

Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health

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SignHealth

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Guidance for commissioners of primary care mental health services for deaf people

Practical mental health commissioning	

Ten key messages for commissioners

- 1 Deaf people find it difficult to access healthcare, face communication barriers and, as a consequence, have poorer mental and physical health than the rest of the population.
- 2 Everyone who uses mental health services should have equitable access to effective interventions, and equitable experiences and outcomes. Under the Equality Act 2010 Deaf people are included as having 'protected characteristics'.
- 3 Due to their unique life experiences, Deaf people require different primary mental health care. Commissioners should commission appropriate cultural and linguistic provisions when planning services for Deaf people.
- 4 Psychological therapy in British Sign Language (BSL) is as cost effective, if not more so, than a hearing therapist using a BSL/English interpreter.
- 5 Deaf people should be able to choose to receive primary care psychological therapy services in BSL directly from a BSL practitioner, without needing a sign language interpreter, if that is their choice.
- 6 A comprehensive commissioning strategy is required to enable an appropriate BSL psychological therapy service to be available.
- 7 Commissioners need to ensure that Deaf people have a clear care pathway that is equitable to the general population.
- 8 Commissioners need to include Deaf professionals in their workforce planning strategy.
- 9 Deaf people need to be involved with the ongoing development of Deaf primary care mental health services.
- 10 Where services are commissioned that require sign language interpretation, commissioners must ensure the provision of interpreters is of a high standard, as highlighted in NHS England's *Principles for High Quality Interpreting and Translation Services in Primary Care 2016* and forthcoming NHS England guidelines for the commissioning of interpreting and translation services.

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Co-chaired by:



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