



Sensory Campaign: Summary of Current Research

Scottish Union of Supported Employment

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Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
1 – Current Statistics	4
1.1 – Deafness/Hearing Loss	4
1.2 – Blindness/Sight Loss	8
1.3 – Deafblindness/Dual Sensory Loss	10
2 – Education	10
2.1 – Primary and Secondary Education	10
2.2 – Higher Education	11
2.3 – Modern Apprenticeships	12
3 – Employment	12
4 – Recommendations	13
Bibliography	14

List of Abbreviations

BSL – British Sign Language

CRIDE – Consortium for Research in Deaf Education

GA – Graduate Apprenticeship

MA – Modern Apprenticeship

ONS – Office for National Statistics

RNIB – The Royal National Institute of Blind People

RNID – The Royal National Institute for Deaf People

SDS – Skills Development Scotland

Introduction

Despite the significant number of people in Scotland who are deaf or experience hearing loss and are blind or experience sight loss, there has been a reduction in employment services that specifically meet their needs. The Scottish Union of Supported Employment, together with Alliance Scotland, The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and Sight Scotland, are embarking upon a new Sensory Campaign to create more and better opportunities for people who want support to enter the workforce. The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary of the preliminary research undertaken for this Sensory Campaign and to provide recommendations for future areas of focus.

1 – Current Statistics

This section presents a summary of the most recently available statistical data on the number of individuals who are deaf or experience hearing loss and are blind or experience sight loss in Scotland.

1.1 – Deafness/Hearing Loss

According to the Davis Model, one in five adults across the United Kingdom are deaf or experience hearing loss (Davis, 1995). Although published in 1995, Davis' report is recognised as a comprehensive study on the prevalence of deafness in the UK population is 'still the bench mark for statistics in this field' (DeafScotland, 2020, p. 7). As such, all estimates concerning the number of individuals in Scotland who are deaf or experience hearing loss are calculated using the Davis Model.

Based on total population figures from 2015/16, DeafScotland have estimated that 787,200 people across Scotland are Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing (DeafScotland, 2016). A

breakdown of this estimate by local authority, as included in the DeafScotland report, can be seen below:

Local Authority/Council Area	Total Population	Estimated Deaf, Deafened, Hard of Hearing (1 in 5)
Aberdeen City	223,000	44,600
Aberdeenshire	253,000	50,600
Angus	116,000	23,200
Argyll and Bute	88,000	17,600
Clackmannanshire	51,000	10,200
Dumfries and Galloway	151,000	30,200
Dundee City	147,000	29,400
East Ayrshire	123,000	24,600
East Dunbartonshire	105,000	21,000
East Lothian	100,000	20,000
East Renfrewshire	91,000	18,200
Edinburgh, City of	477,000	95,400
Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council)	28,000	5,600
Falkirk	156,000	31,200
Fife	365,000	73,000
Glasgow City	593,000	118,600

Highland	232,000	46,000
Inverclyde	81,000	16,200
Midlothian	83,000	16,600
Moray	93,000	18,600
North Ayrshire	138,000	27,600
North Lanarkshire	338,000	67,600
Orkney Islands	21,000	4,200
Perth and Kinross	147,000	29,400
Renfrewshire	175,000	35,000
Scottish Borders	114,000	22,800
Shetland Islands	23,000	4,600
South Ayrshire	113,000	22,600
South Lanarkshire	314,000	62,800
Stirling	90,000	18,000
West Dunbartonshire	91,000	18,200
West Lothian	175,000	35,000

It is important to recognise that the exact numbers of individuals who are deaf or experience hearing loss varies depending upon which data source is consulted. DeafScotland have identified this lack of clarity as ‘problematic when it comes to planning for delivery of future services’ and indicated that it is widely recognised that there is a need to establish better reporting procedures in order to capture relevant statistics’ (DeafScotland, 2020, p. 2). For example, when relying on the 2011 Scottish Census for an understanding of the number of

British Sign Language (BSL) users in Scotland, ambiguity was created due to the wording of Question 18, which asked ‘Do you use a language other than English at home?’ and invited respondents to tick ‘Yes’ if they used BSL at home or specify if they used another language. 12,533 respondents answered that they used BSL at home, but were not able to specify if they themselves were deaf or if they lived with an individual who uses BSL as their first language (DeafScotland, 2020, p. 5). Furthermore, the 2011 Census did not include any questions which would directly capture the number of people who are ‘hard of hearing’, a term used to describe those whose hearing loss is mild to moderate (DeafScotland, 2020, p. 7). In their 2020 report, *Deafness, Predicting the Future for Scotland – The Census and Beyond*, DeafScotland recognised that the National Records of Scotland has addressed the ambiguity of the 2011 Census as it related to those who are Deaf and experience hearing loss and intends to include a new question on BSL in the 2022 census. It is likely, therefore, that ‘that the question(s) relating to BSL usage will provide more nuanced data and a truer reflection of BSL users in Scotland which, in turn, should allow a better and more specific service provision’ after the analysis and distribution of the 2022 Scottish Census data (DeafScotland, 2020, pp. 5-6).

While the statistics presented in the 2011 Scottish Census are likely lower than current estimates, due to its reliance on self-reporting and the fact that the total population at the time it was conducted was lower than the current population, it remains an important document for understanding the population demographics of Scotland. For example, this census identified 350,954 individuals who indicated that they experience hearing loss as a long-term health condition, which equates to 6.6% of the population of Scotland (DeafScotland, 2020, p. 8). Furthermore, 199,123 or 56.8% of those who listed ‘deaf or partial hearing indicate they have 2 or more health conditions’, with 6.7% indicating they also had a mental health condition and 23.4% indicating that they also had a physical disability (DeafScotland, 2020, pp. 19-20).

1.2 – Blindness/Sight Loss

At present, the most up-to-date publicly available statistics relating to the number of Blind and partially sighted individuals in Scotland were produced by the Scottish Government Statistician Group in 2010. In 2010, the number of people registered as blind or partially sighted in Scotland was estimated to be 34,492. 55% of those registered were Blind, while 45% are partially sighted. 75% of those registered were over the age of 65. 39% of those on the register are male, compared to 61% who are female (Scottish Government Statistician Group, 2010). A breakdown of this data by local authority area can be seen in the table below:

Local Authority/Council Area	Number of people registered as Blind	Number of people registered as Partially Sighted
Aberdeen City	401	471
Aberdeenshire	362	483
Angus	329	288
Argyll and Bute	460	416
Clackmannanshire	149	154
Dumfries and Galloway	428	534
Dundee City	451	362
East Ayrshire	398	306
East Dunbartonshire	247	181
East Lothian	375	375
East Renfrewshire	477	278

Edinburgh, City of	1,813	1,671
Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council)	83	53
Falkirk	480	412
Fife	1,029	894
Glasgow City	3,546	2,197
Highland	687	553
Inverclyde	218	261
Midlothian	315	325
Moray	250	144
North Ayrshire	600	463
North Lanarkshire	1,883	1,009
Orkney Islands	42	46
Perth and Kinross	378	425
Renfrewshire	481	591
Scottish Borders	325	430
Shetland Islands	38	40
South Ayrshire	473	391
South Lanarkshire	1,227	918
Stirling	309	269
West Dunbartonshire	290	246

West Lothian	398	364
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When consulting this data, it is important to recognise that ‘registration with Local Authorities for blind and partially sighted persons is not compulsory [and] research studies suggest that between a quarter and a third of visually impaired people are in fact registered with Local Authorities’ (Scottish Government Statistician Group, 2010, p.1).

1.3– Deafblindness/Dual Sensory Loss

In their paper *Deafness: Predicting the Future for Scotland – The Census and Beyond*, DeafScotland stated that DeafBlind Scotland estimates that 5,000 people in Scotland experience deafblindness or dual sensory loss (DeafScotland, 2020, p. 6). Again, the most up-to-date publicly available statistics were produced by the Scottish Government Statistician Group in 2010, which records that 1,473 people are registered as Deafblind in Scotland and a further 1,003 people are registered as partially sighted and deaf (Scottish Government Statistician Group, 2010, p.7).

2 – Education

This section aims to summarise the data that is currently available regarding individuals who are deaf or experience hearing loss and are blind or experience sight loss in Scotland who are in education, including provisions for Further Education and Modern Apprenticeships.

2.1 – Primary and Secondary Education

The Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE)’s 2018 report identified that at least 3,363 deaf children were receiving support from 30 services covering 32 local

authority areas in Scotland (CRIDE, 2018, p. 1). At the time of this survey, there were 159.68 full-time equivalent (f.t.e) Teachers of the Deaf posts in Scotland, of which 3% were vacant, with a range of 'no peripatetic Teachers of the Deaf in one service to 11 in one authority. The average number of Teachers of the Deaf across the 26 authorities reporting was 2.8. Six services reported less than one fully qualified Teacher of the Deaf, 17 services reported fewer than two fully qualified Teachers of the Deaf' (CRIDE, 2018, p.7). 46% of these teachers are over the age of 50 and are expected to retire within the next 10 to 15 years (CRIDE, 2018, p.1). In total, there are three primary schools in Scotland for deaf children and no high schools (CRIDE, 2018, p.9).

In 2017, the Scottish Government published its *British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2017-2023*, outlining ten long-term goals for BSL in Scotland, covering 'early years and education; training and work; health, mental health and wellbeing; transport; culture and the arts; justice and democracy' with the goal of making Scotland 'the best place in the world for BSL users to live, work and visit' (Scottish Government, 2017, p.6). This plan describes the seventy actions which Scottish Ministers will undertake by 2020 to make progress towards these goals, including 'improving the experience of students who use BSL, when they move from school to college, university, training and the world of work' (Scottish Government, 2017, p.6-7).

2.2 – Higher Education

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicated that, as of June 2020, 23.0% of disabled people aged 21 to 64 years in the UK had a degree as their highest qualification compared with 39.7% of non-disabled people, while 15.1% of disabled people had no qualifications compared with 5.4% of non-disabled people (ONS, 2020, p.2). Specifically in Scotland, 20.4% of disabled people in Scotland achieved a degree, compared with 38.6% of non-disabled people (ONS, 2020, p.5). Currently, we have been unable to identify specific Higher Education statistics for people in Scotland who are deaf or experience hearing loss and are blind or experience sight loss.

2.3 – Modern Apprenticeships

In Scotland, Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) ‘provide individuals with the opportunity to secure industry-recognised qualifications at a range of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels while in employment’ (SDS, 2019, p.4). Skills Development Scotland (SDS)’s *Modern Apprenticeship Statistics: Full Year Report 2018/19* shows that there was 27,270 Modern Apprenticeship and 912 Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) starts in 2018/19, forming a total of 28,191 starts (SDS, 2019, p.9). 14.1% of all MA starts self-identified as having ‘an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty... +2.9pp higher than 2017/18, equivalent to +817 starts or +28%’ (SDS 2019, p.10). In 2018/19, 3.4% of MA starts indicated that they were deaf or experienced hearing loss and 2.4% indicated that they were blind or visually impaired, compared to 3.9% and 2.6% in 2017/18 respectively (SDS 2019, p.31).

In November 2020, SDS published *Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan: Annual Report 2020*, providing an update on the progress of their Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan. First produced in 2015, this plan outlines their ‘priorities for improving diversity and equality of opportunity in Scottish Apprenticeships’ (SDS, 2020, p.6). The 2020 Annual Report states that 15.4% of all MA starts in 2019/20 self-identified as having an ‘impairment, health condition or learning difficulty’ (SDS, 2020, p.19).

3 – Employment

This section aims to summarise the data that is currently available regarding individuals who are deaf or experience hearing loss and are blind or experience sight loss in Scotland and employment.

RNIB’s 2015 publication titled *My Voice: The Views and Experiences of Blind and Partially Sighted People in the UK* stated that 27% of registered blind and partially sighted people of working age were in any form of employment in 2015, compared to 73% of people who were

not blind or partially sighted (RNIB, 2015, p.23-24). In addition, 19% of blind and partially sighted people 'reported having some or great difficulty in usually making ends meet' (RNIB 2015, p.27). The majority of those asked (70%) reported that a limited income was one of the main reasons for them having difficulty financially. Furthermore, 68% identified the increased cost of living as a factor, while 40% identified that 'the extra costs related to sight loss' was one of the main reasons (RNIB, 2015, p.27).

In terms of Scotland specifically, we have not yet identified employment statistics for individuals who are Deaf or experience hearing loss and are Blind or experience sight loss.

4 – Recommendations

We have identified five recommendations to be addressed in future research for the Sensory Campaign:

- 1) Obtain up-to-date statistics for the number of Blind and partially sighted individuals living in each local authority area from Local Authority Registers.
- 2) Generate a full list of current services for people who are Deaf or experience hearing loss and are Blind or experience sight loss available across the 32 local authorities in Scotland.
- 3) Obtain employment data specific to Scotland for people who are Deaf or experience hearing loss and are Blind or experience sight loss.
- 4) Identify specific Higher Education statistics for people in Scotland who are Deaf or experience hearing loss and are Blind or experience sight loss.
- 5) Update all current statistics after the 2022 Scottish Census are published, for future reference.

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