



## Press Release

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### **Research finds inequalities in healthcare for deaf people**

A report released today into the GP Patient Survey 2008 has found serious inadequacies in access to primary healthcare for d/Deaf people in England. It found higher rates of dissatisfaction with primary health services amongst d/Deaf people and specific problems relating to lack of provision for their communication needs. Compiled by SignHealth, the healthcare charity for Deaf people, the report also highlights markedly worse general health amongst this minority group.

Titled *Why do you keep missing me?* the report shows that d/Deaf people see their GP on many more occasions than their hearing peers, simply because they frequently leave the surgery unsure of what the doctor recommended and have to return. Estimates put the number of additional appointments made by deaf people at around 625,000. At an average appointment cost of £25, this equates to a cost of £15.6m each year. Research to date suggests that spending a fraction of this on making services more accessible will save the NHS millions each year.

This research coincides with the launch of the 2009 GP Patient Survey. For the first time this will be available in British Sign Language (BSL) and SignHealth is urging d/Deaf people and their relatives to complete the survey and present a wider picture of the health needs of d/Deaf people.

Steve Powell, Chief Executive of SignHealth had this to say:

*"Historically, d/Deaf people have had poor access to healthcare. Quite simply if there is little or no communication between a patient and a medical practitioner, things will inevitably go wrong."*

*The 2009 GP Patient Survey will, for the first time, be available in BSL. The Department of Health's GP Access Programme is pushing for improvements and the particular needs of hard of hearing, deaf and sign language users are at last becoming recognised.*

*We need people to ask their GP for improved communication methods and technology, which is their right. We urge Deaf people to take part in the GP Patient Survey and we urge all health professionals to make sure they are deaf aware in service delivery and commissioning, giving equality of access, comparable with other minority groups”*

**- Ends –**

### **Notes to editors**

#### **About SignHealth**

SignHealth is the healthcare charity for d/Deaf people and is committed to bringing better healthcare and equality of service provision to d/Deaf people in the UK.

SignHealth has developed SignTranslate ([www.signtranslate.com](http://www.signtranslate.com)), a web-based program which can provide almost immediate on-line interpreting for short notice and same day GP appointments as well as visits to hospital A&E. The program is currently free of charge for GPs in England.

#### **Meaning of Deaf and deaf**

Written with a lower case d ‘deaf’ refers to a person who is hard of hearing or cannot hear at all.

Many deaf people whose first language is sign language consider their deafness to be central to their identity, rather than a disability. Termed as Deaf with a capital D, these people are more suitably defined as a minority ethnic group than a type of disabled person. This group is bound together by language, culture and ways of experiencing the world.

#### **For more information please contact**

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