

# PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: See below

SignHealth  
The Healthcare Charity for Deaf People

## **WHAT DEAF AND DISABLED PEOPLE WOULD DO TO IMPROVE PRIMARY CARE ACCESS**

Most Deaf peoples' experiences of accessing primary care could be improved if five simple recommendations were put into practice

This is the finding of a survey carried out by SignHealth, the health charity for Deaf People at the request of the National Director for GP Access. The purpose of the survey was to ask a group of over 150 deaf and disabled people about their experiences of primary care and for their recommendations for ways in which these could be improved.

The suggestions have been submitted to the Department and Dr Mike Warburton, National Director for GP Access said, "This is really helpful, just what I was looking for and allows us to move this forward."

All five recommendations are straightforward and could be implemented rapidly. Indeed, there is much help already available to PCTs and GP practices which could be utilised, e.g. patient software companies, voluntary organisations and the increasing use of technology.

The five recommendations are:

1. Surgeries should allow the booking of appointments by text/SMS, internet or email with attention being given to out-of-hours services.
2. All primary care staff should receive Deaf awareness, basic BSL or wider disability training.
3. All patients should be asked how they should be informed that it is their turn to see a doctor or nurse
4. The patient should be asked if they would like support and if so, what kind of support they need.

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SignHealth is the Healthcare Charity for Deaf People. We are committed to bringing better healthcare and equality of service provision to deaf people through campaigning, working in partnership with other organisations and the provision of specialist services for deaf people. These include Health Promotion, counselling, advocacy, outreach and supported living.

5. Patients' notes should state clearly the person's deafness or disability and the preferred communication method. This should be a clear flag on electronic systems.

SignHealth's Chief Executive, Steve Powell, said, "We can demonstrate that with just a small effort, Deaf peoples' access to good primary care could be improved overnight. Most of these recommendations are cost neutral or present a probable cost saving. It is likely to be the willingness and desire to improve access which will be the principal obstacle."

Copies of the SignHealth primary care access reports can be downloaded from the website [www.signhealth.org.uk](http://www.signhealth.org.uk). SignHealth will have a stand at Deaf Day 2009 at City Lit on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April so come and see us.

#### **Notes to Editors**

1. Please note: it is the convention adopted within the Deaf community of using an upper case D when referring to those who identify themselves culturally and linguistically as members of the Deaf community. Typically they are prelingually deaf and use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language.
2. **SignHealth** is the only UK charity focussed on improving the mental and physical health of Deaf people. SignHealth has a track record of delivering change in care and treatment and in providing supported living, advocacy, outreach, counselling and health promotion, all within a BSL supported environment. Projects are located in London, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham. SignHealth also works with service providers to improve health services for Deaf people and with other health and Deaf charities to provide health information and education. Pending an application to the Big Lottery, SignHealth in partnership with Deaf organisations across the UK, will launch the largest survey of the health of Deaf people in the UK later this year.
3. For more information on SignHealth, contact Steve Grudgings or Rowena Dean on 01494 687600 or visit [www.signhealth.org.uk](http://www.signhealth.org.uk). [sgrudgings@signhealth.org.uk](mailto:sgrudgings@signhealth.org.uk) or [rdean@signhealth.org.uk](mailto:rdean@signhealth.org.uk)
4. SignTranslate is a wholly owned subsidiary of SignHealth. [www.signtranslate.com](http://www.signtranslate.com)

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