



Adult Social Care

JOINT SENSORY SUPPORT PLAN



**HARTLEPOOL
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Review Date: September 2025

Foreword

This co-produced Joint Sensory Support Plan (JSSP) report is intended to:

- Firstly, highlight the support currently in place for residents of Hartlepool with sensory loss, single and combined, and members of the Deaf Community.
- Secondly, recommend a set of actions to fill gaps revealed during the consultations, to improve the situation and the wellbeing of all people living with sensory loss and the Deaf Community in our Borough.
- Thirdly, facilitate further collaborative work with local stakeholders and people with lived experience.
- Fourthly, as we continue to emerge from the pandemic, social isolation and mental wellbeing continues to significantly and disproportionately affect those members of our community who are living with sensory loss and members of the Deaf Community. Mental ill health has been estimated to have risen at least 40% in these groups. This brings with it an absolutely pressing need to ensure excluded groups such as those with sensory loss/Deaf are recognised and supported.

Context and Purpose

Sensory loss, in any form, has a significant impact (note 5) on a person's wellbeing and that of their family. All Local Authorities have a duty to promote wellbeing, to identify local people with a sensory loss, including Deaf British Sign Language users, and a duty to work with partners to continuously shape local advice, guidance and support.

This is especially important for this vulnerable group in our community who, without appropriate and proportionate intervention or advice and guidance, are at heightened risk of becoming isolated and lonely (see page 6: key facts)

Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) commissioned Hi-Vis UK to coordinate the development of the plan, establish a stakeholder planning and steering group and run consultations with local people and organisations to better understand local need.

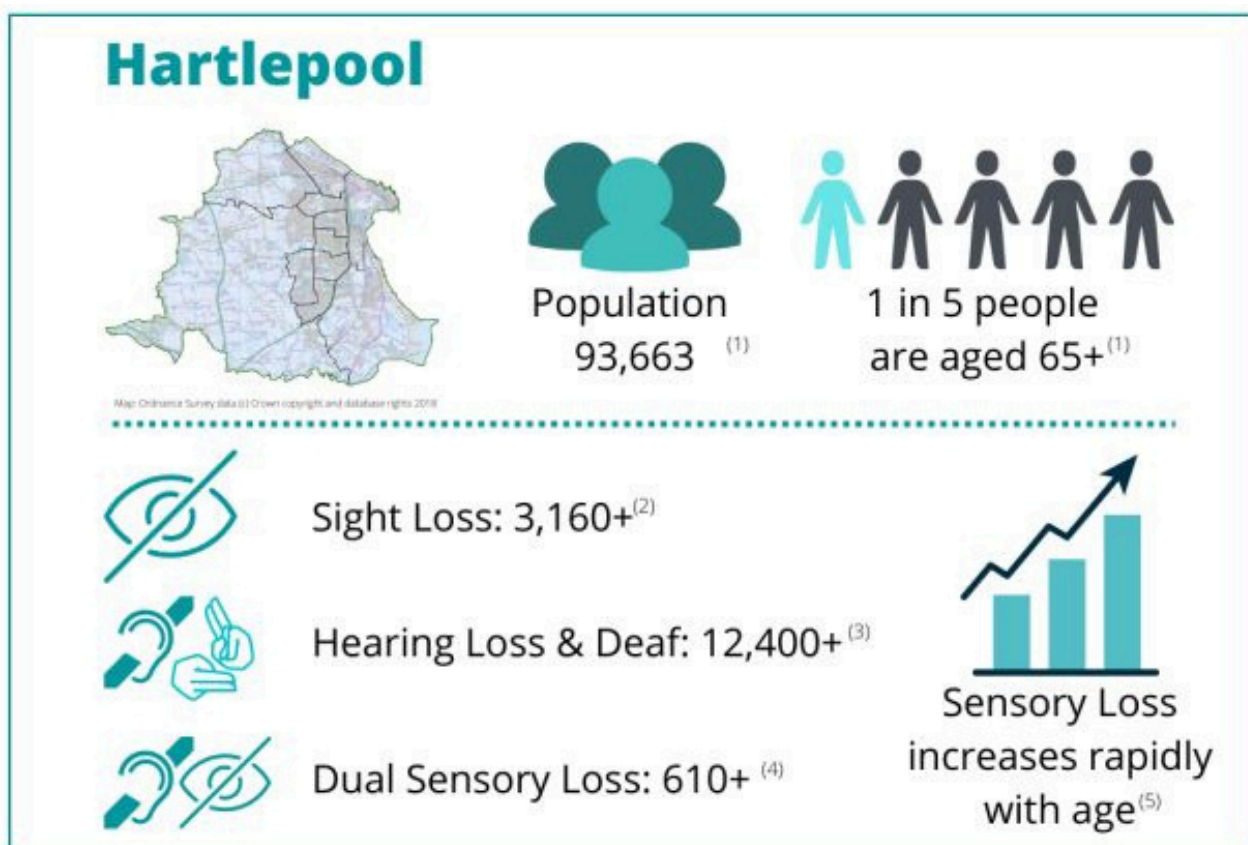
A note on language used in this report: for Sensory Loss we include people who are Deaf and use British Sign Language as their first language, those with a sight loss or severe sight loss, those who become deaf/deafened/hard of hearing, and those with or acquiring combined sight and hearing loss.

Incidence:

How many local people have a sensory loss or are Deaf and use British Sign Language?

Nearly 20% of Hartlepool's population is 65+ year olds. This age-group is increasing steadily in number as communities live longer lives (see p6). We know the incidence of sensory loss increase significantly with age and numbers accelerate rapidly in older groups.

Local authorities struggle to identify sensory loss, especially dual sensory loss (DSL), in the community and by implication offer support. Most people don't see themselves as 'sensory impaired' and are reluctant to self-identify in this way.



Key Legislation and Facts

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Legislation

The Care Act 2014, The Equality Act 2010,
The NHS Accessible Information Standard 2016,
The Children and Families Act 2014,
The Public Sector Equality Duty 2011

Health and Wellbeing⁽⁶⁾

Older people with sensory loss are:

2-3x more likely to have trips, multiple falls

3-5x more likely to experience mental ill health

At much greater risk of loneliness & social isolation⁽⁷⁾



Older people aged 60yrs+⁽⁸⁾

Live with Sight Loss: 1 in 6

Live with Hearing Loss : 1 in 3

Only 10% with sensory loss known to local authority⁽⁹⁾

Impacts on daily life⁽¹⁰⁾

Being Deaf or living with sensory loss affects:

- Mobility and Independence
- Access to Information and Services
- Communication and Learning



We expect in Hartlepool

3k+ people 65yrs+ living with sight loss

12k+ people 65yrs+ living with hearing loss

.6k+ people 65yrs+ living with dual sensory loss

(age related dual sensory loss is hugely underestimated. It will increase 64% by 2030⁽¹¹⁾)

Local Lived Experience

The JSSP Group met a wide range of local people living with sensory loss, with Deaf BSL users, and parent-carers. People said having a sensory loss / being Deaf in Hartlepool means:

- Facing challenges to mobility, access to information and services; experience many barriers to communication.
- There is little awareness of sensory loss or of being a Deaf person/BSL. One major impact is loneliness. Since COVID a 40% increase in mental health problems.
- Information is often not accessible: small text, no audio/audio description, no British Sign Language (BSL) version - English is not the first language of BSL users.
- Parent-carers struggle to get local information or help on sensory loss / Deaf; feel isolated and ignored.
- Relying on taxis to travel around town in the evening as there are no buses means keeping in touch with others becomes unaffordable, limits social and leisure activity.
- No sensory loss or Deaf awareness makes leisure / fitness provision inaccessible. This includes background noise which makes listening very hard.
- Services don't know how to communicate; a few BSL courses, no D/deaf awareness and communication skills training, how to hire a communication professional.



Local Lived Experience: People said having a sensory loss / being Deaf in Hartlepool means:

“

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There is little awareness of sensory loss or of being a Deaf person / BSL user. One major impact is loneliness, and since COVID, a 40% increase in mental ill health problems

“

Information is often not accessible: small text, no audio / audio description, no British Sign Language (BSL) version - English is not a BSL users first language

Parent-carers struggle to get local information or help on sensory loss / Deaf; they feel isolated and ignored



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**Local Lived Experience:
People said having a sensory loss /
being Deaf in Hartlepool means:**

“ Relying on taxis to travel around town in the evening means, as there are no buses, keeping in touch with others becomes unaffordable, limits social and leisure activity ”

“ No sensory loss or Deaf awareness makes leisure / fitness provision inaccessible. Often there is loud background noise making listening really hard / impossible ”

“ Services don't know how to communicate; don't know how to hire a communication professional; too few BSL courses, no D/deaf awareness and communication skills training, ”



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Hartlepool Plan on a Page

Recommendations: To ensure Hartlepool becomes a Sensory and Deaf Friendly Place, Hartlepool Council will:

- Establish a sensory support coalition of public and VCSE organisations to work together for long term change.
- Work with our local sensory support organisations to improve accessibility and monitor and co-develop our sensory and Deaf support plans.
- Work to develop the sensory and Deaf awareness, skills and knowledge of health and care services workforce and the wider community.
- Work to improve access to information and to communication support in health and care services including compliance with the Accessible Information Standard (p6)
- Work to increase the number of people identified and supported with single and combined sensory loss and parent-carers where sensory loss/Deaf is involved.
- Work to raise sensory awareness & Deaf awareness.
- Work to improve access to learning, leisure and fitness.
- Consult further to fill gaps in our understanding e.g. carers, to co-create a sensory support action plan. Continue the conversations with stakeholder groups.



Joint Sensory Support Plan on a Page



LONG TERM CHANGE

Establish a **Sensory Support Coalition** of public, independent and VCSE organisations to **work together for long term change**.



IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY

Work with local sensory support organisations to help us **improve accessibility**, co-monitor / co-develop our sensory / Deaf support plans.



RAISE AWARENESS AND SKILLS

Work to develop the sensory and Deaf **awareness, skills, and knowledge** of local health and care services workforce, the independent and VCSE sectors and in the wider community.



IMPROVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Work to improve access to information **and to communication support** in health and care services including compliance with the Accessible Information Standard 2016.



RAISE NUMBERS IDENTIFIED & SUPPORTED

Work to increase the number of **people identified and supported** with single and combined sensory loss including carers and parent-carers where sensory loss/Deaf is involved.



IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Work to improve accessibility of **learning, leisure and fitness** services and facilities, wherever these services are provided.



CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Consult further to fill gaps in our understanding e.g. carers, **co-create a local sensory support delivery plan**. Continue conversations with stakeholder groups and across the wider community.

The Hartlepool JSSP Group

In the Spring of 2019, the Council commissioned Hearing Impairment & Visual Impairment Support UK (HI-Vis UK) a Charitable Incorporated Organisation to coordinate the development of a sensory loss support strategy.

Since 2019 Hi-Vis UK has engaged and consulted with key stakeholders, people with lived experience, carers groups and local organisations. The organisation has held workshops, conducted surveys and questionnaires and consulted with local commissioners.

A JSSP planning group of key local organisation continues to guide and support the development of this work. This is an open group. Local members currently are (diagram below)

Partners for Change

Raise Awareness,
Invest in Skills,
Change Lives



References

1. ONS (2020) Population estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2020. ONS (2020) Local Authority ageing statistics, based on annual mid-year population estimates.
2. Pezzullo, *et al* (2017) The economic impact of sight loss and blindness in the UK adult population. RNIB and Deloitte Access Economics.
3. ONS (2014) Estimate, based on Adrian Davis, *Hearing in Adults*, 1995.
4. Department of Health (2009) Estimated 40:100,000 deafblind people in the UK, whilst, Robertson, J. and Emerson, E. (2010) Centre for Disability Research estimated 572/100,000; and by 2035 rising too 802/100,000. ONS in *State of the Adult Social Care Workforce in England*, Skills for Care (2010); Lang and Buisson, *Care of Elderly People - market research* (2002). Hi-Vis UK, Northumberland (2017), fund the number is very likely much greater than 802,100.000
5. Evans JR, Fletcher AE, Wormald RPL, *et al* Prevalence of visual impairment in people aged 75 years and older in Britain; results from the MRC trial of assessment and management of older people in the community. *British Journal of Ophthalmology* 2002; **86**:795-800.
6. Department of Health (2009); NHS, (2017) in *Age UK Health in Later Life*, (2019); NHS Health Advisory Service, (1998); Davidson, *et al* (2005); Anderson, *et al* (2005).
7. Online references to research and briefing papers highlight the impacts of sensory impairments: Department of Health, NHS, Age UK, SENSE, Action on Hearing Loss; Deafblind UK, RNIB, the Thomas Pocklington Trust, Hersh, M, 2013, OUP; Social Care Institute for Excellence; NHS Action Plan on Hearing Loss, 2015.
8. RNIB, 2016; Action on Hearing Loss (now RNID), (2013, 2019); see also 4 above re dual sensory loss).
9. There are many reference to the challenge presented by low identification, low self-identification of sensory impairment, including: SENSE (2010) *Deafblind Guidance*, *Eight Years On* and reports by Action on Hearing Loss (now RNID) and the RNIB.
10. Department of Health (2001) LAC Circular (2001/8), *Deafblind guidance*, 1997, 2007, 2009, Care Act, 2014, *Deafblind guidance*; Mental Health - Divisional Intelligence Unit, 2014; Tiwana, *et al*, 2016; Pavey, *et al*, 2009.
11. Flatters, *et al*, 2007; Roberts, *et al*, 2007. (see also 3 and 6 above)
12. Epidemiological studies indicate that the prevalence of depression in visually impaired older adults living in the UK is 13.5% compared to just 7.4% for those without a visual impairment (Evans JR, Fletcher AE, Wormald RPL. Depression and anxiety in visually impaired older people. *Ophthalmology*. 2007; 114(2); 283-288. "Deaf People

are Sick of it (2014)". Deaf people reported more depression than the rest of the population (24% compared with 12%), in keeping with previous studies. (Sign Health, Deaf People are Sick of It, 2014). Deaf people are more likely to have poor mental health - up to 50%, compared to 25% in the general population.


<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-disabilities-and-impairments-user-profiles/saleem-profoundly-deaf-user#:~:text=Deaf%20people%20are%20more%20likely,79%25%20of%20the%20general%20population> Accessed June 2022. Impact of COVID on those with hearing loss and tinnitus found 74% of respondents felt sad, anxious, or stressed at least some of the time and concerning this figure increases to 86% for BSL users. Deaf, deaf and those with tinnitus, online survey, Changing World, RNID 2021 Chrome - extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgiclfndmkaj/https://rnid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ChangingWorldReport.pdf) Accessed June 2022.

Appendices

Glossary: A-Z of sensory loss terms	
Assistive Technology (inc. Adaptive Technology)	Assistive technology includes items or technology which helps people who have an injury, disability, sensory loss, or illness to carry out everyday tasks.
Acquired deafblindness	A person who loses their sight and hearing after they have developed language as a child is said to have 'acquired deafblindness'. An individual may already have a sight or hearing impairment, and suddenly or gradually lose the other sense. It could be related to a specific genetic condition from birth, or as a result of an illness or accident.
Blind (Severely Sight Impaired / SSI)	People who are 'blind' meet criteria under the 'Snellen Scale' which is the eye test using the lines of letters getting smaller and smaller. The NHS use the term 'Severely Sight Impaired' (SSI) to describe people previously described as 'blind'.
British Sign Language	This is the sign language used by most Deaf people who live in Britain. There are regional dialects. Each country around the world has their own, distinct from English and has its own, different grammatical rules.
Cataracts	Cataracts are cloudy patches that develop in the lens of your eye and cause blurred or misty vision. Very common.
<u>Deaf</u>	People who identify themselves as being Deaf (using a capital 'D') are people who use Sign Language as their first language and see themselves as being culturally distinct and part of the Deaf Community.
deaf	Generally, people who are 'deaf' (lower case 'd') are people with hearing loss who use speech and consider the dominant language of their country to be their first language (e.g. English)

Deafblind	A person is regarded as deafblind if their combined sight and hearing impairments cause difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility. This includes people with sight and hearing loss which gets worse over time. Many have some hearing and vision. Others will be totally deaf and blind.
deafened	People who were born hearing and became severely or profoundly deaf after learning to speak are often described as 'deafened'. This can happen suddenly or gradually.
Diabetic retinopathy	Diabetes can cause several problems with sight. Diabetic retinopathy is the most serious complication. It involves the blood vessels in the area at the back of the eye known as the retina.
Disabling hearing loss	Hearing loss which is greater than 40 decibels (dB) in the better hearing ear in adults and a hearing loss greater than 30 dB in the better hearing ear in children.
Dual Sensory Loss	A combination of sight and hearing loss. Sometimes also referred to as either deafblindness, combined sight and hearing loss, or dual sensory impairment..
Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO)	A person whose role involves providing support to people with vision loss in eye clinics.
Glaucoma	Glaucoma is a condition which can affect sight, usually due to build-up of fluid and pressure within the eye.
Hard of Hearing	The term 'hard of hearing' is mostly used to describe people with mild to severe hearing loss. Often it is used to describe people who have lost their hearing gradually, often due to ageing.
Hearing Impaired	This is a term used to describe a person with a lower level of hearing. The word 'impaired' can be offensive to some.

Low Vision	Moderate visual impairment and more severe visual impairment are grouped under the term "low vision"
Mild deafness	25 - _39 decibels. People with mild deafness may find it difficult to follow speech in noisy situations or busy places.
Moderate deafness	40 - 69 decibels. People with moderate deafness may need to use hearing aids.
Normal vision	People with normal vision are defined as able to read the bottom, or second bottom line of the Snellen Scale which is the commonly used test featuring rows of letters getting smaller and smaller.
Ophthalmologist	Is a specialist in medical and surgical eye problems. Since they perform operation on eyes they are considered as both surgical and medical specialists.
Optician	Is a specialised healthcare practitioner who designs, fits and dispenses lenses for the correction of a person's vision. They convert a prescription for the correction of refractive error into an ophthalmic lens or some other device such as treading aids or telescopic lenses,
Optometrist	Is a licensed medical professional trained to prescribe and fit lenses to improve vision, and to diagnose and treat various eye diseases.
Partially Sighted / SI	People who are partially sighted meet certain criteria under the 'Snellen Scale'. This is the eye test using the lines of letters getting smaller and smaller.

Profound hearing loss/deafness	95 + decibels. British Sign Language is likely to be the first or preferred language of people who are profoundly deaf.
Retinitis Pigmentosa	Retinitis Pigmentosa causes night-blindness and a loss of [peripheral vision (side vision) through the degeneration of the retina which gets worse over time. The retina is a light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye and is crucial for vision.
Severe deafness	70 - 94 decibels. People who are severely deaf will need hearing aids and may also rely on lipreading. British sign language may be their first or preferred language.
Sight Impaired	A term used to describe someone who is unable to see as well as someone with 'normal vision'.
Sighted	This term is sometimes used to describe a person who can see
Snellen Scale	<p>A test used to define whether someone has normal vision, has a sight impairment (SI) or a severe sight impairment (SSI).</p> 
Tinnitus	The word 'tinnitus' describes when a person can 'hear' sound in the absence of any corresponding external sound. The noise may be low, medium or high-pitched. There may be a single noise or two or more components. The noise may be continuous, or it may come and go. It can be highly distressing.
Usher Syndrome	Usher Syndrome is a genetic or inherited condition that affects hearing, vision and balance
Visually Impaired	This is a term used to describe someone who cannot see well. The NHS often use this term. (See also SSI and SI above)

Appendices

Local (Hartlepool based or serving)

(*denotes JSSP main member)

Organisations A-Z	
Community Led Inclusion Project	https://www.clip.uk.com/
Everyday Language Solutions (for a BSL-English interpreter)	https://everydaylanguagesolutions.co.uk/
Hartlepool Borough Council (see final page)	https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/
Hartlepool Carers	https://en-gb.facebook.com/deafcentrehartlepool/
Hartlepool Deaf Centre	https://en-gb.facebook.com/deafcentrehartlepool/
Hartlepool Now	https://www.hartlepoolnow.co.uk/
Hartlepool Vision Support	https://hartlepoolvisionsupport.org.uk/
Healthwatch Hartlepool	https://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk/
Hearing Impairment and Vision Impairment Support UK	https://hi-vis.org/
Incontrol-Able	https://www.incontrol-able.co.uk/
Integrated Care Board	https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust	https://www.nth.nhs.uk/
Northern Regional Advice and Support Service for Deaf/deaf people	https://en-gb.facebook.com/nrasscharity/
The Tees Local Pharmaceutical Committee	https://tees.communitypharmacy.org.uk/

National

Organisations A-Z	
Action Deafness	https://actiondeafness.org.uk/
British Deaf Association	https://bda.org.uk/
Deafblind UK	https://deafblind.org.uk/
Guide Dogs for the Blind	https://www.guidedogs.org.uk/
Hearing Dogs for the Deaf	https://www.hearingdogs.org.uk/
Hearing Impairment & Visual Impairment Support UK	www.hi-vis.org
Hearing Link	https://www.hearinglink.org/
National Deaf Children's Society	https://www.ndcs.org.uk/
NRCPD	https://www.nrcpd.org.uk/
Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People	https://www.incontrol-able.co.uk/
RNIB	https://www.rnib.org.uk/
RNID	https://rnid.org.uk/
Sense	https://www.sense.org.uk/
Sign Health	https://signhealth.org.uk/
Tinnitus Association	https://tinnitus.org.uk/

Appendices

Further Resources (A-Z)	
Accessible print standards and information formats: (print, PDF, video, web, images, audio)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats
Making video calls inclusive to people with sight loss	https://www.rnib.org.uk/
Making meetings, courses accessible to someone with sight loss	https://www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/equality-and-employment/employers/make-your-workplace-safer-for-employees-with-sight-loss/
Making meetings deaf/Deaf aware	https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/deaf-awareness/make-your-meetings-deaf-aware/
Deaf/deaf communication tips from the RNID (includes poster for the workplace)	https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/how-to-communicate-with-deaf-people-hearing-loss/

Equipment and information (A-Z)

Hartlepool Now	https://www.hartlepoolnow.co.uk/category_schemes/34-sast/categories
Deafness Connevans (in partnership with RNID)	https://www.sarabec.com/
Deafness Hearing Link/Hearing Dogs for Deaf People	https://www.hearinglink.org/technology/assistive-equipment/
Deafness Sarabec (based locally in Middlesbrough)	https://www.sarabec.com/
Sight Loss AbilityNet (sight loss and technology)	https://abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets/vision-impairment-and-computing
Sight Loss Macular Society	https://www.macularsociety.org/support/daily-life/low-vision-aids/
Sight Loss RNIB	https://shop.rnib.org.uk/

Contact Information

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