.co.uk for a hard copy.

Deaf people in Enfield

254 people in Enfield are registered with Enfield Council or known to EDA as Deaf. Furthermore, 23,657 individuals in Enfield were recorded as having moderate or severe hearing loss in 2012 when [the last data is available from](#).

About Enfield Disability Action

Enfield Disability Action (EDA) is an organisation run by and for disabled people of all ages. EDA acts as an umbrella organisation for local disability groups and offers a range of services to local residents. EDA offers a Deaf service to local residents to provide opportunities for Deaf people to explore issues and access local services and support. EDA also supports a Deaf service user group: ENDIG (Enfield Deaf Image Group).

About Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in England. The organisation has independent statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumers' voice is heard and best practice is delivered in health and social care nationally. Healthwatch is also focused on providing leadership, guidance and support to the development of the network of 148 local Healthwatch that launched in April 2013. To find out more please go to www.healthwatch.co.uk

About Healthwatch Enfield

Healthwatch Enfield is an independent organisation set-up to ensure that local people have a real say in the way that health and social care services are provided in the borough. It is independent, but part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations set up by Parliament with real powers for change.

We work by: providing information and signposting to help people connect with the most useful services and support available to them; by referring complaints and putting people in touch with the appropriate complaints' process and/or referring them to someone who can support them in making a complaint; and by influencing decision - listening to what people say and feeding back to those who plan, commission and deliver services. This includes representation on the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) in Enfield. To find out more please go to www.healthwatchenfield.co.uk

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Pictures supplied if required