

# A LIFE LESS EQUAL?



**Manx Deaf Society**  
*Manninagh Bouyr Sheshaght*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this research project was to acquire as clear a picture as possible of the current situation of deaf people living on the Isle of Man. In particular, the aim was to discover whether they enjoy the same quality of life as hearing people and, if they don't, to make recommendations as to how to change this situation for the better.

This research was restricted to those deaf adults who are profoundly, pre-lingually deaf, plus those who attended a school for deaf children or who received other specialist education. The research focused on 10 specific areas of deaf people's lives and a total of 25 deaf people, ranging from 18 to 89 years were interviewed, plus 14 of their hearing relatives.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **The range of support currently given to deaf people by hearing relatives**

Hearing relatives are currently giving deaf people a very significant amount of support, most of which involves the translation of written or spoken English. Whilst this support is well meaning, none of these relatives are appropriately trained or qualified in providing such support. The result of this is that deaf people are inevitably missing out on a great deal of vital information - in particular in health-related situations (where their lives and health are potentially at risk as a result of a lack of communication or of miscommunication) and occasionally in situations involving the police and/or the courts (where potentially their liberty is at stake). In addition, having relatives (often parents) accompany them to a variety of appointments, severely compromises their ability to function as independent adults.

#### **Communication**

The 25 deaf people interviewed do not form a community of deaf people who are all fluent in BSL (British Sign Language). Due to lack of access to BSL early in life, or lack of the opportunity to use BSL since leaving school, only 5 are considered fully fluent and 9 fairly fluent. Nearly one third of those interviewed therefore had no sign language whatsoever.

The above has very significant implications for the provision of appropriate communication support in that simply providing the services of a qualified BSL interpreter will not solve the problem (other than for the 5 people who are fully fluent in BSL).

## **Education**

It is clear from this research that the majority of deaf people surveyed have received a significantly poorer education than their hearing peers. Despite this, or perhaps as a result of it, 18 of the 25 said that they wanted more education or training. Some of the types of training requested were in relation to improving their BSL and their literacy skills, but there was also a wide range of other training requested e.g. maths, psychology, mechanics, building etc.

Whilst deaf people are perfectly capable of successfully undertaking additional training, they will not be able to do so without the provision of appropriate professional communication support.

## **Work**

Of the 25 deaf people interviewed, 22 were of working age and of these, 18 were currently in work of some kind.

However, serious concerns were expressed about the perceived lack of appropriate support from the Isle of Man Job Centre and the majority of those interviewed felt strongly that deaf people on the Isle of Man did not have the same job opportunities as hearing people.

Currently on the Isle of Man there is a perception amongst the majority of deaf people interviewed that there is no system for providing professional communication support for job interviews or for work-related training or meetings and in the vast majority of work settings no flashing light fire alarm system or reliable other procedure for alerting deaf employees to the fact that the fire alarm is going off.

## **Social and/or community involvement**

Most of the deaf people interviewed were involved in a wide range of social activities. However, there is still a danger that deaf people living on the Isle of Man can become socially isolated from a range of social activities that hearing people take for granted - e.g. many of those interviewed noted the lack of any subtitled showing of films at the cinema - despite the fact that this is now the norm in the UK.

## **Feelings**

There is a very clear feeling on the part of those interviewed that they do not have the same life chances as hearing people living on the Isle of Man. In addition, deaf people and their hearing relatives perceive a negative attitude towards, and lack of understanding of, the needs of deaf people by the Government, employers, service providers and the general public.

## **Isle of Man Government**

Whilst there was some awareness of some of the services that the Government provides to deaf people, there was also a clear feeling that neither the Government decision makers nor their service providers understood the needs of deaf people and that, as a result, there were many vital services which should be provided - but are not.

## **The Manx Deaf Society**

Around half of the deaf people interviewed were not aware of the range of services which the Manx Deaf Society provides to deaf people living on the Island. Amongst some of the younger deaf people there was a feeling that the services provided were not appropriate to their needs as they were focused more on the needs of older deaf people. There was also a feeling on the part of some of those interviewed that the Society was there to meet the needs of people who were profoundly deaf and used sign language and that this excluded those who have less severe hearing losses and/or do not use sign language.

## **Leisure**

Whilst deaf people interviewed seemed, on the whole, to be aware of the range of leisure services available on the Isle of Man, there were some significant concerns about lack of equal access to some of these services and about lack of deaf awareness on the part of their staff members.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the interviews carried out, it is very clear that, in many areas of life, deaf people living on the Isle of Man have a much worse quality of life than hearing people. It is of particular concern that in relation to situations where deaf people's health, lives and liberty are at stake, there is currently no robust system for the consistent provision of appropriate communication support - thus placing deaf people at serious risk. The good news is that this situation can be changed for the better.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations at the end of this report are divided into three sections, those which should be addressed immediately, those which should be addressed urgently and others. Whilst all of the recommendations are important, those in the first section relate to situations where deaf people living on the Isle of Man are currently facing serious risk to their health, lives or liberty - and it is vital that these recommendations are implemented immediately. In summary they are:-

1. Assess each deaf person's individual need for communication support.
2. Make funding available and establish clear procedures to ensure that such communication support is provided in every situation where a deaf person's life, health or liberty is at stake (i.e. medical appointments and situations involving the police and courts).
3. Provide training for all deaf people in how to access and use the appropriate communication support.
4. Provide a minimum of a half day deaf awareness training course to all GPs and their surgery staff where there is currently a deaf person registered with them. Make this training available to as many hospital doctors, nurses and other staff as possible.
5. Provide a minimum of a half day deaf awareness training course to all Judges working on the Isle of Man and to a range of other legal professionals.
6. Provide a minimum of a half day deaf awareness training course to all front line emergency services staff on the Isle of Man (fire, police, ambulance, coast guard).
7. Provide flashing light/vibrating pad baby alarms and smoke detectors to all deaf people living on the Island who need them.
8. The Isle of Man Government should ensure the safety of deaf people at work by making it compulsory for all employers of one or more deaf people to either fit flashing light fire alarms or, as a minimum, to carry out a risk assessment in relation to deaf employees and to create an appropriate emergency plan/procedure to ensure their safe evacuation in the event of a fire or other emergency.
9. Specialist mental health advice should be made available to those deaf people living on the Isle of Man who may need it.
10. A post of full time champion/support worker/development worker for deaf people should be created on the Isle of Man.

Recommendations in the 'urgent' section include suggested reviews of current service provision to deaf people at the Isle of Man Job Centre and the Isle of Man College and of the range of environmental equipment which is currently available to deaf people living on the Island. They also cover areas such as the provision of appropriate communication support in relation to work-related situations, the provision of BSL classes for deaf people and of deaf awareness and BSL classes for a wide range of hearing people, access to text phones and telephone relay services and access to written information in general. Finally in this section, there is the suggestion that serious consideration be given by the Isle of Man Government to bringing in the overdue Equality Act and reviewing whether other existing legislation, including the Human Rights Act 2001, is adequately ensuring that deaf people are being treated equally with hearing people.

Recommendations in the 'other' section include additional suggestions in relation to deaf awareness and BSL training, in relation to the role of the Manx Deaf Society, in relation to the provision of subtitled showing of films and the provision of interpreters at the theatre and suggestions that similar research projects should be considered in relation to hard of hearing or deafened people and to deaf children.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This research project was commissioned from Deafway by the Manx Deaf Society. The steering group for the project was made up of:-

Julie Smith (Chairperson, Manx Deaf Society)  
Colin Faragher (Member, Manx Deaf Society)  
Peter Cartmel (Partnerships and Contracts Manager, Adults, Social Services)  
David Hynes (Chief Executive, Deafway).

The interviews were carried out by Jimmy Anderson (Team Leader, Deafway).

### **The aim of the research**

The aim of this research was to acquire as clear a picture as possible of the current situation of deaf people living on the Isle of Man. In particular, the aim was to discover whether deaf people living on the Isle of Man enjoyed the same quality of life as hearing people and, if they did not, to identify those areas of life where there was significant inequality. Further to this, should we find that there was significant inequality, we were asked to make recommendations as to how to change this situation in order to bring deaf people's quality of life up to the level of that enjoyed by hearing people.

### **The subjects of the research**

It was agreed that the research would be restricted to interviewing those deaf adults who were profoundly pre-lingually deaf, plus those who attended a school for deaf children, a partially hearing unit or who received similar specialist educational provision as a result of their deafness. In addition, it was decided that a hearing relative of each deaf person interviewed would also be interviewed if the deaf interviewee gave their permission for this.

### **The method of carrying out the research**

A questionnaire was created by Deafway in consultation with the steering group. It was agreed that the questionnaire would focus on specific areas of life and on the interviewees perceptions of service provision to deaf people on the Isle of Man. As a result, the questionnaire was divided into 10 sections. The first 9 of these sections focused on specific areas of life or on service provision/providers, with the final section being an opportunity for those interviewed to make any other comments relevant to the aims of the research. The sections of the questionnaire were:-

1. The range of support currently given to those deaf people interviewed.
2. Communication.
3. Education, past, present and future.
4. Work, past, present and future.
5. Social and/or community involvement.
6. Feelings.
7. Isle of Man Government.
8. Manx Deaf Society.
9. Leisure.
10. General.

It was recognised that many deaf people, due to poor and/or inappropriate educational provision, have poor literacy skills and that, because of this, each interview would need to be conducted face-to-face rather than by posting out written questionnaires.

Deafway selected Jimmy Anderson to conduct all of the interviews. Jimmy is himself a profoundly deaf BSL (British Sign Language) user and works for Deafway in Lancashire both as a Team Leader in our residential services department and as a BSL tutor. Jimmy has a great deal of experience in communicating not only with deaf people who are fluent in BSL, but also with deaf people who have minimal language skills. Jimmy was accompanied by a fully qualified and experienced BSL interpreter to enable him to interview and communicate with hearing relatives.

Once all of the above was agreed and the questionnaire finalised, the Manx Deaf Society then publicised the opportunity to be interviewed and arranged a timetable for the interviews to be carried out.

When all of the interviews had been completed and written up, David Hynes (Deafway's Chief Executive) collated and analysed the information that had been gathered and wrote this project report.

Because of the relatively small population of deaf people on the Isle of Man and because of our promise of confidentiality to those interviewed, wherever we have used quotations from interviews in this report we have taken steps to disguise the identity of the person quoted without losing the meaning, relevance and impact of what they said.

## **An initial selection of quotations from those interviewed**

*'She was in a car accident. She was panicking and didn't know what to do. The police rang me to go out to her. When it went to court the judge told her to step out of the box and go closer so she could lipread. She could not understand.'*

*'He needed a job - there was no support from the job centre because the person there could not communicate with him so could not help him. He was turned down for a job before he had a chance when they knew he was deaf.'*

*'She was refused treatment by the hospital because there was a communication misunderstanding. No communication - so treatment was refused.'*

*'I was in hospital for an operation. I asked the staff 'when can I go home?' - they misunderstood me and thought that I was refusing further treatment - so they sent me home. It was an horrific situation.'*

*'When I was pregnant - I needed full access to information, but didn't get it. When I was actually giving birth I was trying to write things down at the same time in order to communicate! I really needed an interpreter.'*

*'There was a complaint made against me at work - we needed to resolve this issue/complaint. I was given no communication support - so there was miscommunication and a lack of understanding.'*

*'When I was doing an educational course - I was in the final year of the course and exams were coming up. I asked the tutor for help and support, particularly for him to give me a copy of his notes - he refused and said that if I persisted I would learn! Total lack of deaf awareness!'*

*'I was arrested by the police. There was no understanding of my communication needs. I had no idea what was happening. I could not communicate with them and they could not communicate with me.'*

## **THE PEOPLE INTERVIEWED**

A total of 39 people were interviewed. Of these, 25 were deaf people and 14 were hearing relatives of those deaf people. The hearing relatives included 9 parents, 3 husbands/wives/partners and three other relatives.

The deaf people interviewed ranged in age from 18 to 86 years old. Of these, 10 were in the 19-30 age group, 12 in the 31-65 age group and 3 in the 65+ age group.

Of the 25 deaf people interviewed, 12 were male and 13 female. Of the hearing relatives interviewed, 2 were male and 12 female.

20 of the deaf people interviewed have lived on the Isle of Man all of their lives and five have lived there for over 10 years. 5 live alone, 18 in family settings (i.e. with a partner/husband/wife and/or children) and 2 lived with their son or daughter.

Of the 20 living with other people, 9 lived with other deaf people and 11 lived in settings where they were the only deaf person.

### **The range of support given to the deaf people interviewed.**

The hearing relatives interviewed were asked what support they were giving to their deaf relative and gave the following descriptions:-

*'For example, my son has children. One of the children was in hospital. The mother stayed with the child in hospital and my son asked me to stay at his home with him that night otherwise if the children cried, my son would not have heard them.'*

*'Mainly if there are problems at his work. Any forms that need filling in I do them. Car problems, tax and insurance. Sometimes he asks me to explain news headlines, give him information. I keep him up to date or correct misinformation.'*

*'Phone calls. Attending some appointments with her.'*

*'Help with filling in forms. I have access to his bank account so I can check or pay for things. I attend appointments with him - doctors or police etc.'*

*'Everything - appointments - everything.'*

*'I go to the doctors with her. I help her understand if she's in a group.'*

*'Communication support (through home signs) at various medical appointments.'*

*'Communication support. I try to explain things to him or to find out information for him.'*

*'I make phone calls for him even though he has been married for years. I go to the doctor with him if his wife is at work. I update him with all the local news every day.'*

*If there are communication issues e.g. work phone calls - I have helped to get the message across for her and I have communicated for her.'*

*'Interpreting - a lot of explaining everyday life. There are so many things they miss - so it's filling in the gaps.'*

*I am his ears - I help with phone calls, form filling, any problems he has.'*

*'Communication support at GP and dentist. Sometimes she goes for appointments with her mother if I am working.'*

*'Emotional support, communication support, driving him places. Everything he needs. We are there as much as we can be.'*

## **The people interviewed**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

- The number of deaf people who fitted the criteria for this research project and who put themselves forward to be interviewed is fairly small - 25 people. However, we are confident that we have interviewed the majority of deaf adults living on the Isle of Man who fit the criteria established for this research.
- The relatively small number of deaf people living on the Isle of Man goes some way towards explaining the lack of appropriate services that this research demonstrates are currently provided on the Isle of Man to meet their needs. Deaf people living on the Isle of Man are, in many ways, a hidden group - without the power of numbers behind them to help them press for the vital services that they need. The fact that 20 of the 25 people have also lived on the Isle of Man all of their lives is another contributory factor - i.e. they are not aware of the range of services provided to meet the needs of deaf people living in the UK.
- Hearing relatives of deaf people are currently giving them a very significant amount of support - without which many of those deaf people may well not be able to function in society. However, it is vitally important that we do not assume that this support is being provided either appropriately or to an acceptable standard. This is in no way a criticism of those hearing relatives providing this support. However, it is a recognition that they have no training in how to provide it and that, even if they were to be given training, they would not be the appropriate people to provide this support(\*). The result of this is that, even when a hearing relative is providing communication support, the deaf person concerned is almost certainly missing out on very significant amounts of information - often in situations where health, life or liberty are at stake (medical appointments, situations involving the police, court etc.).
- *(\*It should be noted that when you are an adult, taking your mother/father/husband/wife/partner with you to, for example, a job interview, does the opposite of promoting independence - both in relation to your own view of yourself and in relation to your potential employer's view of you as a prospective*

*employee. It should be further noted that Sign Language interpreters and other communication support workers have to undergo considerable amounts of training before being deemed fit to undertake such work. The reality of having an untrained and unqualified relative or friend 'interpreting' for you is that you will get nothing approaching full access to the information - **and that neither you nor the hearing person you are trying to communicate with (doctor, potential employer etc.) will be aware of this.***

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- That, as a matter of urgency, ways be found to provide deaf people in need of communication support with appropriate, competent professional communication support that is provided by people who are appropriately trained and qualified (both to provide communication support and to promote independence) and bound by a code of ethics. The people providing this support should not be close relatives of the deaf people to whom they are providing the support.
- As an absolute priority, such support must be provided in all settings where health, life or liberty are at stake - even though this will initially involve paying for such people to come from elsewhere in the UK.
- Serious consideration should also be given to finding ways of providing appropriate communication support for other situations which, whilst being important, do not concern issues of health, life or liberty, in particular for job interviews and work-based training and meetings.
- That a review of the range of environmental equipment that is available to deaf people living on the Isle of Man is carried out, including which items of equipment are considered essential and which items are provided free of charge. That this information is then made available to all deaf people living on the island. It is particularly important that certain pieces of environmental equipment (e.g. flashing light/vibrating pager baby alarms and smoke detectors) are made easily available to those deaf people who need them as failure to ensure this puts people's lives needlessly at risk.

## **COMMUNICATION.**

### **Communication used in daily life.**

Of the 20 deaf people interviewed who were living with other people, only 4 lived with anyone who they judged to sign 'fairly well' or better.

Of the 25 deaf people interviewed, when asked about their communication in everyday life, 15 said that they communicated by speech and lip-reading, 2 added writing things down to this, 3 said they only wrote things down, 3 said they used a combination of sign language plus writing things down with perhaps a little speech and 2 said that they used speech and lip reading plus some sign language.

When asked about their fluency in sign language, of the 25, 9 had no sign language at all, 3 had a little sign language, 9 were fairly good and only 5 were fluent. Due to profound deafness and lack of fluency in any one language, there were occasions during the interviews where it was not possible for the person being interviewed to understand the question being asked (whether asked in sign language or speech and despite the fact that the interviewer is deaf himself, works daily with deaf people with minimal language skills and had use of an experienced and qualified BSL interpreter during all of the interviews).

When asked if they had ever been in a situation on the Isle of Man where communication was important - but where nevertheless clear communication was not possible - 21 said they had, 3 said they had not and 1 did not understand the question. The incidents that they described where they had been unable to understand those talking to them, and/or where those talking to them had been unable to understand them, included serious medical situations (both at hospital and with GPs), work-related situations (applying for jobs, job interviews, situations at work - including disciplinary situations), situations in educational/training settings, and situations involving police and courts.

Of the 25 interviewed, only 12 said that they had ever used an 'interpreter' (\*) on the Isle of Man. Of those 12, only one had ever used a registered qualified BSL interpreter. The other 11 said that they used a parent, family member or friend to help them communicate (usually by lip-speaking) in situations such as job interviews, meetings at work, college situations and health situations (hospital, GP, dentist, optician).

*(\*) Only a small number of those interviewed used or understood the term 'interpreter' as we do (i.e. as a fully trained and qualified sign language interpreter bound by a code of ethics).*

When asked if they would use an 'interpreter' if there was one provided to them on the Isle of Man, 21 said 'yes', one was unsure and 3 said 'no'. *When using the term 'interpreter' here, those interviewed were using it to refer to a range of*

*communication support including BSL interpreters, lip-speakers, note-takers, speech-to-text operators etc.*

When asked how they cope now (i.e. without an interpreter), responses included:-

*'I have to write things down. This makes things difficult and slows things down. Also, if you write things down to communicate, you don't get all the information - whereas you do in sign language.'*

*'I miss a lot of information at work, both in 1 to 1 situations with colleagues and in meetings.'*

*'I'd 'manage'.'*

*'It's very difficult.'*

*'It's hard.'*

*'I have to write things down and try to manage.'*

*'I can't take the course I want to because there is no interpreter.'*

*'Without the help of my parents, I don't manage. I would panic, I'd be very worried and nervous. I would be lost.....I don't know.'*

When asked what they felt would help improve communication on the island answers included:-

*'Teach Deaf Awareness to hearing people on the island'*

*'More access for deaf people living on the island'*

*'Minicomms and Typetalk'*

*'More loop systems in shops, theatres and museums'*

*'BSL classes for deaf people'*

*'BSL classes for hearing people' 'More people who can sign on the island'*

*'We should be on an equal footing with hearing people - we need interpreters'*

*'Teach sign language to hearing children at school'*

## **Hearing relative's thoughts and comments in relation to communication**

Of the 14 hearing relatives interviewed, 10 knew of a situation in which communication had been very important for their deaf relative - but in which it had not been possible - 4 did not know of such a situation (however one of these 4 said that this was because there was always a family member available to support the deaf person).

When asked if they felt an interpreter was needed on the Isle of Man all 14 hearing relatives said 'yes'. When asked in what situations such an interpreter should be used, they listed the following:-

*...police, court, hospital, emergencies of all kinds, legal situations, job interviews, GPs, medical situations, school (i.e. in relation to the deaf person's children), dentists, filling in forms (e.g. tax, DLA etc).....*

Other significant comments included:-

*'He would not cope without my support and his mother's support when I am not available.'*

*'Without my support I don't know. She does write things down, but she doesn't understand English very well - she does not have the vocabulary to understand English.'*

*'Without my support he would be scared stiff - e.g. In the case of any police and court situation.'*

*'Without our support she wouldn't cope. She manages with people at the local shop that she knows well.'*

*He would find it difficult without my support. Some people don't realise he is deaf and look away when they are talking to him'*

*'If she went without me to a doctor's appointment, she would understand about 25%. If information is in writing she has to rely on someone else to explain what's been written. She would not cope by herself without support.'*

*'He has managed up to now with my support and my wife's support. However, I attended a job interview with my son and I felt like the one being interviewed when I was only there to help with communication. The people interviewing kept their mouths covered so he could not lip-read them - they don't have a clue.'*

*'I don't know (how she would cope without my communication support) I worry about this for her future.'*

When asked what would improve communication for their deaf relative and if they had any other comments in relation to communication, significant comments included:-

*'If she could read and write better then that would help her.'*

*'People should be taught sign language - we were never taught as parents, we were discouraged from learning to sign as it would 'discourage them from learning to speak.'*

*'Deaf awareness training (for hearing people on the Isle of Man). Some of it is so simple - look directly at him/her. Even the doctors look at their computer screen rather than at him.'*

*'An interpreter.'*

*'Attitude (to deaf people) on the Isle of Man (it needs to improve).'*

*'Try and raise the profile of deaf people. Make resources available to allow hearing people to learn sign language and bring everybody together.'*

*'If the services - i.e. police, ambulance etc. if they had basic sign language or deaf awareness training so they knew how to communicate with someone who was deaf it would help.'*

*'An interpreter would be a priority. Also people to have a bit more than basic signing in government departments, around the island - that could help deaf people.'*

*Deaf awareness (perhaps starting at school age) also BSL training on the Island.'*

*'The Deaf centre is good - but it would be useful if they had a drop in centre a number of days a week to provide information for deaf people.'*

*'If children were taught deaf awareness and sign language at school then they would grow up with that knowledge and deafness would be less of a stigma.'*

*'Deaf people don't have enough (access to) information to be able to make a decision (about all sorts of things).'*

## **Communication**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

- Communication is one of the things that defines us as humans. Expressive and receptive communication is central to almost every part of our development and our lives. Deafness, and the lack of appropriate responses to deafness, can have a major negative impact on deaf people's ability to communicate with others and on others' ability to communicate with them. If deaf people are to be treated as full members of society and to have anything approaching the chances in life that hearing people enjoy - then it is the barriers that they face to full and fluent communication with others that need to be addressed.
- The 25 people interviewed do not form a community of deaf people all of whom use and are fluent in BSL (British Sign Language). In fact there are currently only a small number of deaf people (5) who are fully fluent in BSL, with a further 9 who are fairly fluent. Nearly 1/3 of those interviewed had no sign language whatsoever.
- The above has very significant implications for the provision of appropriate communication support. Were all of the deaf people on the Isle of Man fluent in BSL - then the provision of a BSL interpreter plus BSL classes for hearing people

who wished to learn would go a long way to removing these barriers. The fact however that only a small number of deaf people living on the Isle of Man are fluent in BSL means that a more complex solution needs to be found.

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- Provide BSL classes (taught by an appropriately qualified deaf person) for those deaf people who wish to acquire BSL and/or to improve their BSL skills.
- Provide BSL classes (taught by an appropriately qualified deaf person) and deaf awareness training for those hearing relatives of deaf people who wish to learn/improve their skills. Open these classes and this training up also to hearing colleagues, friends and neighbours of deaf people who wish to learn.
- Provide deaf awareness training and basic level BSL classes for a range of hearing service providers, including emergency service staff (fire, police, ambulance and coast guard).
- Work with each deaf person to assess what type of communication support would best meet their needs and then, based on this assessment, provide appropriate, individually tailored, communication support to all deaf people. Initially there will be a wide range of communication support needs including BSL interpreters, lip-speakers, note-takers and possibly speech to text operators.
- As a matter of absolute priority, agree an initial list of situations where the provision of such support is vital (e.g. situations where there is a risk to health, life and/or liberty) and agree who will fund such support. Until such support is available on the Isle of Man, it must be purchased from elsewhere in the UK. Not to provide such communication support in these situations is to deny deaf people a basic human right and to put them at serious risk.
- Provide training for all deaf people in how to use communication support.
- Provide deaf awareness for a range of hearing professionals (GPs, hospital doctors and other staff, dentists, police, judges and other legal professionals) and ensure that included in this training is information concerning how to make appropriate and best use of communication support when communicating with deaf people.
- Provide individually tailored training to those deaf people who wish to receive it to enable them to improve their literacy skills.
- Review and then clarify which items of environmental equipment are available free of charge to deaf people and publicise this information
- Ensure that deaf people are enabled to use the telephone by providing access to Minicomms and Typetalk services.

- Provide deaf awareness training for any hearing people who are prepared to attend.
- Consider the possibility of teaching deaf awareness and BSL to hearing children in schools on the Isle of Man.
- Consider providing a drop in centre at Manx Deaf Society, staffed by an appropriate support worker.

## **EDUCATION, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.**

### **Experience of school**

The 25 deaf people interviewed attended a variety of different schools depending on their age and other factors. 13 attended mainstream schools (with or without partially hearing units attached), 12 attended deaf schools in the UK. 11 of the schools attended were residential and 14 non-residential. 21 said that the education policy at their school was oral/aural (i.e. no sign language used in teaching), the remaining 4 said that there was some element of sign language used in their education.

When asked how they communicated with other pupils outside the classroom, 16 said 'by speech and lip-reading', 5 'by speech and lip-reading with a little sign language' and only 4 'by sign language'.

When asked how much of what their teachers said they understood, 3 said 'everything', 10 said 'most', 9 said 'not much', 2 said 'hardly anything' and 1 said 'nothing'.

### **Qualifications on leaving school**

10 had achieved no qualifications on leaving school, 15 had achieved some. Qualifications gained included GCESs, 'O' and 'A' levels and AQA and NVQ qualifications. One person interviewed had clearly gained a large number of high grade qualifications, whilst a number commented on the fact that whilst they had gained qualifications, they had been of low grades.

### **Education/training since leaving school**

9 said they had undertaken no additional education or training since leaving school, 16 said they had undertaken some. The education/training undertaken included:-

.....Bricklaying, hairdressing, office related, accountancy related, catering, joinery, computing, mechanics, welding, business related, nursing, health and beauty related, laundry and cleaning.

### **Perceived access to education and training post school.**

There were a number of negative comments about the experience of undergoing education or training after leaving school - especially, although not exclusively, in relation to doing so on the Isle of Man. These comments included:-

*'I hated it at college so I didn't attend much'*

*'It was difficult (undergoing education/training on the Isle of Man) as I was the only deaf person in the class and the teacher kept turning round and talking whilst writing on board so I missed what he said.'*

*'I did some courses on the Isle of Man. The English was not accessible. My mother had to help to translate it so I could understand it. There is no help on the Island - no interpreters.'*

*'It was very hard, some of the words were hard to understand and there was no-one to help translate or explain what they meant. No support available.'*

*'There was no support - they didn't understand.'*

*'When I moved on to the higher college there was no signing and therefore it was harder to access the education and training.'*

### **Further education/training wanted?**

When asked if they knew what courses might be available to them to take, 18 said that they didn't know and 7 said they did.

Of the 25 interviewed, 5 said that they didn't want any additional education or training, 2 said that they didn't know, but 18 said that they did want more education or training. The list of courses they wished to undertake is below:-

- *Lip reading*
- *British Sign Language*
- *British Sign Language tutor training (i.e. to become a tutor of BSL)*
- *Literacy courses*
- *Photography*
- *Psychology*
- *General courses to improve their promotion prospects*
- *Mechanics*
- *Boat repair and maintenance*
- *Aromatherapy and massage*
- *Craft courses*
- *Courses to enable them to become a vet*
- *Courses to enable them to become an architect*
- *English*
- *Maths*
- *Art*
- *Building*
- *HGV driving*

## **Support needed to access the above**

When asked what communication support they would need to undertake the above courses, responses included:- lip-speakers, note-takers, speech-to-text operators, loop systems and sign language interpreters.

When asked whether they thought that the above communication support would be available to the on the Isle of Man, 13 said that they didn't know, 10 said 'no', and only 2 said 'yes'.

## **Hearing relative's thoughts and comments in relation to education, past, present and future.**

When asked about their deaf relative's experience of school, significant comments included:-

*'Parents should be made aware that they have choices (not just told).'*

*'Minimal education given. Facilities made available an absolute disgrace. Isle of Man refused to pay for her to go to school in the UK. At 16 she was way behind in education so decided to use her hands and become a (practical job mentioned) - went on a day release course and was given some support.'*

*'He did not receive an education at all'*

*'He/she enjoyed school (on the Isle of Man) but I don't think got the specialist care he would have got in England.'*

*'There should be more on the dual teaching - sign and oral communication - she found it really hard.'*

*'He went to the deaf school in (UK town mentioned) - he does not talk of it very often. I don't know if he has very good memories of it really.'*

*'We were told she had to go to school in (UK town mentioned) when she was 4 or she would be taken into care. When she came back aged 6 and a half she knew 2 words. We struggled to get a teacher for her - she was 10 before we had a teacher for the deaf.'*

*'He did well at school, got GCSEs C and above - but he could have done more he was not pushed.'*

*'She had to go away to school age 3 and a half - you could not communicate with her in any way - it was heartbreaking.....At 16 she had a choice to stay there and learn a trade (particular course mentioned) but she decided to come home and work as a (practical trade mentioned) as she earned more money.'*

When asked whether they felt that deaf people had the same access to education and training on the Isle of Man after leaving school, they made the following significant comments:-

*'The Isle of Man college was very good with my son when he did a (practical course mentioned) course. He got support and it was 'hands on'.'*

*'My daughter went there for (particular course mentioned) once a week for the paperwork, but the teacher didn't always turn up so she didn't get the same support.'*

*'There is nothing there for deaf people. Nothing has changed.'*

*'Don't know if things have improved - but we suffered lack of everything.'*

*'It was more difficult as he did not get the support - it was a bit hit and miss. I think at college they really let him down - only got support up to 19 yrs of age. One day a week is not enough either.'*

*'She was excluded from lessons as support could not be provided. That's why she went to (UK college mentioned).'*

*'He has not been educated in the same way that we have been.'*

*'In college in particular the teacher was good. But the college was aware my daughter could have modified papers, that was her right, but they would still sit her ordinary tests. It's not good enough and is definitely an attitude problem. Because she was treated so badly during her (particular course mentioned) she has left (despite wanting to do the next level).'*

## **Education, past, present and future**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

Whilst there were many negative comments made about the education that deaf people had received at school, and whilst it was clear that the majority (although not all) of the deaf people interviewed had received a significantly poorer education than their hearing peers - 18 of the 25 said that they wanted more education or training.

The fact that 13 of the 25 deaf people interviewed said that during their education they understood somewhere between 'not much' and 'nothing' of what their teachers said is an alarming statistic. It should be noted that a lack of real understanding of the linguistic needs of deaf children and of the implications of profound pre-lingual deafness on their ability to acquire language through speech is likely to be at the root of this. It is vitally important that such lack of understanding, such lack of 'deaf awareness' must not be allowed to continue to deprive these deaf people of the opportunity to learn that they have so clearly stated that they want.

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- Each deaf person who has expressed a desire for more education or training should have an appropriate (\*) advisor/support worker discuss this with them further and then ways should be found to provide the education/training that they

require in such a way that it is made fully accessible. (\*)i.e. *fully deaf aware and fully able to communicate with them.*

- Funding needs to be made available to enable the provision of appropriate communication and other (e.g. note-taking) support for deaf people undertaking education or training on the Isle of Man.
- A review of current access arrangements for deaf people undertaking education or training courses at the Isle of Man college needs to be undertaken to ensure that they receive the communication and other support that they need to access courses.

## **WORK, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.**

### **Numbers currently working**

Of the 22 deaf people interviewed who were of working age (i.e. 18 - 65), 18 were currently in work of some kind.

### **Applying for work**

When asked whether they had received support from the Job Centre on the Isle of Man, 10 replied 'no', 1 replied that he/she had only looked at their notice board, and 8 replied 'yes'.

The 8 who had received support were asked how much of what the staff at the job centre said to them they understood. 2 replied 'everything', 2 replied 'most of it', 1 replied 'not much' and 3 replied 'nothing'.

### **Range of work**

There was a range of jobs held by those interviewed including skilled and semi-skilled work. The employment experiences covered both the private and public sectors.

### **Happiness with work**

Of the 18 currently in work, 14 said they were happy with their work, 2 said they were not happy, 1 said she was happy most of the time and 1 said he was happy with his job for the moment - but not for the future.

### **Perceived equality in relation to work**

However, of the 25 deaf people interviewed, 19 said that they felt that they did not have the same job opportunities as hearing people and the remaining 6 either replied that they 'didn't know whether or not they had the same job opportunities as hearing people' or our interviewer felt that they had misunderstood the question.

When the 19 who had replied were asked why they felt they did not have the same job opportunities as hearing people, replies included:-

*'People prefer to employ hearing people. (They don't employ deaf people for Health and Safety reasons) you can't hear fire alarms going off.'*

*'(I am) restricted on jobs because I am unable to use the phone to take or make calls. (So) you can't do the job yourself.'*

*'(I am) discriminated against when they see 'Deaf' on my CV.'*

*'In my old job I was given filing because I could not use the phone. In my current job I can do (the main task that is part of my job) and don't have to use the phone which is better.'*

*'I have the skills but there needs to be more Deaf awareness. Deaf people on the Island face a lot of oppression and abuse. They are ignored, there is a lot of stigma. It's frustrating. A lot of Deaf people are very embarrassed to talk about it. The Government needs to think about it and how to protect deaf people and that should be a priority.'*

*'Because of communication they can all talk and I feel excluded.'*

*'(There is) not the same opportunity to learn new skills, different jobs - due to being deaf. People think you are deaf, (therefore) you are stupid - and I am not.'*

*'Due to communication misunderstandings.'*

*'I was qualified. I applied many times on the Island for a job and didn't get it. They shipped people in from the UK. It took me a long time to get the job I'm in now and even now it's not a permanent job'*

*'Because people think deaf (people) are stupid. I can't use the phone and it's difficult to lip read. It's easier for hearing people.'*

*'It is harder to find jobs - get interpreters etc.'*

*'Lack of communication.'*

## **Communication at work**

When asked how they communicated in important meetings at work (both those currently in work and those who had worked in the past) 1 said he/she avoids all meetings, 1 said through gesture and facial expression, the remainder said through various combinations of lip reading, speech and writing things down/having things written down for them.

When asked how much of what others say to them at work they understand, 1 said 'everything', 2 said 'not much' and the remainder said 'most'.

However, when asked if they felt they would benefit from communication support at work, 2 said 'no' and 21 said 'yes'.

When asked how important they felt the provision of such communication support was, 1 said 'not at all important', 1 said 'not very important', 2 said 'fairly important' and 19 said 'very important'.

## **Health and Safety at work**

When asked whether there were flashing light fire alarms or flashing light machinery alarms at their place of work (both those currently in work and those who had worked in the past), 2 said 'yes' and 22 said 'no' and 1 gave no answer. When those who said 'no' were asked what would happen if there was a fire at their place of work, the range of responses included the following:-

*'I've told someone to prompt me if the alarm goes off in case the battery in my hearing aid is dead. It happened in my old job, the alarm went off when I was in the toilet. When I came out, the office was empty and they were all outside!'*

*'I watch other people and if they left, I would follow. I am sure someone would tell me.'*

*'The alarm is very loud - so I would hear it.'*

*'I'd smell a fire.'*

*'Other staff would alert me.'*

*'The boss would stop work.'*

## **Hearing relative's thoughts and comments in relation to work, past, present and future.**

When asked if they felt that deaf people had the same job opportunities as hearing people on the Isle of Man, 13 answered 'no' and 1 'don't know'.

Significant comments made when they were asked why they thought this are as follows:-

*'Lots of jobs they're excluded from. Answering the phone - there are times when you really need your hearing.'*

*'Because she is not qualified for anything because the college would not accept her.'*

*'A lot of companies don't have the support for people who are deaf.'*

*'As soon as someone sees 'Deaf' on a CV that's it. He has tried for government posts that are supposed to be non discriminatory, and we have been careful about what he has applied for and only applied for what he could actually do, and he does not even get to the interview stage.'*

*'Problems with interviews and no communication support - the same with application forms. She has had a number of interviews and once they've realised she is deaf, she has not got any further. She has had only one part time job and that was with someone we know.'*

*'He was not allowed to work on any machinery at college. They would not take him for (practical course involving use of machinery mentioned) as they said it was too dangerous'*

*- they would only take him for (practical course not involving the use of machinery mentioned).'*

*'She did not have an English GCSE so she was thrown out before she got a chance. A lot of jobs use the phone and there was no flexibility on that. She would like to have worked in an office but there were no facilities for someone who was deaf or they were just boring jobs such as scanning and copying which she didn't want to do.'*

*'He has no interpreter so no access to learning.'*

*'I think when employers see that they are deaf they discriminate against them straight away - they are not interested.'*

*'I don't think she has the same promotion prospects as a hearing person, I think she is passed over for promotion because she is deaf. Deafness plus limited writing skills due to limited education.'*

*'He got his current job because his mother had a contact. They had to fight to get his job as the people interviewing just saw that he was deaf not that he could do the job. Some people see the disability before they see the person.'*

*'Her mum knew of a job and put her forward - but she didn't have a choice of what she did. If she was hearing she could have looked around and seen what she wanted to do.'*

## **Work, past, present and future**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

Whilst 18 of the deaf people of working age are in some sort of employment, and 14 of these said that they were happy in their work - we should not assume that there is no problem in relation to deaf people and employment.

It is clear that deaf people living on the Isle of Man have nothing like the same work opportunities as hearing people. They receive little or no accessible and informed support from the Job Centre and they face discrimination and lack of understanding in relation to their deafness when applying for work.

When they are in work, it is usual for there to be no provision of flashing light fire alarms and for there to be no appropriate communication support provided to give them access to work-related training or meetings.

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- A review of the support that the Isle of Man Disability Employment Service is able to provide to deaf people be carried out.
- Appropriate communication support be provided for deaf people who wish to use the services of the Job Centre.

- Deaf awareness and basic BSL training be provided to staff of the Isle of Man Job Centre.
- Isle of Man Health and Safety legislation/guidelines relating to health and safety at work to be urgently reviewed and amended to include the provision of accessible fire alarm systems or, as an absolute minimum, there to be a requirement for each employer to have carried out a risk assessment in relation to deaf employees and to have created an emergency plan/procedure that will ensure the safe evacuation of deaf staff should there be a fire or other emergency.
- Free deaf awareness training to be made available to all organisations employing one or more deaf people (and to other interested organisations as they may be future employers of deaf people).
- The provision of appropriate communication support for each deaf person for meetings with employment advisors, job interviews, work-related training and work-related meetings.

## **SOCIAL AND/OR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.**

### **Social activities**

Most of the deaf people interviewed are involved in a very wide range of 'social activities' including:-

...Watching TV, using computers , playing sports, fishing, going to the deaf club, visiting deaf friends, walking, horse riding, going to the pub, swimming, shopping, going to a chess club, riding motorbikes, going camping, going on holiday, going out for meals, going to the cinema, going ten pin bowling (before it closed).

### **Levels of happiness with social life**

Of the 25 deaf people interviewed, 7 described themselves as being 'very happy with their social life', 13 as being 'happy' with it, 1 as 'happyish' with it, 3 as 'not very happy' and 1 as 'very unhappy'.

9 described themselves as 'never' being lonely, 13 as 'sometimes' being lonely, 2 as 'rarely' lonely and 1 as 'always' lonely.

When asked what could be done to improve their social lives, the following suggestions were made:-

*'Bring back the ten pin bowling.'*

*'We need subtitles at the cinema.'*

*'Hearing people living on the Isle of Man need Deaf Awareness training and more should learn to sign'*

*'I would have a better social life if I had a decent job.'*

*'I am worried that because lots of deaf people on the island are older than me, when I get old I may be the only one.'*

### **Hearing relative's thoughts and comments in relation to social and community involvement**

When asked what could be done to improve the social lives of their deaf relatives, comments and suggestions included:-

*'Use of interpreters.'*

*'Access, subtitles for films (cinema). We have had signed theatre now and that helped.'*  
*'It's getting everybody together again. We used to come here (to the deaf club) on a Saturday night and everyone was here with their families. There were events, days out,*

*nights out, trips, it was a community and aimed to keep it together. Really now it's providing a room for people to sit in.'*

*'I know the deaf club is changing - which is good; do other activities, get them involved.'*

*'If people were more aware there would be more understanding of deaf people. He is excluded due to communication/language.'*

*'Deaf awareness generally. People are quite ignorant and have no understanding of deafness.'*

## **Social and/or community involvement**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

Whilst the majority of deaf people interviewed were happy with their social life and involved in a wide range of social activities, there is still a danger that deaf people on the Isle of Man can become socially isolated and excluded from social activities that hearing people take for granted.

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- Cinemas on the Isle of Man need to provide some subtitled showings of all films. They should bear in mind that this will not only benefit those deaf people who were interviewed, but also the very significant number of hard of hearing people who live on the island. Given appropriate advertising, there will be a sufficiently large audience for subtitled showings of films.
- There should be more signed theatre performances. As with subtitled showings of films at the cinema, this not only enables deaf people to access the film/show, it also enables families and groups where some members are hearing and others deaf to attend and enjoy together. (*Captioning has been introduced for some theatre performances since the research was completed*).
- The Manx Deaf Society should review its current provision of social and leisure activities/opportunities, seek ideas from deaf people for new activities/opportunities that they would like and 'pilot' some of these on a trial basis. It is worth noting here that the deaf people interviewed are involved in a wide range of social/leisure/sporting activities and that perhaps ways could be found to enable and encourage them to share their knowledge/experience of some of these with other deaf people.
- Free deaf awareness training and information should be made available to the general public. This would improve people's understanding of the situation of deaf people and thus promote more social interaction between hearing and deaf people.
- Deaf awareness and basic BSL training should be provided to staff working in leisure facilities.

## **FEELINGS**

### **Perceived quality of life**

When the deaf people interviewed were asked how they felt about being a deaf person living on the Isle of Man, 13 gave neutral answers (e.g. 'it's OK'), 5 gave positive answers (e.g. 'It's fantastic') and 7 gave negative answers (e.g. 'It's boring'). Some people however went into more detail:-

*'The problem is the attitude of people that I meet.'*

*'My lifestyle and social (life) is good at the moment. I feel however the Isle of Man is behind the UK in terms of deaf awareness (and the) Disability Discrimination Act. Deaf people should be equal with hearing people and they are not on the Isle of Man.'*

*'I am happy but I do feel lonely because there are only a few deaf people.'  
'It's limited. I don't know many deaf people on the island.'*

*'I would love more support.'*

*'I like the fresh air, it's better than in England. It's quieter here (i.e no protests, no fights).'*

*'Communication is difficult, I can't join in many things, it's difficult. I feel bored on my own.'*

When asked if they felt they had the same chances in life as hearing people living on the Isle of Man, 3 replied 'yes', 4 either didn't know or didn't understand the question and 18 replied 'no'. When those who answered 'no' were asked 'why?' they gave a range of answers including the following:-

*'Because of my deafness.'*

*'There are a lot of things that hearing people can do that a deaf person cannot do i.e. just going to the pub and trying to order a drink.'*

*'Job interviews - I've been to many I felt I could do but people would not take me on. I can't get served as they can't hear me or understand me.'*

*'Everybody else is talking when you are out and I feel left out.'*

*'Because they can hear, they use their hearing to do whatever they want.'*

*'Too much discrimination. Too much oppression. People back off when they realise you are deaf. No deaf awareness.'*

*'It's a small community here it's very quiet, boring really. Elsewhere there would be more people more opportunities.'*

*'Some people look at you and think, 'Oh Deaf!'. The only difference is we can't use the phone, we can work'..... 'it's just our ears don't work!'*

*'Because of my deafness. Hearing people can just talk to anyone and with several people in a group, I can't.'*

*'I think people here are naive and don't understand - particularly as they can't see any disability.'*

*'I am not Manx and opportunities are supposed to go to Manx people first.'*

*'There are different chances and opportunities for hearing people compared with deaf people. I want equality and to be treated as an equal. E.g. when I drop my child off at school and all the parents are talking to each other and I can't do that. I want it to be open to deaf people.'*

*'Deaf people find it difficult with communication, there are problems with going out. Hearing people can just mingle whereas deaf people can't. Deaf people are more isolated.'*

*'I am confident mixing with people and teaching some signing..... if it's on a one to one basis. If it's a group of people I can be or feel left out.'*

When asked if they could change one thing in their life or asked if they had anything else to say in relation to how they felt about living on the Isle of Man, there were a variety of responses including the following:-

*'I am happy but as I said earlier there are not enough interpreters or communication. I think the island needs to wake up a bit.'*

*'I do feel isolated sometimes and it makes it harder to build up your own confidence. It can be quite frustrating.'*

*'I love living on the Island but I wish we were more positive, more willing to take risks, to be the forefront of something rather than being behind the times.'*

*'Be hearing.'*

*'I feel demoralised and I want to feel and be treated as an equal.'*

*'Hearing people to be more aware of people who are disadvantaged.'*

*'I want an interpreter on the island.'*

*'Deaf people to have more confidence to do things. Deaf people should be given the opportunity to do the job or things.'*

*'I would dedicate my life to promote deaf awareness because of my own bad experiences of how people react to a deaf person.'*

*'Change hearing people's attitudes. They can be terrible sometimes.'*

## **Hearing relative's thoughts and comments in relation to their deaf relative's feelings.**

When asked what, in their opinion, life was like for a deaf person living on the Isle of Man, significant comments included:-

*'I think it is tough, frustrating.'*

*'I would hate to be a deaf person on the Isle of Man, knowing what I know now.'*

*'I think sometimes she feels isolated. But I think she has this ideal that being hearing means that you have a great social life. She has hearing (siblings) and thinks they have more friends.'*

*'Isolated. We don't do things as a family i.e. theatre, cinema etc. as he misses so much.'*

*'If it wasn't for places like the deaf club or local churches they would not have the same support.'*

*'He is lucky he has some good friends but I think people can be lonely. I think the internet and mobile phones have helped.'*

*'It's very difficult.'*

*'It seems that people are being left here (the deaf club) to get on with it themselves. It's 'here's somewhere to meet but just do what you can.' It's lack of support. I don't think it's fair to just say, 'here you go do what you can.'*

*'It is very difficult, they are discriminated against. People don't understand what it's like. Hearing aids are the only signs that someone is deaf until they speak and then people back off because they think you are stupid, or they feel stupid because they can't communicate.'*

*'Most of the deaf people that I know have always lived on the Isle of Man and perhaps don't realise what's available in the UK, so what they have got is fine because they don't know any different. I don't know what the services are in the UK - it's only what I have been told.'*

*'Very limited. There are very few deaf people on the island. Some don't get involved with other deaf people and some are young enough to be able to cope and mix with hearing people.'*

*'Isolated. They have their own small community and the young ones leaving the island are having their eyes opened with the technology that's available 'across' that we don't have here.'*

When asked if they felt that their deaf relative had the same chances as a hearing person living on the Isle of Man, 13 said 'no' and 1 'yes'. When those who said 'no' were asked why they thought this was, significant answers included:-

*'It's the education that they are given. He wanted to do (particular course mentioned) but was not allowed to do that, they would not provide the A level facility and he had to do something he didn't want to and as a result left as he was not happy. He had no choice compared to his hearing peers.'*

*'I think there would be more opportunities for deaf people if they lived somewhere else. If you are deaf you miss conversations, information etc.'*

*'She misses different things - news, important information etc. that others would pick up on.'*

*'I think he has been limited on friends. Other people just go out and make friends but he can't do that. He has only just started to gain confidence to go out more.'*

*'There are so many things she can't do. She did join a (sports) team but she couldn't hear the whistle or the other players shouting. It's difficult because there are only a few deaf people. Hearing people look at her thinking, "what is she trying to say?"'*

*'Going off from what I have been told and visiting (UK town mentioned), everyone seems supportive, they all meet up together. I think the social and community elements seem better in (UK town mentioned). He has done fairly well due to his resourcefulness but that's an individual thing there are a lot out there who are not doing as well.'*

*'Because of lack of access to services or leisure services. It's difficult for her to lip-read people she has not met before.'*

*'I don't think that the island caters for deaf people. He said he can only imagine working in an office but would never have the opportunity because of poor education. No chance of promotion, he could not take charge because of the communication issue.'*

*'Her choices were limited to what she was told about rather than seeing everything that was available.'*

## **Feelings**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

There is a definite feeling amongst those interviewed that they do not have the same life chances as hearing people living on the Isle of Man. This can probably never be solved completely as there will always be some communication difficulties between deaf and hearing people unless all deaf and hearing people become fluent in sign language.

However, there are some important steps which can and must be taken to improve the situation. The perceived negative attitude and lack of understanding of the needs of deaf people living on the Isle of Man by the Government, employers, service providers and the general public was mentioned by a number of people - and, if there is the will to do so, this can be changed for the better.

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- Find ways to positively raise the profile of deaf people on the Isle of Man.
- Provide free deaf awareness information and training to all decision makers, employers, public-facing service providers and to any members of the general public who are prepared to attend.
- Funding be allocated to create a full time post of 'champion'/'support worker'/'development worker' for deaf people living on the Isle of Man.
- Some showing of films to have subtitles and more theatre performances to be signed - to enable families who have hearing and deaf members to attend and enjoy together.

## **ISLE OF MAN GOVERNMENT.**

### **Awareness of support available**

When asked what support they were aware of the Isle of Man Government providing for deaf people living on the island, 9 of the 25 deaf people interviewed said 'nothing', or 'I don't know'. The remaining 16, each listed one or two of the following (but it was clear that no-one knew the full range of services that were available):-

....Job centre, hearing aid clinic, DLA, education (for deaf children), social services (disability social worker), bus pass, fax machine, flashing doorbell.

When asked what support they felt the Isle of Man Government should provide to deaf people living on the island, answers included:-

*'(They) should provide a lot more for deaf people, particularly older (deaf) people.'*

*'Provide deaf awareness training for all its staff.'*

*'Loop systems provide equipment for work and home life - i.e. for the telephone.'*

*'Interpreters, lip-speaker, help with housing.'*

*'Interpreters, deaf awareness (training), note-takers/communication support. The Disability Discrimination Act would enable deaf people more. These are what the government should focus on.'*

*'Interpreters, we need people who can (interpret) to help deaf people get jobs and to have a good quality of life. Hearing dogs for the deaf. Flashing light door bells, alarms and environmental equipment.'*

*'I would like a vibrating alarm clock (and) help to find a better job.'*

*'Baby alarms, environmental equipment. Support at work.'*

*'More support aimed at younger deaf people so they can achieve. Improve hearing aids and equipment.'*

*'The Government should be more deaf aware and provide interpreters.'*

*'They should provide interpreters or help - whatever is needed.'*

*'Alarms, Minicomms, interpreters.'*

*'DLA. (They also) need to support deaf people more in education, (in) hospitals, (and) in general.'*

When asked if they had any additional comments to make in relation to the Isle of Man Government's provision for deaf people, replies included:-

*'I would like free hearing dogs for deaf people provided.'*

*'I don't think anyone on the Government knows or understands anything about deafness or people with hearing problems.'*

*'Why have they cut the DLA? There is nothing any different but they have cut (a particular deaf child's) DLA in half because she is attending a hearing school and uses a radio aid. I would like the Government to be more helpful to deaf people. They have not helped deaf people. Disabled people get help but deaf people don't. Disabled people get a car but Deaf people have to pay for an interpreter! There is no help for deaf people.'*

## **Hearing relatives thoughts and comments in relation to the Isle of Man Government**

When asked which services or support were available to deaf people living on the Isle of Man from the Government, the following were listed:-

*...Hearing aids and batteries, flashing light doorbells, smoke alarms, DLA, free bus pass, fax machine....*

There were also the following more negative comments made:-

*'None.'*

*'Not a lot.'*

*'The DLA has been stopped. I know some get it, some don't.'*

*'A social worker. They are not equipped in any way to cope with deaf people. She has a social worker who always communicated by writing things down.'*

*'I don't think there is any support.'*

*'We have had very little support. He has never had a social worker, we have had very little support.'*

*'I don't think that the services they provide are publicised, so people are not aware. Publicity needs to be looked at to get the information out to people.'*

*'I feel they could provide more within the community.'*

When asked what support or services the Isle of Man Government should be providing to deaf people and for anything else they would like to say, the following significant comments were made:-

*'Benefits (to enhance her wages to allow her the opportunity to be able to afford a house as at the moment she will never be able to earn enough to afford a house).'*

*'They should provide to hearing people (employers) some education about deaf people - deaf awareness.'*

*'Support workers, interpreter, lip speaker.'*

*'Access services, interpreters, support with interviews i.e Job Centre staff being trained or using interpreters.'*

*'A more dedicated deaf support i.e. a social worker who could sign and understand deaf people. They don't understand the needs of deaf people really.'*

*'More education for the adults.'*

*'I think they should help with employment and bring in laws - some laws that make employers have to consider them. They could help them more with benefits but they don't see deafness as a disability.'*

*'There should be an interpreter on the island to help him in different circumstances.'*

*'Interpreters. Services to families of deaf people to help them in building up communication and understanding. The more understanding, the easier to mix (deaf and hearing people) and increase awareness.'*

*'They should provide support for families. There are suddenly so many difficulties when you are faced with a deaf person who has to go to school. You don't know what services are available to you, what benefits are available, there is no 'point of information'.'*

*'Interpreters. They should help to train people to have basic signing skills so services that they (deaf people) access, they know there is going to be someone there who can communicate with them instead of having to rely on lip-reading and writing notes.'*

*'In hospitals and doctors and dentists surgeries there should be a more visible system. They have them in some surgeries but not in all.'*

*'Interpreters. Through interpreters the deaf people would be able to say what they needed.'*

*'They should make more of an effort to publicise what services they do provide. Currently you have to dig around to try and find what services are available, they are not forthcoming with the information and they don't advertise their services. You have to fight for what you get.'*

*'DLA annoys me! Award for life and then has to be reviewed. He is on the minimum amount. He is still as deaf as he was, he still has communication issues - its frustrating. There is no deaf person on that panel for sure! The forms are horrendous but there is no assistance for people to fill them in.'*

*'They don't seem to have the same rights as in the UK - i.e. disability laws. I've been told they will not bring it in because it would cost too much money.'*

*'I don't think they are very good at communicating what's out there, what help or support is available, what you are entitled to. You have to fight even for DLA. She only got that a couple of years ago and the forms are so difficult to fill in. She should have had them from being little - but.....'*

*'I've never been impressed with what they have given and have had to fight for everything we've got. Education for my son in particular was appalling and they were unhelpful.'*

## **Isle of Man Government**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

Whilst there was some awareness of some of the services that the Isle of Man Government provides to deaf people, it was clear that no one deaf person was aware of the full range of services.

There was a clear feeling that neither the decision makers nor the service providers understood the needs of deaf people and that, as a result, there were many vital services which should be provided - but that are not.

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- Key politicians and decision makers in the Isle of Man government to be given deaf awareness training (a half day session, taught by a deaf person who is an experienced deaf awareness trainer would be sufficient) and briefed on the situation and needs of deaf people living on the island.
- Funding to be found and allocated to create a full time post of 'champion'/'support worker'/'development worker' for deaf people living on the Isle of Man. Part of the role of this worker would be to encourage and enable the government to appropriately take into account and meet the needs of deaf people living on the island. Given the role of such a worker, they should be employed by the voluntary sector, not by the Government.
- Funding to be made available for the provision of appropriate communication support workers for deaf people, initially and urgently in situations where health, life and/or liberty are at stake and in relation to employment.
- The Isle of Man Government to ensure that Health and Safety guidelines/legislation relating to health and safety at work, and in leisure and other venues accessed by the public, be urgently reviewed and amended to include the provision of accessible fire alarm systems or, as an absolute minimum, there to be a requirement for each employer/venue to have carried out a risk assessment in relation to deaf employees/visitors and to have created an emergency plan/procedure that will ensure the safe evacuation of deaf staff/visitors should there be a fire or other emergency.
- Review and then clarify which items of environmental equipment are available to deaf people and publicise this information.

- Provide clear information concerning DLA - who is entitled, under what circumstances etc. Support and advice needs to be provided to those applying for DLA to enable them to understand the application process.
- Ensure that all GPs, Dentists and hospital waiting rooms have visual displays rather than relying on patients hearing their names when called out by staff members.

## **THE MANX DEAF SOCIETY**

### **Awareness of current services provided by the Manx Deaf Society**

Of the 25 deaf people interviewed, 12 said that they did not know what services the Manx Deaf Society provided. The remaining 13, between them, mentioned the range of services listed below - but no one person was able to list the full range of services.

*....Pool, darts, the deaf club, trips, outings, holidays, parties, meals out, support with heating bills, Minicoms.*

### **Use of current services provided**

7 people said that they used the services that Manx Deaf Society provides, 17 said they didn't, and 1 said he didn't know whether he did or didn't use them.

Some people expressed the feeling that because there were a lot of older deaf people at the deaf club - that it wasn't for them (as they were younger). One person wondered whether she would be welcome as she didn't sign and was not profoundly deaf.

When asked what services not currently provided by the Manx Deaf Society they would like them to provide, suggestions included the following:-

*'Advertise in the paper about themselves, where are they and what's on.'*

*'Sign language classes.'*

*'Equipment free of charge for deaf people. Holidays free for deaf people. Hearing aids free of charge for deaf people. Fire alarms, flashing light doorbells and phones. Smoke alarms for all deaf people who attend.'*

*'We need to get deaf people to come back to the deaf club, feel more comfortable. Ask deaf people what they want, at the moment it's hearing who dictate what they get. The hearing are sat talking and not signing and it's not open, it's secretive. They have meetings and treat deaf people like they are thick. There need to be more activities. Why do we have to be members? We are deaf, we should be able to attend as and when. We cannot attend every week, we can't bring our children every week, they have homework. We should still be given information whether we attend regularly or not - i.e. about the signed performance as we would have attended but no one passed on the information! I don't feel the club is as open as it used to be and that's really sad.'*

*'Perhaps subsidised trips i.e. Deaf free, and hearing should pay for the trips rather than be subsidised.'*

*'I'd like more sign language training.'*

*'Don't know - to do more fun things.'*

*'Don't know - maybe more trips and outings.'*

*'Should provide environmental aids/technical equipment for all deaf people.'*

*'To provide interpreters.'*

*'Provide help to find a job. Information about deaf issues.'*

## **Hearing relatives thoughts and comments in relation to the Manx Deaf Society**

When asked what services they were aware of that the Manx Deaf Society provides, 6 people said 'I don't know', 'we don't use any of their services' or 'none'. The remaining 8 made the following comments:-

*'It used to be totally signing so would not have been any help to my children.'*

*'When our children were small we were told the Deaf Society was for people over 21 years of age.'*

*'They have helped with smoke alarms for individuals, communication support with appointments if they can.'*

*'Social support, holidays and being available for advice if needed.'*

*'Outings, they go on holiday every year. Christmas dinner every year.'*

*'I believe there is an annual holiday (UK) but I don't know how many people attend. Deaf club Saturdays. There used to be a BSL class (Level 1) but that no longer happens.'*

*'They help them with holidays, assistance with mobile phone bills.'*

*'Social.'*

*'They support each other. Holidays, trips.'*

When asked which services that the Manx Deaf Society does not currently provide that they would like them to provide, they made the following comments:-

*'Information i.e. like the door bell as we didn't know we could get that; the alarm system, anything like that, which could help improve their life within society.'*

*'I think we should look at government to provide services. I don't know what else the Deaf Club could or should provide as I have not been involved with another Deaf Club.'*

*'They should widen their scope and let people with hard of hearing in and people with communication difficulties in.'*

*'Events, day trips, charity events that people helped out with. Anything to bring people together.'*

*'I think the deaf people should think what they should be provided with.'*

*'It's mainly for adults and not for younger children. Maybe they should do something for parents and toddlers.'*

*'I don't regard the society as an agency to call on all the time. I would not like to say they should do anything as a charity. It would be nice if they could provide an interpreter or accompany him on his appointments but I would not like to say they should do.'*

*'There should be some equipment loan service as there is nothing anywhere. Also to support more users, not just BSL users.'*

*'Some social activities for deaf people so they can all get together.'*

*'It's mainly for adults and not younger children. Maybe to do something for parents and toddlers to offer some support. There was nothing for us when my daughter was younger.'*

## **Manx Deaf Society**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

Around half of the deaf people interviewed were not aware of the range of services that the Manx Deaf Society provides to deaf people. Amongst some of the younger deaf people there was a feeling that the services provided were not appropriate to their needs as they were focused more on the needs of older deaf people. Some of those interviewed also felt that the society was there to meet the needs of people who were profoundly deaf and used sign language and that this excluded those who had less severe hearing losses and did not use sign language.

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- The Manx Deaf Society to review and then state clearly who it is there to provide services for/support - in particular whether this includes people who are not profoundly deaf.
- To review its current range of services/activities and, in consultation with deaf people, to pilot some new services/activities - particularly such services that may interest younger deaf people.
- To consider what services/facilities it could provide to deaf children and their families.
- To consider having a support worker based a number of times per week in a 'drop in centre' in the deaf club.

- To consider gathering all of the information concerning the services and support available to deaf people living on the Isle of Man and making this available from the deaf club premises and in other ways (in accessible formats).
- To consider providing BSL classes in the deaf club - i.e. in a deaf environment (which is often preferred by those learning to a college environment).
- To consider setting up a display of the range of environmental equipment that is available to deaf people.
- To provide clear and accessible information about the range of services that the Manx Deaf Society provides.

## **LEISURE.**

### **Awareness of range of leisure services and opportunities available**

When asked what leisure services they were aware of on the Isle of Man, those interviewed cited the following:-

*....The national sports centre, football training, cinema, horse riding, swimming, gyms, golf, tennis and cricket clubs, paint balling, clay pigeon shooting, rock climbing, horse riding, canoeing, fishing, bowling (but no longer ten pin bowling), kayaking, camping, badminton, walking....*

When asked whether, as a deaf person, they had any difficulties in accessing these facilities/services on the Isle of Man, 1 said that it was a difficult question to answer, 9 said 'no' (2 of these added that they never go on their own however and 1 that people are not deaf aware') and 15 said 'yes'. When those 15 were asked what difficulties they faced, answers included the following:-

*'(When I'm) swimming, I may not hear the fire alarm.'*

*'No subtitles at the cinema.'* (This was mentioned by 11 people)

*'Communication difficulties when shopping.'*

*'Theatre performances are not signed'* (There was great praise for the recent theatre performance that was interpreted and many requests for more such interpreted performances at the theatre).

*'It's difficult to do exercises and watch instructions at the same time when you have to lip-read.'*

*'Communication - without an interpreter I would have to write things down.'*

*'It's hard to understand (what people are saying).'*

*'The cinema has a loop system but the headphones are huge and I don't feel comfortable wearing those as everyone stares. Something discreet would be better.'*

When asked for ideas that would improve their access to leisure services, the following suggestions were made:-

*'They should improve things - a signal (visual) for the fire alarm in the swimming pool.'*

*'Subtitles at the cinema. There's only been one signed performance at the Theatre (there should be more).'*

*'People understanding how to communicate i.e. looking at me when they talk to me.'*

*'Deaf awareness training on how to communicate with deaf people.'*

*'There was a signed performance at theatre but it was not well advertised, I would have gone if I had known. Needs to be better publicised in advance.'*

*'A big (night) club!'*

*'There used to be sports for the disabled but they don't class deafness as a disability. It was aimed at people with a physical disability. They don't ask people if they feel they have a disability when they are deaf.'*

*'Something must be done to promote and help access for deaf people on the Isle of Man.'*

*'More deaf awareness for shopkeepers i.e. at a till where it does not display the price, you don't know how much to pay and they just talk at you.'*

*'It would be more comfortable if there was an interpreter available to make things more accessible.'*

### **Hearing relatives comments in relation to Leisure**

When asked how they thought that deaf people's access to leisure services on the Isle of Man could be improved, they made the following suggestions/comments:-

*'Subtitles at the cinema, interpreter at the theatre.'*

*'Education about deaf awareness and better communication.'*

*'Anything history related has no communication support and are dark places so it's difficult to pass information/translate. The cinema needs subtitles. Loop systems that work or are switched on! More signed theatre performances so that all the family can access it together.'*

*'Communication - it would have been nice at concerts or events to have had someone signing and to advertise the fact so deaf people could attend.'*

*'More deaf awareness generally on the island.'*

*'I go to the theatre with the children, my wife rarely does because there is no access, but she came to the recent signed performance of Joseph and it was lovely for us to be able to do that as a family and all have access to it.'*

*'He goes to his works Christmas meal but doesn't really want to go because they are all talking and although a couple will talk to him they can't do that all through the evening.'*

*'I think deaf people are excluded from a lot of things (not just on the Isle of Man). They can't go to things because an interpreter is not organised.'*

## Leisure

### Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments

Deaf people interviewed seemed, on the whole, to be aware of the range of leisure services available on the Isle of Man. However, there were some significant concerns about lack of equal access to some of these services, safety when using them and lack of deaf awareness on the part of the staff of these services.

### Deafway's recommendations from the above

- Cinemas on the Isle of Man need to provide some subtitled showings of each film.
- Cinemas need to involve deaf people in discussion about the provision of access facilities such as headphones or loop systems to ensure that they provide systems that deaf people will use and will not be embarrassed by.
- More signed theatre performances should be arranged and these should be advertised more widely and more in advance of the date of the performance.
- Deaf awareness training should be provided to all leisure service/facility staff who are in contact with customers.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of interpreters for some other public/community large scale events.
- Isle of Man Health and Safety guidelines/legislation relating to health and safety at work should be urgently reviewed and amended to include the provision of accessible fire alarm systems or, as an absolute minimum, there to be a requirement for each leisure venue to have carried out a risk assessment in relation to deaf visitors and to have created an emergency plan/procedure that will ensure the safe evacuation of deaf visitors should there be a fire or other emergency.

## **GENERAL COMMENTS**

At the end of their interview we asked each deaf person if there was anything else they would like to say to us about any difficulties they face as a deaf person living on the Isle of Man or about anything that could be done or provided to improve things for deaf people living here? 8 of the people interviewed said either that they didn't know or that they had nothing to say - the remaining 17 gave the following answers:-

*'I'd like to see schools learn sign language and (for there to be) classes for me to learn i.e. morning, evenings or weekends when I am not at work.'*

*'It is difficult for people with hearing problems on the island. On some courses I've been on and at some places where I've worked, people have never spoken to me because of communication difficulties.'*

*'Support at job interviews needed.'*

*'I think the government should be promoting and providing deaf awareness and the Disability Discrimination Act. There would be less stigma which would make life on the Island better for deaf people.'*

*'Interpreters, subtitles, fire alarms, hearing dogs for deaf people. More help for deaf people, the government need to consider more.'*

*'College is very difficult - i.e. there is a lack of support. There needs to be more support (for deaf students).'*

*'There are no interpreters, no support for deaf people.'*

*'To have an interpreter on the Island.'*

*'I would like communication support on the Isle of Man for medical appointments police access etc.'*

*'There are problems with many things but we try to find a way around them. There is a lack of understanding from hearing people about deafness. There needs to be more support for deaf children in schools. If I had had more support in school I would have done better and got qualifications.'*

*'We have no RNID or Deaf Children support, no hard of hearing clubs, no lip reading (classes) and no sign language interpreters on the Island.'*

*'I want more jobs for deaf people. A support worker for deaf people. An interpreter on the island for various appointments i.e. doctors, hospital, police etc. More outings as a group for deaf people. The deaf club to change and organise more trips and outings.'*

*'I'm worried about the car theory test as it will be hard to understand the questions. My partner phoned for jobs for me but they hang up after being told I'm deaf. My child's teacher shouted at me for not supporting homework and called me stupid. A bus driver said 'bye' when I left the bus but I didn't hear him - other passengers gave me a bad look and made comments thinking I was rude.'*

*'I want to be treated equally with hearing people. Good communication for deaf people.'*

*'No problems, I am happy with lots of good (deaf) friends'*

*'Interpreters needed on the island.'*

At the end of their interview we asked each hearing person if there was anything else they would like to say to us about any difficulties faced by deaf people living on the Isle of Man or about anything that could be done or provided to improve things for deaf people living here. The following comments/suggestions were made.

*'We need deaf awareness and we need interpreters.'*

*'They need access to an interpreter or access through other means. More social things are needed too.'*

*'Communication - I would like her to be able to have access to an interpreter without feeling like I am bothering somebody to interpret (i.e. having to ask the deaf club for help). I would like to see more help from social services so if I contact them to explain her behaviour they will go and see her, without me having to explain the problem. I think she needs mental health care e.g. counselling - I've asked for that help but cannot get it. More support in the mental health area for deaf people.'*

*'I am lucky he is outgoing and just gets on with it. The only issue was finding his job and his fight with the Government to get DLA.'*

*'I don't know. She normally goes out with her family who can communicate with her or to the deaf club where she can communicate with people. She goes to the local pub where people know her and are used to her. A lot of people think because you are deaf you are stupid! They really do need an interpreter as situations arise where it's needed. I do a lot for her, making phone calls and going to the doctor and hospital etc.'*

*'One of the things that did get to me a little bit. I used to work in the building trade and there was 'Document M' about disabled access and use, but it only covered physical disabilities, there was nothing in that document that made it necessary for visual fire alarms, door bells, any sort of visual kit. It was not just deaf awareness that was missing, it was blindness as well. I believe it should provide measure for all disabilities, it's a Government document, why was it not considered?'*

*'I think I've covered it really. An interpreter on the Isle of Man would be a really great thing. He recently had to go to court, but there was nobody there to interpret. It was really difficult and I had to sit with him and try to interpret what the judge was saying in a way that he could understand but that was acceptable to the court. We need more professional help there that's just one example.'*

*'Nothing that I have not already said. i.e. interpreters needed, basic signing skills training should be provided. Publicity to say what is available and can be provided. Not everyone has a partner or family member to support them/act as communicator, some people are on their own with no support.'*

*'If people were aware of the difficulties deaf people face, it would make it easier.'*

*'Every deaf person should be able to have the facility of an interpreter at any given time, that is a basic human right that they deserve and I think that is being denied to them.'*

## **General comments**

### **Summary of the current situation and Deafway's comments**

Despite having been through relatively long interviews, both deaf people and hearing relatives - when asked if there was anything else they would like to say about the difficulties faced by deaf people living on the Isle of Man - had plenty to say!

### **Deafway's recommendations from the above**

- Consideration should be given to teaching BSL and deaf awareness in all schools on the Isle of Man.
- Appropriate communication support should be provided immediately for deaf people living on the Isle of Man for all situations that involve health, life or liberty.
- The need for communication support in other situations is also very important and must be addressed as soon as possible.
- Ways must be found to ensure that the Isle of Man Government both understands and provide for, and is seen to understand and provide for, the needs of deaf people.
- A review of current access arrangements for deaf students at Isle of Man college should be undertaken.
- A support worker/champion for deaf people living on the Isle of Man should be appointed as soon as possible.
- Serious consideration should be given to bringing in the Equality Act to ensure that deaf people are treated equally on the Isle of Man.
- Deaf Awareness training sessions should be provided for as many people living on the Isle of Man as can be persuaded to attend.
- Specialist mental health advice should be made available in relation to deaf people with suspected mental health problems/difficulties living on the Isle of Man.

- An urgent review of current legislation/guidelines in relation to disability access to and safety in buildings should be undertaken, looking in particular at the needs of deaf people.
- Appropriate communication support should be provided for deaf people living on the Isle of Man at job interviews and for meetings and training relating to their employment.

## **THEMES RUNNING THROUGH THIS REPORT**

### **Independence**

Deaf adults living on the Isle of Man are currently denied the independence enjoyed by hearing adults. The main reason for this is lack of appropriate professional communication support - meaning that for many situations they have to be accompanied by a relative who attempts (to the best of their ability) to 'interpret' for them.

The provision of professional communication support would promote independence. There is also the need for a support worker who could work with individual deaf people to promote their independence - someone outside the family to whom they could come for advice and support - but whose role would be, as far as possible, to encourage and enable each deaf person to gain the information and skills needed to function as independently as possible in society (rather than to do things for them).

### **Equality**

There is no reason that deaf people living on the Isle of Man should not have equal chances in all areas of life with hearing people. However, there is much that needs to happen to achieve this (see the summary of recommendations in this report). In the UK, whilst deaf people would say that life is still not fully equal with hearing people in all areas of life, considerable progress has been made. In particular, the provision of interpreters and other communication support through the Access to Work scheme has made a vast difference to the range of employment which deaf people are able to undertake. As an example of this, Jimmy Anderson who conducted all of the interviews for this research was provided with a registered qualified BSL interpreter through the UK's Access to Work scheme because he had to communicate fluently with hearing relatives of deaf people in order to interview them.

### **Communication**

Fluent, two way communication is something that hearing people take for granted. From cradle to grave and from morning to night we communicate - expressively and receptively. Deprived of the ability to communicate, the lives of the majority of hearing people would disintegrate - personal relationships, education, access to information, ability to acquire and hold down a job and more.

Deaf people on the Isle of Man are currently denied the opportunity to participate in many aspects of life on an equal footing with hearing people due very largely to a lack of understanding and acceptance of, and appropriate provision to meet, their communication needs.

## **Human Rights**

There are many definitions of human rights. In most definitions some version of the 'ability to express one's views and opinions' is often mentioned. Given this, plus the fact that fluent two-way communication is one of the things that defines us as being human, to be denied the support needed to enable such communication might be considered a denial of one's human rights. Whilst deaf people living on the Isle of Man continue to be denied appropriate communication support, particularly in situations where their health, life or liberty are in danger or at risk and in situations related to employment - it can be said, quite justifiably, that the Human Rights Act 2001 (Isle of Man) might not be having the desired impact on their lives.

## **Perceived attitudes towards deaf people on the Isle of Man**

It is clear from the interviews carried out for this research that deaf people feel that there is a negative attitude towards them on the Isle of Man. There are strong feelings that the Isle of Man Government do not understand or provide for their needs, that potential employers deny them work opportunities, that they miss out on educational opportunities, that they receive poor quality health care (in that they are not enabled to communicate fluently with medical staff) and that neither the police nor the courts take the trouble to provide appropriate communication support so that there is clear two way communication.

## **The role of the Isle of Man Government in relation to deaf people living on the Isle of Man**

The Isle of Man Government has the same responsibilities towards deaf people living on the Island as it does towards hearing people. The fact that deaf people need additional or different services in order for the government to meet these responsibilities should be no excuse for deaf people to be treated any less favourably than hearing people.

## **The role of the Manx Deaf Society in relation to deaf people living on the Isle of Man**

As the organisation on the Isle of Man whose very purpose is to support deaf people living on the Island, the Manx Deaf Society has a particular responsibility to do all that it can to work towards deaf people having an equal quality of life with hearing people - across every aspect of their lives. It is therefore very encouraging indeed that the Manx Deaf Society has commissioned this research. It is hoped that this report will contribute to them being able to take a high profile lead in advocating for, and contributing to, both the changes to existing services and the provision of new services that are so much needed by deaf people.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to acquire as clear a picture as possible of the current situation of deaf people living on the Isle of Man and, in particular to discover if they enjoyed the same quality of life as hearing people living on the Island.

From the interviews carried out with both deaf people and hearing relatives of deaf people, it is very clear that in many areas of life deaf people have a much worse quality of life than hearing people.

The good news is that this situation can be changed for the better. Below is a list of recommendations that, if implemented, will make a real, lasting and positive difference to the lives of deaf people living on the Isle of Man.

It is vital that those recommendations listed in the first section below headed 'Recommendations that should be addressed immediately' are indeed addressed immediately. Now that there is clear evidence that the lack of appropriate communication support is putting at real and unnecessary risk deaf people's health, life and liberty - there are no excuses. This situation cannot continue and the recommendations in this section must be implemented immediately.

The recommendations in the second section headed 'Recommendations that should be addressed urgently', whilst they do not relate to situations where deaf people's health, life or liberty are at stake, should still be addressed as soon as possible. These recommendations are in the second section of recommendations only because of the high level of risk that deaf people will continue to face unless or until the recommendations in the first section are implemented.

The recommendations in the third section, entitled 'Other recommendations' should also be implemented and it may well be that some of the recommendations in this section (e.g. in relation to cinemas providing sub-titled showings of films) may be more quickly and easily implemented than recommendations in the second section.

### **Summary of recommendations.**

NB - Before beginning the research, we recognised that the achievement of equality for deaf people living on the Isle of Man is likely to be a gradual process and that responsibility for progress towards this goal must be shared by all organisations concerned - statutory, voluntary and private.

However, this research has made very clear that there are a number of steps which must be taken and issues which must be addressed immediately. Failure to take these steps will be to knowingly leave deaf people in situations where their lives, their health and their liberty continue to be put unnecessarily at risk.

## **Recommendations that should be addressed immediately.**

1. Each deaf person who was interviewed as part of this project (or who fits the criteria for this project but was not interviewed) must be offered an urgent assessment of their individual needs for communication support. The aim of the assessment would be for the assessor(s) and the deaf person concerned to jointly decide what would be the most appropriate form of communication support (e.g. BSL Interpreter, lip-speaker, speech-to-text operator) for them to be provided with in situations where their life, health or liberty are at stake. (The assessors, with the deaf person, should also determine whether or not each deaf person would like and benefit from BSL classes taught by a deaf person - if they are not already fluent in BSL).

### **Additional comments on the above:-**

- *This research has demonstrated that currently deaf people living on the Isle of Man are facing situations where their life, health or liberty is potentially at risk (medical situations, situations involving the police and the courts) - and in these situations, despite the fact that neither they nor the hearing people with whom they need to communicate (GPs, nurses, doctors, police officers, judges and other legal professionals) can communicate clearly with each other - no appropriate communication support is being provided.*
  - *The solution to the above problem is not as simple as providing a registered, qualified BSL interpreter as only a small number of deaf people living on the Isle of Man are currently sufficiently fluent in BSL to make use of one - hence the need for individual assessments of individual need for communication support.*
  - *These assessments need to be carried out by one or more assessors who are appropriately experienced in this field. ( NB this expertise does not currently exist on the Island).*
2. Funding must be made available, and clear procedures created, for the provision of the appropriate communication support for each deaf person to be provided in situations on the Isle of Man where health, life and liberty are, or could be, at stake. The people providing this support should not be close relatives of the deaf people to whom the support is provided. (NB Such communication support services are not currently available on the Isle of Man so funding must be found and arrangements made to provide them from elsewhere in the UK until or unless these services become available on the Isle of Man).

### **Additional comments on the above:-**

- *Once the assessments have been completed and a decision made as to what sort of communication support each deaf person needs - funding must be made available immediately (I suggest that the responsibility for provision of this funding should lie with the Isle of Man Government) and clear procedures established so*

*that there is no delay in providing such support, sometimes at short notice, whenever a deaf person living on the Isle of Man is in need of it.*

3. Training must be provided for all deaf people on how to access and use the appropriate communication support.

*Additional comments on the above:-*

- *Given the fact that communication support has not been provided for deaf people living on the Isle of Man up to now, it is essential that training is given (by a deaf trainer) to each deaf person on how to use the communication support that they have been assessed as needing. If this training is not provided, it will not be possible for deaf people to make the best use of such support.*

4. Deaf awareness training (a minimum of a half day course provided by an appropriately qualified and experienced deaf person) must be provided to all GPs and their surgery staff (receptionists, nurses etc.) who currently have a deaf patient registered with them. This training should also be provided to as many hospital doctors, nurses and other staff as possible.

*Additional comments on the above:-*

- *It needs to be recognised that communication support is vital to both the deaf person and to the hearing person who need to communicate with each other. It is therefore equally important that those GPs and other surgery staff who have deaf people registered with them, and as many hospital doctors and nurses as possible undergo this training so that they understand how to make appropriate use of those providing communication support.*

5. Deaf awareness training (a minimum of a half day course provided by an appropriately qualified and experienced deaf person) must be provided for all Judges working on the Isle of Man and for a range of other legal professionals.

*Additional comments on the above:-*

- *The fact that at least one deaf person has appeared in court on the Isle of Man without appropriate communication support is extremely worrying and steps must be taken as quickly as possible to ensure that this situation does not arise again. However, we cannot expect judges or other legal professionals to know how deaf people should be given access in court without appropriate training.*

6. Deaf awareness training (a minimum of a half day course provided by an appropriately qualified and experienced deaf person) must be provided to all front line emergency service staff (fire, police, ambulance and coast guard).

Additional comments on the above:-

*If emergency services staff are to meet the needs of deaf people they encounter appropriately, then this training is vital.*

7. Flashing light/vibrating pad baby alarms and smoke detectors must be provided to all deaf people living on the island whose deafness means that they would not hear their baby/young children crying and/or their smoke detector going off.

Additional comments on the above:-

*Whilst it may be possible to debate which other items of environmental equipment should be provided to deaf people and which they should take responsibility for providing themselves, these two life saving pieces of equipment must be provided immediately. I suggest that the responsibility for provision of this equipment should lie with the Isle of Man Government.*

8. The Isle of Man Government should undertake an urgent review of Health and Safety Legislation/guidelines relating to Health and Safety at Work, focusing on the needs of deaf employees. If it is discovered that the needs of deaf employees are not currently appropriately covered, then such legislation/guidelines must be amended to include requirements for the provision of accessible (i.e. flashing light) fire and other alarms or, as an absolute minimum, the requirement for each employer to have carried out a risk assessment in relation to deaf employees and to have created an appropriate emergency plan/procedure that will ensure the safe evacuation of deaf staff should there be a fire or other emergency.

Additional comments on the above:-

*The urgent need to ensure that deaf employees are not left in a building unaware that a fire alarm is going off is self explanatory.*

9. Specialist mental health advice should be made available to those deaf people living on the Isle of Man who may need it.

Additional comments on the above:-

*There is a history in the UK (and in other countries) of deaf people being mis-diagnosed in relation to mental illness. It is therefore vital that, where there is the possibility that a deaf person has a mental illness, specialist advice is sought from one of the specialist centres in the UK.*

10. A full time post of 'champion/support worker/development worker' for deaf people on the Isle of Man should be created.

Additional comments on the above:-

*The needs of deaf people are more complex than most hearing people realise. Given this, plus the relatively small number of deaf people living on the Isle of Man - meaning that few professionals develop expertise in working with deaf people - there is a vital need for one person to be appointed who will take the role of 'champion/support worker/development worker' for all deaf people living on the Isle of Man. The person appointed needs to be appropriately skilled, experienced and managed in order to ensure that fast progress is made towards the achievement of equality across all areas of life for deaf people. Without such a post it will be extremely difficult to make such progress. Given the nature of this role, the post holder should be employed by the Voluntary Sector not by the Government.*

**Recommendations that should be addressed urgently.**

1. A review needs to be undertaken of the current services provided to deaf people by the Isle of Man Job Centre. The review needs to focus on how much understanding Job Centre staff have of, and how well they are meeting, the specialist communication needs of deaf people in relation to:- seeking employment opportunities; applying for jobs; attending job interviews; undertaking work based induction, training and meetings.
2. Appropriate communication must be provided for deaf people wishing to use the services of the Isle of Man Job Centre.
3. Deaf awareness and basic BSL training should be provided for all customer facing staff in the Isle of Man Job Centre.
4. Appropriate communication support should be provided for deaf people in situations which do not involve health, life or liberty. First amongst these should be employment-related situations - i.e. appointments at the job centre, job interviews and work-related training and meetings.
5. A review needs to be undertaken of current education provision for deaf people at the Isle of Man College - with particular focus on the range and quality of communication support that is available to deaf people who are attending, or who may wish to attend courses there in the future.
6. Funding must be made available for the provision of appropriate communication support for deaf people undertaking education or training of any sort at the Isle of Man College (or other training venues) on the Isle of Man.
7. A review should be carried out of the range of environmental equipment which is available to deaf people living on the Isle of Man. The review should focus on how and by whom their need for this equipment is to be assessed, how and by whom this equipment is to be supplied, what range of equipment will be supplied and under what circumstances it will be provide free of charge/charged for. Once the review is completed and decisions made - clear

and accessible information concerning assessment for and provision of environmental equipment must be provided to all deaf people living on the Isle of Man.

8. Each deaf person living on the Isle of Man who has expressed, or expresses in the future, a desire to undertake more education or training, should have an appropriate (\*) advisor/support worker discuss this with them and then support them in accessing such training/education with appropriate communication support. (\*) *i.e. someone who is fully deaf aware and fully able to communicate with them.*
9. Serious consideration should be given to providing literacy classes for deaf people living on the Isle of Man. Such classes should be for deaf students only - i.e. they should not be mixed classes of deaf and hearing people.
10. Specialist BSL classes (taught by an appropriately qualified and experienced Deaf person) should be provided, free of charge, for those deaf people living on the Isle of Man who wish to improve their BSL - and for those of their relatives and friends who wish to attend.
11. Deaf people on the Isle of Man need to be given access to text phones and the Typetalk service which is available to deaf people in the rest of the UK.
12. Deaf awareness training (initially a half day course) should be provided for all key politicians and other decision makers on the Isle of Man. This course needs to be led by a suitably qualified and experienced deaf person working through a BSL interpreter where necessary.
13. Serious consideration should be given by the Isle of Man Government to the bringing in of the Equality Act which ensures as far as possible that deaf people are treated equally with hearing people on the Isle of Man.
14. Clear information, in an accessible format, should be provided concerning DLA on the Isle of Man. This information should include, who is eligible, under what circumstances they are eligible and how they can apply. Support should also be provided for people who wish to make use of it when they are making applications for DLA.
15. Appropriate communication support should be made available to those deaf people living on the Isle of Man who have poor literacy skills to enable them to understand correspondence they have received and other important written materials and in replying to important written correspondence.

### **Other recommendations.**

1. Ways need to be found to raise the profile of deaf people living on the Isle of Man in a positive way.
2. Ways need to be found to offer and provide free Deaf Awareness training sessions for all hearing people living on the Isle of Man who are prepared to attend.
3. Serious consideration should be given to providing a deaf awareness training session to all hearing children in school on the Isle of Man

4. Consideration should be given to the possibility of providing BSL classes (to qualification levels) to those hearing children in school on the Isle of Man who wish to take them.
5. Deaf awareness and basic BSL training should be provided to all staff working on the Isle of Man in leisure facilities.
6. Ways need to be found to provide deaf awareness training to relevant staff in all organisations employing one or more deaf people. Ideally, such training should also be made available to other organisations who do not currently employ deaf people (as they may do so in the future).
7. Ideally, ways need to be found to provide deaf awareness training to all public-facing staff in all organisations on the Isle of Man.
8. The Manx Deaf Society should consider providing a 'drop in centre' staffed by an appropriate support worker at a variety of set times (at least once a week during the daytime and once during the evening) each week.
9. The Manx Deaf Society should consider reviewing its current provision of leisure activities/opportunities, seeking ideas from deaf people for new activities/opportunities and piloting some of these on a trial basis. In doing this, encouragement should be given to those deaf people already involved in a wide range of leisure activities to take the lead in introducing other deaf people to these activities.
10. The Manx Deaf society should consider reviewing its provision of services to younger deaf people and to children and families.
11. The Manx Deaf Society should consider reviewing who it wishes to provide services/support for. In particular it should look at whether this should include people who are not profoundly deaf and people who do not use sign language, and whether it should include deaf children and their families.
12. The Manx Deaf Society should consider gathering all information relevant to deaf people on the Isle of Man and making it available both via a staff member and in accessible formats – such information should be updated each year. Consideration should also be given to providing a display of environmental equipment.
13. The Manx Deaf society should consider providing BSL classes in the Deaf Club - as this environment is often preferred by some learners to a college environment
14. Cinemas on the Isle of Man should provide some subtitled showings of all films - and to consult with deaf people concerning the type of access they need/want - including subtitled showings, loop systems, type of headphones etc.
15. Theatres on the Isle of Man should provide more BSL interpreted performances of plays.
16. Ways need to be found to encourage and enable all hospital, GP, dentist and other health-related waiting rooms to have visual displays rather than relying on patients hearing their names called out by staff.
17. Consideration should be given to how to overcome the difficulties that many deaf people have in accessing information that is provided in a written format.
18. As remote video interpreting services begin to be developed for deaf people in the UK, steps need to be taken to ensure that the Isle of Man are included in any such developments.

19. Consideration needs to be given to undertaking a research project similar to this in relation to people living on the Isle of Man who are hard of hearing or deafened
20. Consideration needs to be given to undertaking a research project similar to this in relation to deaf children and young people who are living on the Isle of Man.
21. Consideration should be given to providing BSL interpreters for large scale public events.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Deaf.** The word 'deaf' refers to someone who has a hearing loss, but does not give any information about the degree of that hearing loss or the age of onset - both of which are very significant factors.

**Profound pre-lingual deafness.** This phrase refers to someone who was either born severely deaf or became so before developing spoken language.

**BSL.** British Sign Language. Each country has its own sign language. BSL is the sign language used in the UK. In common with other sign languages, BSL is a full language in its own right rather than a way of 'signing' spoken English. It has its own grammar and does not follow spoken English word order.

**BSL interpreter.** Someone who is fully qualified to function in this role. To become a BSL interpreter one must first become fluent and gain BSL language qualifications and then undergo additional interpreter training.

**Lip-speaker.** Someone who has undergone specialist training to enable them to be easy to lip-read.