

# Healthwatch Rochdale Report

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## Listening to d/Deaf Rochdale Residents Voices Phase 2

### About Us

Healthwatch Rochdale listens to local people about their health and social care. We share these views to help make services better.

### Introduction

In April 2025, Healthwatch Rochdale met with d/Deaf people to talk about health services. Many problems were the same as when we met with them in December 2024.

d/Deaf People are still struggling to get BSL interpreters, especially at the dentist.

### Main Problems

- Dentists not booking BSL interpreters 🦷
- No screens or alerts in waiting rooms 💻
- NHS App and systems not accessible 📱
- Interpreters only booked for 2 hours ⌚
- Staff not trained in Deaf awareness 🗣️
- Family members wrongly used as interpreters 👤
- Poor Wi-Fi in hospitals blocks Sign Live 🌐



## What People Said

*"We almost missed being seen in Urgent Care because staff shouted our name."*

*"I had surgery but woke up with no interpreter to explain what happened."*

*"Dentists refuse to book interpreters. I am scared I will be removed from the list."*



### GP Appointments

- Some GPs do not book BSL interpreters or rely on phones only.
- Staff often not trained in d/Deaf awareness.
- Some GPs do treat d/Deaf patients well – they book interpreters and make reasonable adjustments.
- d/Deaf Patients say appointments are stressful and sometimes avoid going.
- Reception staff sometimes wrongly refuse BSL interpreters.



### Hospitals and Urgent Care

- BSL Interpreters only booked for 2 hours. Not enough for long appointments or surgery.
- d/Deaf Patients left without a BSL interpreter after waking from operations.
- Staff shout names in waiting rooms – d/Deaf patients can miss their turn.
- Poor Wi-Fi makes Sign Live difficult to use.
- Some d/Deaf Patients waiting days or weeks in hospital before getting a BSL interpreter.



## Dentists

- Many d/Deaf people cannot get a BSL interpreter for dental visits.
- Some d/Deaf patients fear being removed from NHS dental lists for missing appointments.
- d/Deaf Parents worried for children's teeth – no BSL interpreters provided.
- Emergency dental care is not accessible for d/Deaf people.
- Dental Receptionists say patients must pay for BSL interpreters – this is wrong under the law.



## Pharmacies

- d/Deaf Patients often get wrong or missing medicines.
- Staff tell Deaf people to phone GP – not possible for many.
- Relying on family members to translate breaks privacy and confidentiality.
- No text or email systems to fix prescription problems.
- Can cause serious health risks if the right medicine is not given.

## What Needs to Change

- Book BSL interpreters for at least 4 hours 🗓️
- Stop saying '2 weeks' notice is needed for appointment booking ❌
- Train all NHS staff in d/Deaf awareness 🧑🏿
- Make NHS App and booking systems accessible 📱
- Never use family members as BSL interpreters 🚫

- Show names on screens and give free Wi-Fi in hospitals 🌐

## NHS Responses to Deaf Residents' Recommendations



### GP Practices

- BSL Interpreters: GPs will be reminded that 2 weeks' notice is not needed.
- Training: d/Deaf awareness will be included in GP training.
- Systems: NHS App and booking changes are national. Feedback will be given.
- Family: GPs will be reminded not to use family members as interpreters.
- Wi-Fi and screens should be available in GP practices.



### Dentists

- BSL Interpreters: Dentists will be reminded they do not need 2 weeks' notice.
- Training: d/Deaf awareness training will be reviewed for dental staff.
- Systems: NHS App changes are national, but feedback will be passed on.
- Family: Dentists will be reminded not to use family members as BSL interpreters.
- Wi-Fi: Where possible, practices must provide Wi-Fi.



### Hospitals and Urgent Care

- A 5-year plan has been made to improve care for d/Deaf patients.
- BSL Interpreters: Longer booking times and easier systems will be tested.
- d/Deaf Patients can email [AIS@nca.nhs.uk](mailto:AIS@nca.nhs.uk) or [dDeafappointments@nca.nhs.uk](mailto:dDeafappointments@nca.nhs.uk) for hospital support.
- Training: More NHS Hospital staff training provided in communication and Deaf awareness.

- Clear face masks and visual alerts are being rolled out.
- No family interpreters – only qualified BSL interpreters.
- Range of resources being trialed across Northern Care Alliance.



## Conclusion

d/Deaf people in Rochdale face many barriers to care. Things must change so everyone gets fair treatment.

### In Short

GPs, dentists, and hospitals all agreed to:

- ✓ Book BSL interpreters quickly 🗣️
- ✓ Train staff in d/Deaf awareness and communications 💡
- ✓ Use screens, texts, and emails to aid 💻 📱
- ✓ Provide clear face masks 🧐
- ✓ Stop using family members as BSL interpreters 🚫
- ✓ Improve access to medicine and prescriptions 💊

