



**Staffordshire and  
Stoke-on-Trent**  
Integrated Care Board

Our Ref: PW/KJJ/FOI/0225/1180

Stafford Education & Enterprise Park  
Weston Road  
Stafford  
ST18 0BF

12<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Sent by email

Telephone: 0300 123 1461

Dear

**FOI-0225/1180**

**Your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Thank you for your request for information received on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025. We can confirm that the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board can provide the following information.

An anonymised copy of this response will be made publicly available on the ICB website.

Please see our responses in blue below:

**Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000**, I would like to formally request the information you gathered from the two focus groups the ICB carried out in September 2024, regarding patient feedback on interpreting services.

**The focus groups were held in the autumn of 2022, rather than in 2024, and the focus of these was on British Sign language rather than all of our translation and interpretation services.**

**The attached has been redacted to remove names of providers and team members**

**To request an internal review**

You can request an internal review by contacting the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB FOI team by emailing; [staffsstokeFOI@staffsstoke.icb.nhs.uk](mailto:staffsstokeFOI@staffsstoke.icb.nhs.uk) or by post to the address at the top of this letter within 40 working days of the initial response.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board's FOI complaints procedure.

The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

**Chair:** David Pearson MBE

**Chief Executive Officer:** Peter Axon

[www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely

**Paul Winter**  
**Associate Director of Corporate Governance**

Enc

## Overview of Focus Groups

### Review of BSL Service:

- The group highly valued the service and all felt the benefits of the local provider opposed to a national service.
- The group gave insight to the struggles of national providers not understanding the local BSL accent and dialect.
- One member queried the qualifications of National BSL providers.
- The service operated a Drop-in service weekly.
- No requests were highlighted for any changes and additional services to be provided by **X**.

### Themes identified by the Focus Group:

#### Access to GP services

- Difficulties in booking GP appointments. Most surgery only offered same day appointments which made it impossible to book interpreters which need to be booked in advance. Request for the ability to book advance appointments.
- Patients preferred Face to Face appointments as most experienced internet issues when in surgeries which interrupted the videolink with the interpreter
- A lack of appreciation that written communication is hard for patients to understand due to learning needs. Written communication is not always seen as an alternative to the interpreter.
- Patients are able to engage an interpreter service of their choice but some GP practices will also book an interpreter which can result in two professionals arriving for the same appointment.
- Patients experienced difficulties when moving or mergers between surgeries.
- It is common for some patients to not been recorded as deaf on GP systems despite diagnosis of the condition from an early age.
- Patients do not always receive consistency of delivery by GP staff and will often depend on the individual. **Action: Deaf Awareness Training to be rolled out.**

#### Hospital Trust: Access to Emergency Services/ Day Patient Services

- Long standing concerns were raised around the booking and confirmation of attendance at appointments. Most patients received standard letters asking them to either call or respond to telephone calls which they are unable to do.  
Patients relied on family members and most felt there were times they would like to retain confidentiality of their records from their family.  
Alternatively, patients will use **X** to interpret and make contact which results in delays responding to appointments, booking of interpreters and on occasions missing the appointment: **Action required **X** to highlight with Commissioning Managers to feedback back to the Trust**
- It was highlighted that Hospitals will have their own contract arrangements for interpreter services. On occasions interpreters did not arrive on time or clinics running early which resulted in patients been asked to attend appointments alone.
- Access to secure rooms when Intercom are used was highlighted as an issue
- Sign on how to gain support for hard of hearing patients from main reception has been removed. Request for this to be replaced.

### **Hospital Trust: Experience of Hospital Admissions**

- Patients described difficult of isolation when admitted to hospital. Staff would not know the patient was deaf and patients were unable to communicate if they were in pain for example.

### **General Themes**

- Patients described the challenges and lack of confidence of using IT technologies.
- Clear masks use needs to be used by clinical staff to support lip reading. It was noted the clear visors do not satisfy PPE compliance.
- Most patients would like the option for a carer to attend appointments with them (COVID-19 restrictions) but equally for more complex matters would like to use independent interpreters to protect family members. This enables the patient to support their family members rather than the family member interpret and present distressing information to them.

### **Actions:**

- Feedback back to the Hospital Trust to replace sign in the main reception.
- Feedback back to the Hospital Trust to clearly identify any patients who are deaf/ hard of hearing.
- Feedback back to the Hospital Trust to review if a flag can be added to the patient record when scheduling appointments to make reasonable adjustments for making and confirming appointments.
- Deaf Awareness training to be rolled out to across GP Practices.
- Explore if advance appointments can be made by patients at GP Practices.
- Explore any curriculum changes at X for Deaf Awareness