



Sign and Share Club Improved Inclusion Project Final Evaluation Report

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Contents

Terms	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Background to the Sign and Share Club	7
The Improved Inclusion project	7
Methodology	9
Project indicators	9
Questionnaire	10
Interviews	10
Videos of members	11
Results	12
Project Indicators for Years 1 – 5	12
Indicator 1	12
Indicator 2	13
Indicator 3	14
Indicator 4	15
Demographics and Communication	16
Mental Health and Well-being	21
Club Meetings and Trips	22
Telephone and Video Support	27
Equipment Hire	27
Hearing Aid Repair Service	28
Business Liaison	29
Benefits to businesses/researchers highlighted in interviews and emailed feedback.	
In summary,	29
Barriers for businesses/researchers,	30
Other comments received,	30
Use of resources and value for money	31
Recommendations	31

References	34
Appendices	34
Interview questions at the club meeting	34
Videos of members	34
Questionnaire	34

Terms

- Sign and Share Club is also referred to as 'the club'
- Improved Inclusion project is also referred to as 'the project'
- British Sign Language is also referred to as 'BSL'
- 'D/deaf' is used throughout this report, the following explanation for using Deaf and deaf is taken from the British Deaf Association - bda.org.uk/what-is-deaf-culture/,

There are two approaches to defining the word "deafness". One is based medically on a condition of lack of hearing in the range of perceived sound common to most people.

This can be described in terms of percentage or degree. Words such as profound, severe, moderate or partial hearing loss are often used to illustrate how much a person's hearing deviates from the general range.

A second way to define "deafness" is important to acknowledge ... Deafness here is [a] description of a state of being: it defines a group of people who share a perception of the world through an emphasis on visual and kinaesthetic input. This description of deafness is used most commonly for people who are deaf at birth or in very early childhood. Deafness here defines a cultural, social and linguistic group, and is often signified by the use of a capital "D".

It is also worth noting, not all Deaf people are pre-lingually Deaf, some become profoundly deaf later in life but learn BSL and become part of the Deaf community.

- Corinne Cariad is referred to as 'project evaluator'

Executive Summary

Over the last 5 years, Sign and Share Club has been proactive in engaging with D/deaf and hard of hearing people with their Improved Inclusion Project. They have worked with 415 D/deaf and hard of hearing people to provide support, social activities, equipment hire and a hearing aid repair service. They have engaged with public sector, third sector and commercial organisations and businesses to improve services and accessibility for D/deaf and hard of hearing people.

The club has made excellent use of the Big Lottery People and Places grant funding. They have vastly exceeded all their project indicators even when events beyond their control could have made things difficult. Instead, the club rose to the challenge and responded to support their community very effectively.

When face-to-face meetings were not possible, they moved to meeting online and supported members to join online meetings - a form of communication that is more challenging for those in the D/deaf and hard of hearing community. They also stepped in with their mobile hearing aid repair and maintenance service to ensure deaf and hard of hearing people in their area could still communicate using their devices.

Undertaking the research for this evaluation, it has been heartwarming to hear how much members and users value the club. It is not an exaggeration to say the club has been life-changing for some. For some who are regularly excluded from social activities and cultural events Sign and Share Club connects them and allows them to communicate with peers and the wider world. Being part of the club has increased the confidence of some so much that they now have a much richer social and cultural life with *and* beyond the club.

There were also many positive comments from businesses who received advice, training and audits. As well as from researchers who had consulted with the club and its members. They appreciated the personal advice and had a better understanding of how to improve their services and accessibility to people who are D/deaf and hard of hearing. Which ultimately supports the beneficiaries of this project. As one researcher, who is part of the D/deaf community, wrote,

'I hope they continue to have the funding as we know nothing happens overnight and everything is baby steps and building trust. The funding is important for them to continue what they are doing otherwise everything they have been doing which has been so positive is for nothing. Inclusion should not be a 'tick box' otherwise it will feel like tokenism.'

Many of the recommendations given at the end of this report are dependent on funding being available for Sign and Share Club to further develop the work they've started with their Improved Inclusion Project. Sign and Share Club has a very effective small team of staff who are dedicated to everyone who uses the club and supporting others to improve their services and accessibility for D/deaf and hard of hearing people. They are very well placed to grow the club and their ambition for a permanent home for Sign and Share Club is achievable. This would be a real asset for club members, users and the wider community.

Introduction

Sign and Share Club were awarded funding for their Improved Inclusion project from the Big Lottery People and Places - Investing in Your Community grant in May 2018. The club has submitted annual monitoring reports to the Big Lottery, a mid-term evaluation report in May 2021 as well as a report following a Consultation Day with club members in May 2022.

Here is the aim of the Improved Inclusion project, as described in the application:

Sign and Share Club will extend services to deaf people in the north and south of Pembrokeshire. The project will set up new meetings in these areas, undertake home visits to befriend and support those who are unable to attend meetings. The grant will employ a deaf community support officer to undertake home visits, establish more meetings, oversee, and help deliver a hearing aid repair and replacement battery service as well as improve deaf awareness amongst other businesses and service providers.

This final evaluation report covers the club's actions and activities over the last five years against the project indicators and outcomes.

Background to the Sign and Share Club

Established in 2013 as an unincorporated charity with a constitution, Sign and Share Club became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in February 2018 with the objective:

To relieve the needs of deaf people by the provision of arts, sports, social activities, information, advocacy, training, and support, and in such other ways as the trustees may from time to time determine.

The club is based in West Wales and is led by a panel of six volunteer committee members who are all D/deaf or hard of hearing. The committee is supported by a staff team with a Co-ordinator and a team of Deaf Community-Support Workers (DC-SW). The staff team are qualified in British Sign Language and have experience of working with deaf and hard of hearing people. Some members of staff have lived-experience as they are D/deaf or hard of hearing themselves.

The Improved Inclusion project

Since 2018, the club has grown from 45 people involved with the club to 325 in 2023 and a further 90 have been involved (of these, 63 no longer use the service and 27

have died). This is a significant increase, which has been made possible by the funding which allowed the club to employ staff and expand the services and activities they offer.

Four project indicators were agreed at the start of the Improved Inclusion project. All the indicators were chosen with the aim of improving the lives of D/deaf and hard of hearing people in the club. Every year the project has made significant progress towards the agreed indicators and vastly exceeded many of them.

Lockdowns due to Covid-19 meant that some activities had to change. There was a move from in-person to online meetings and a huge increase in home visits to carry out hearing aid repairs. Whilst engaging with local businesses decreased during this period. In 2022 usual activities were able to resume and now, in 2023, the club are running their full programme of activities as well as continuing with online activities.

Methodology

A variety of methods have been used to monitor progress to meet the project indicators.

- Throughout the project statistical data has been kept of attendance at club meetings, trips, home visits, D/deaf awareness training courses and business liaison work has been documented.
- A questionnaire of members and users of the club's services was carried out by the club in 2021 and was repeated this year by the project evaluator.
- The project evaluator interviewed the Co-ordinator and one of the Deaf Community-Support Workers.
- The project evaluator interviewed club members, volunteers and staff at a club meeting in Johnston in March.
- The project evaluator carried out online interviews with two people from organisations who received business liaison support.
- The club has also recorded videos of interviews with club members talking about what the club means to them.
- Written feedback given by people from organisations which have engaged with the business liaison service.

Project indicators

The four agreed project indicators were:

Indicator 1 - Deaf people will have gained more confidence and the ability to participate more fully in their community.

Indicator 2 - Local businesses and organisations will have assessed their accessibility and improved their local services to the deaf community.

Indicator 3 - Deaf people will feel less isolated by being involved in Sign and Share Club meetings or receiving home visits.

Indicator 4 - Deaf people will have received help in improving communication through better access to hearing aid repairs and support in using their hearing aid(s) effectively.

To note, the percentage increase on targets was calculated using the following formula:

Percentage Increase as P, the initial amount as A and the increased amount as B.

$$P = ((B - A) \div A) \times 100$$

Source: [Percentage Calculator](#)

Questionnaire

A mid-term questionnaire for members and service users was conducted in May 2021 and again towards the end of the project, covering project indicators 1, 3 and 4. The initial questionnaire was posted to everyone on the contact list, with 164 questionnaires issued and 73 returned (44.5%). The results of this questionnaire were reported and analysed in the Mid-term Evaluation Report in May 2021.

The second questionnaire was carried out in March 2023 and had a total of 22 responses. It was available online and the link was shared in the club newsletter and in the private Facebook group, there were 8 online responses. Paper copies were also posted to 46 people on the club's mailing list, with 14 responses. To note, this significant reduction of postal questionnaires since 2021 was due to adding more mailing consent categories to the club's database and a reduction in people giving consent for general mailings to be sent to them.

It was hoped there would be more online responses, however most of the club's contacts are from the home visit or hearing aid repair service and many are not online (also, many have not given consent for mailings to be posted to them). Whilst the response rate and overall responses are lower than for the first questionnaire the results will be considered below. If we assume the issue rate to be 46 (based on the number of paper questionnaires issued as the reach of the online version is unknown) then the return rate is 48% and provides statistically valid data.

Interviews

The project evaluator interviewed the Sign and Share Club Co-ordinator and one of the Deaf Community-Support Workers in early March. In these interviews the members of staff shared their experiences and gave the project evaluator online access to relevant documents, reports and records.

Later in March the project evaluator attended a club meeting and interviewed all nine attendees (eight club members and one partner of a club member) and three members of staff (two Sign and Share Club Deaf Community-Support Workers and one support worker from a residential home). These were informal interviews carried out whilst an art activity was led by an external provider.

Interviewees had the choice of whether to participate or not and which questions to respond to. This format was chosen in collaboration with the club staff as it was thought members would feel more comfortable participating in interviews during a club meeting, also club meetings usually have a good number of attendees.

For interviews with D/deaf and hard of hearing interviewees three interviews were supported with a BSL interpreter, one with a Conversor portable listening device, the remaining interviews were carried out with lip reading and/or interviewees who used hearing aids.

Interviews relating to the business liaison work were conducted over Zoom. One for an organisation which had received training and an audit and the other with an academic who was conducting research for D/deaf awareness training for medics. They were asked about the benefits of working with the club, how they found the experience and any other comments and feedback they would like to give. A large visitor attraction which had received training and an audit was asked to provide feedback however they didn't respond to emails (possibly due to timing - March is a busy time as they prepare for the new season).

Four other organisations were contacted for written feedback, and they all responded.

Videos of members

The club has recorded video interviews with club members over the last couple of years and these are available on the club's website (see Appendices for the weblink). They provide testimonials of the benefits of the club for the members and were viewed by the project evaluator and are referred to below.

Results

Project Indicators for Years 1 – 5

Indicator 1

The number of additional D/deaf people attending the clubs and trips has well exceeded the target (1.2). With the most significant increase in the first year, 2018-19. Considering the huge reduction of in-person activities in 2020 and 2021, and to some degree in 2022, the club did very well to attract new people when they were only offering online activities. Especially considering online activities are much harder for some D/deaf and hard of hearing people to engage with. Responses to the questionnaire indicate that online and telephone calls are not suitable for some people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing. However, some really value online communication.

Indicators 1.1 and 1.3 have been harder to quantify and qualitative data gathered in the interviews and questionnaires has been used. This is considered in the Mental Health and Wellbeing section below.

Indicator 1 - Deaf people will have gained more confidence and the ability to participate more fully in their community								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Target	Variance
1.1 The number of deaf people who feel more confident about going out and engaging with other people							75% improvement	
1.2 Number of additional D/deaf people attending the clubs and trips offered	49	12	15	11	5	92	46	+46 100% increase on the target
1.3 The number of deaf people who have had a positive experience of dealing with local business/organisations							50% increase	

Indicator 2

Again, the number of businesses and organisations engaged has vastly exceeded the target. Some proactively approached the Sign and Share Club directly for advice and support. Networking in the local area has proved effective as one interviewee said this was how they had heard of the club. Then, when they were seeking advice, they sought out the club rather than a larger national organisation. They specifically wanted to work with another local organisation who understood the area and local issues.

Collaborating with other organisations and attending events was also an effective way of extending the reach and connecting with organisations and businesses to make them aware of the services the club offers. Having a stall at an event or attending an event another organisation hosted allowed the club to make best use of their own resources and reach a wider audience who may not attend an event aimed at the D/deaf and hard of hearing community.

In Year 5, some organisations/businesses which did not complete an assessment form took positive steps following advice or an audit by the club. This has led to more positive steps being taken. For example, in the club's report about one organisation,

The church requested we test their loop system - which was found to be faulty on the day. Advice was also given to 4 attendees on the free hearing test on RNID's website, use of listening aids, and how to operate the T function on a hearing aid.

Indicator 2 - Local businesses and organisations will have assessed their accessibility and improved their local services to the deaf community								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Target	Variance
2.1 Number of individual businesses and organisations that received information and support to improve deaf access	3	2	27	75	16	123	36	+87 241% increase on the target
2.2 The number of businesses and organisations that received information and support to improve deaf access through	2	2	128	59	80	271	60	+211 351% increase on the target

group presentations								
2.3 The number of businesses and organisations that complete an assessment of their services to the deaf	0	0	6	12	22	40	36	+4 11% increase on the target
2.4 The number of businesses and organisations that state they have taken positive steps to improve deaf access	0	0	6 – 100%	12 – 100%	28* - 100%+	100%	75%	+25% 33% increase on the target

**Includes 'Steps taken' by additional businesses/organisations which didn't complete an assessment. The percentage indicator in 2.4 is based on the figure in 2.3.*

Indicator 3

The club has been extremely successful in attracting more people to meetings and responded swiftly to changes brought about by the lockdowns. They moved to online meetings however, as noted elsewhere in this report, online and phone calls are not suitable for all D/deaf or hard of hearing people. Their home visit service to support people repair and maintain their hearing aids during lockdowns was invaluable for many people.

Again, they vastly exceeded their targets and feedback in the questionnaire has been very positive. However, now that in-person meetings and trips have resumed the club is reducing the number of home visits for hearing aid repairs and maintenance as the audiology department is back to capacity. The club does not have sufficient resources to do both meetings and home visits and has prioritised their original activities for club members.

Indicator 3 - Deaf people will feel less isolated by being involved in Sign and Share Club meetings or receiving home visits.								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Target	Variance
3.1 The number of home visits that are undertaken	14	48	131	260	186	639	112	+527 470% increase

								on the target
3.2 The number of deaf people attending the meetings	69	55	40	48	51	263	135	+128 94% increase on the target
3.3 The number of <u>new</u> deaf people attending the meetings	12	10	40	4	4	70	29	+41 141% increase on the target
3.4 The number of <u>new</u> deaf people receiving home visits	9	14	78	34	24	159	24	+135 562% increase on the target

Indicator 4

As mentioned above, the number of people receiving support increased dramatically during the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, as can be seen on the table for Indicator 4.1. Use of this service has continued in subsequent years.

Club members and non-club members have all made use of this service and the targets have been vastly exceeded.

There appears to be a big increase in advice given (Indicators 4.4 and 4.6) in Year 4. This is due to staff receiving training about how to record 'advice given'. The staff had been giving advice, however they hadn't all been recording it as such, e.g., how to store hearing aids and how to adjust the volume. Following the training, some staff began giving more advice and others began recording the advice they were already giving.

As noted above (Indicator 3), the club is now reducing the number of people they offer this service to due to limited resources and re-focusing on their core services.

Indicator 4 - Deaf people will have received help in improving communication through better access to hearing aid repairs and support in using their hearing aid(s) effectively.								
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Target	Variance
4.1 The number of hearing aid repairs	40	43	169	319	397	968	50	+918

and battery replacements provided to non-club members								1836% increase on the target
4.2 The number of hearing aid repairs and battery replacements provided to club members	44	56	34	26	42	202	18	+184 1022% increase on the target
4.3 The number of club members receiving advice on how to better maintain their hearing aids	6	11	14	17	12	60	12	+48 400% increase on the target
4.4 The number of non-club members receiving advice on how to better maintain their hearing aids	18	38	71	195	85	407	27	+380 1407% increase on the target
4.5 The number of club members receiving advice on using their hearing aid e.g. getting used to the aid, using the aid with a loop system or other listening device	7	6	16	18	13	60	36	+24 66% increase on the target
4.6 The number of non-club members receiving advice on using their hearing aid e.g. getting used to the aid, using the aid with a loop system or other listening device	18	33	64	199	79	393	12	+381 3175% increase on the target

Demographics and Communication

The club keeps a record of the demographic data of the people who use their services, for those who choose to give this information (approximately a quarter of users' data is

held, the club staff are working to obtain data from more people however some prefer not to give this data). Of these people:

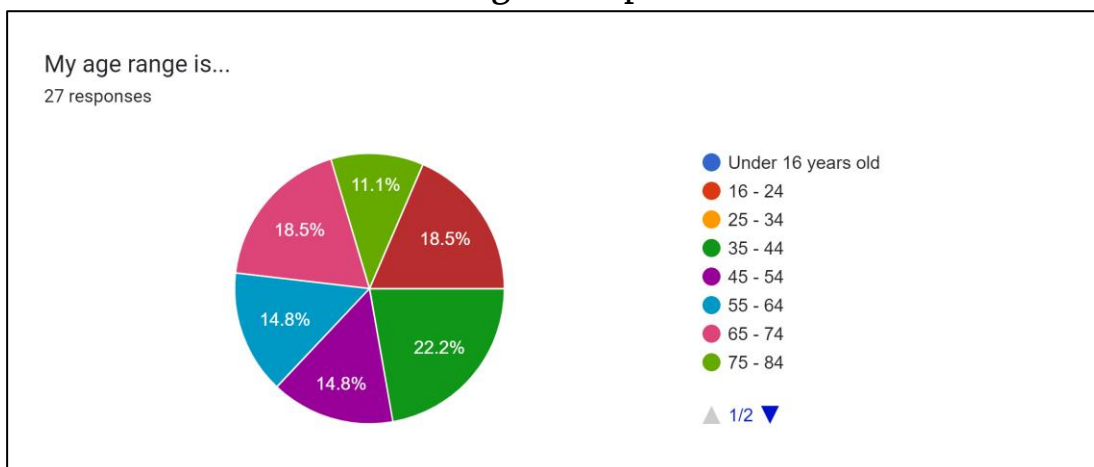
- 100% identify as white, of these 82.4% identify as white British and 17.6% as white other
- 34.5% identify as male, 65.5% identify as female
- The majority chose not to respond to the question about sexuality, of those who did all identified as heterosexual
- 84% of respondents gave details of a disability or illness and of these the majority identified as D/deaf or hard of hearing

Of those responding to the questionnaire 66.7% identify as female and 33.3% identify as male, in keeping with the data held by the club. Whilst the local population has a more even ratio of 51.1% women to 48.9% men (for the purposes of this report, the local area is taken to be the three counties of Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire) (reference 1).

All respondents were over 35 years of age, and a breakdown of ages is given in Table 1 below (note the red 18.5% is for '85+'). Government data for the area shows an ageing population and as hearing loss is age-related this may also account for the older age range (reference 1).

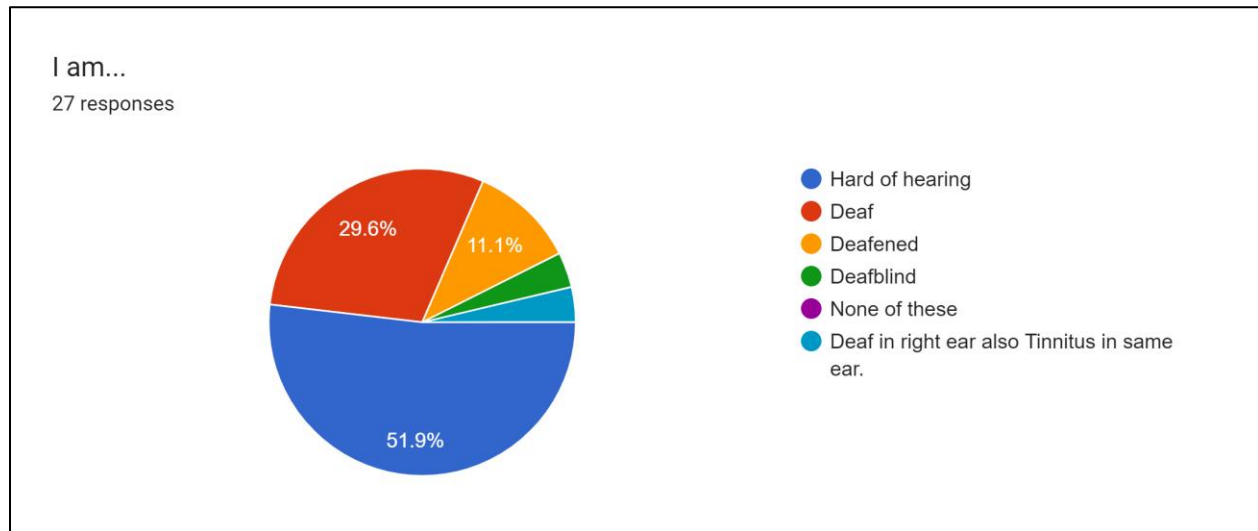
All respondents identify as white, in keeping with the data held by the club. This is similar to government data for the area which shows 98% of people identify as white in the area (reference 2).

Table 1: Age of respondents



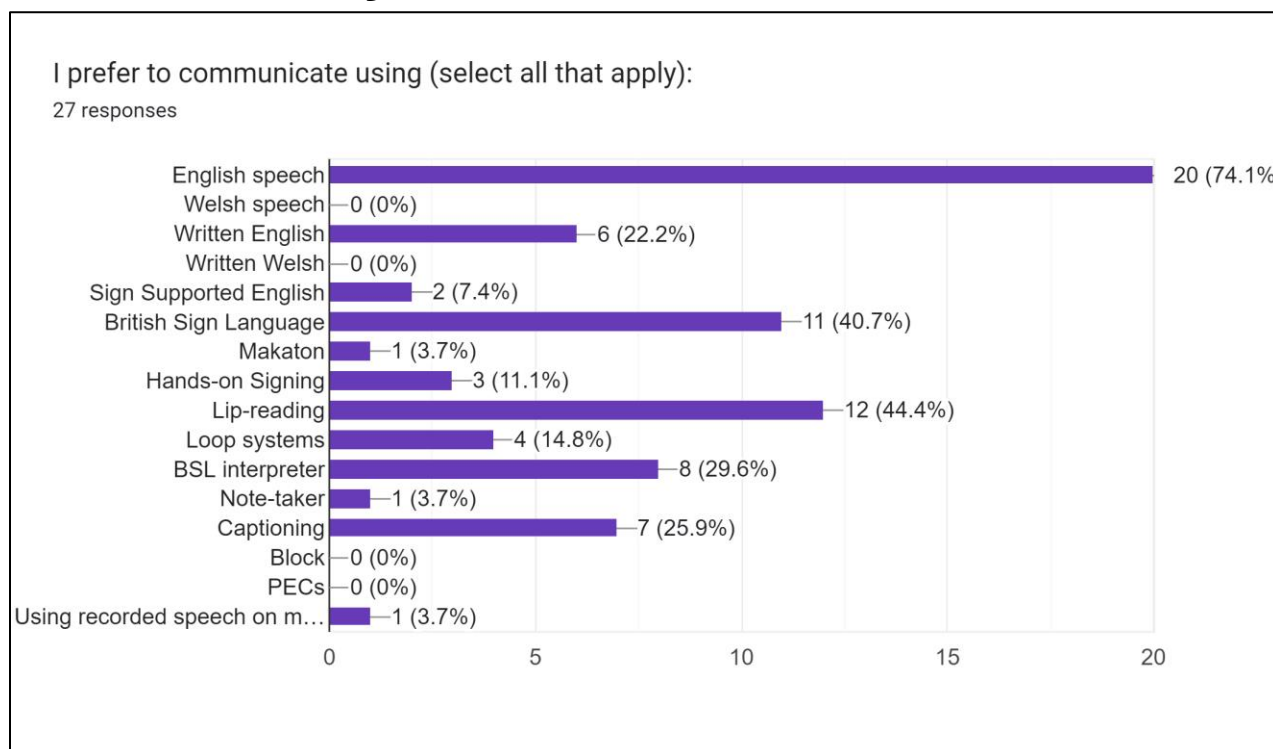
Of those who responded to the questionnaire, all identified as having hearing loss or being D/deaf, as illustrated in Table 2 below, this demonstrates the questionnaire was completed by the target audience.

Table 2: Type of hearing loss or deafness



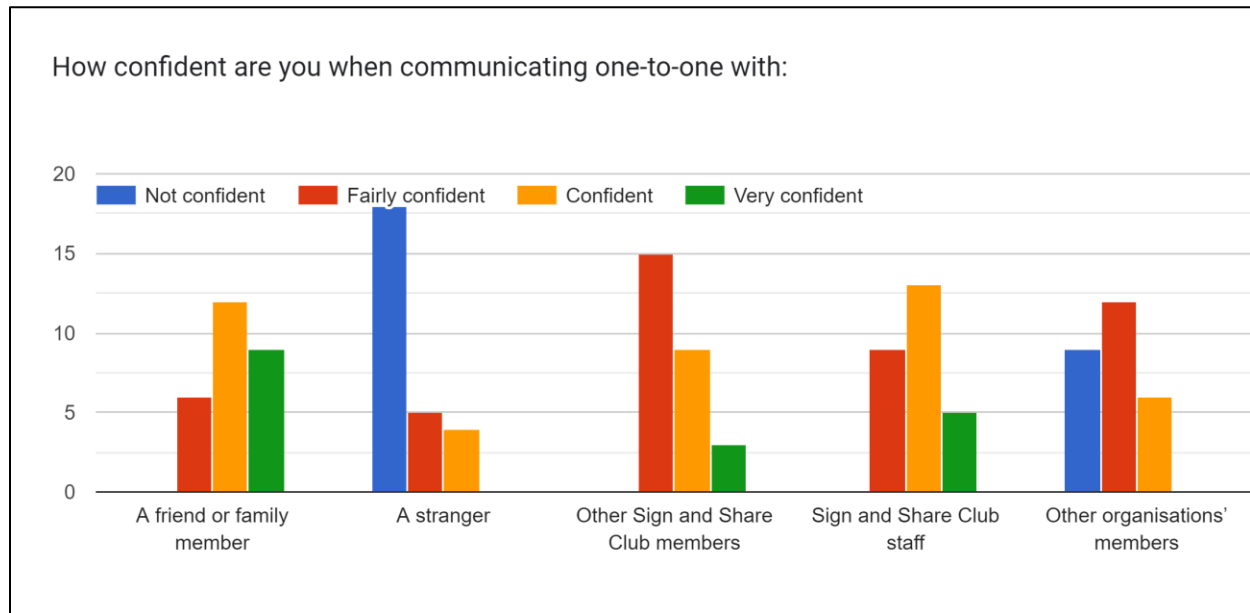
When asked about their communication preferences (Table 3, below) the language most respondents communicate in is spoken English (74.1%) whilst 40.7% communicate in British Sign Language and no respondents communicate in Welsh. All three languages are used on the club's website to ensure members and service users can access the information. Other common communication preferences are lip reading, British Sign Language interpretation, written English, captioning, loop systems and sign supported English - all of which are supported in club meetings, on trips and home visits.

Table 3: Preferred methods of communication



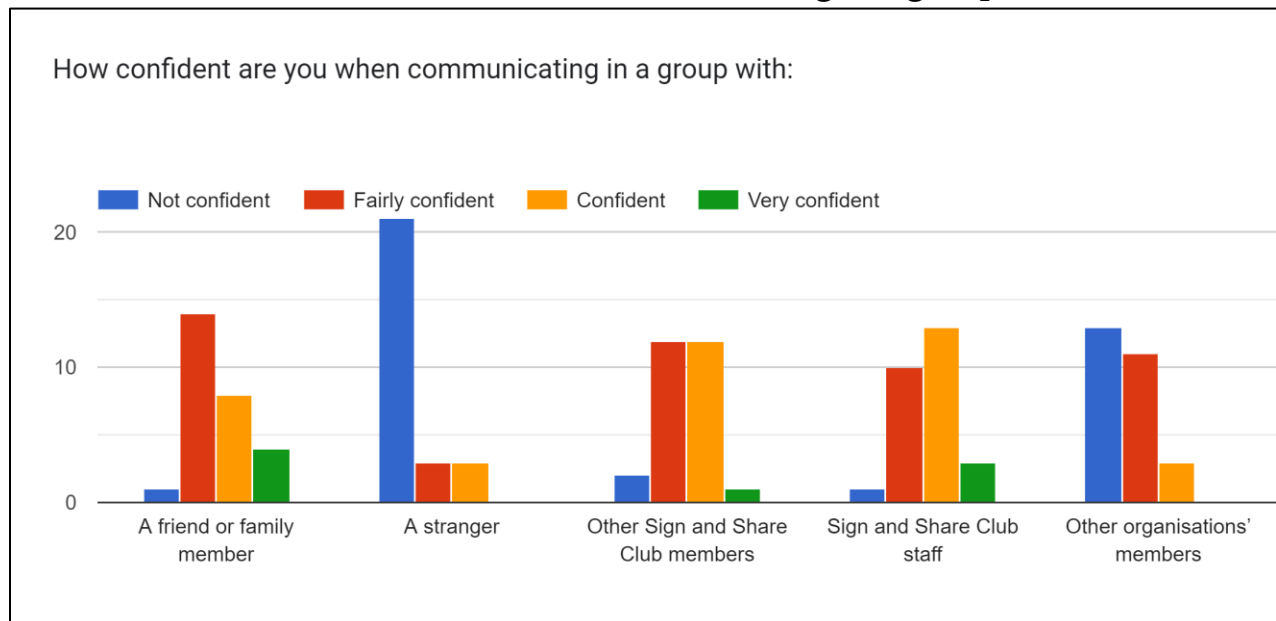
When asked about confidence communicating with people one-to-one nearly all respondents reported being confident or very confident communicating with friends and family and not confident communicating with strangers (Table 4, below). Confidence communicating with other club members and staff ranged from fairly confident to very confident. However, it is worth noting that a few respondents felt more confident communicating with club staff and other members than with anyone else - including friends and family - indicating that they may have difficulties communicating at home and in other settings.

Table 4: Confidence communicating one-to-one



In a group setting confidence levels dropped for all respondents (Table 5). It is notable here that nearly all respondents still felt some level of confidence communicating with Sign and Share Club staff even in group settings.

Table 5: Confidence communicating in a group



Mental Health and Well-being

As referenced in the project Mid-term Evaluation Report in 2021, disabled people and those who are D/deaf or hard of hearing are more likely to be affected by mental health problems than abled people. They are also likely to experience more barriers to participating in cultural and social activities - activities which can have a positive impact on mental health. Indeed, the most recent Wellbeing Assessment for Pembrokeshire states that, ‘People who regularly attend arts and culture events report higher levels of wellbeing’ (2022, p.27). The Wellbeing Assessment for Pembrokeshire also found, ‘There is evidence that levels of health impacts our resident’s ability to take part in cultural events’ (2022, p.27).

In the questionnaire respondents were asked how they were affected by isolation, loneliness and depression. The responses, in Table 6 (below), demonstrate that the majority experience these mental health issues some of the time. Table 7 (below) highlights how respondents found being involved with the club helped them, or not. The majority responded that the club had helped them to make friends and/or socialise more (17 and 18 of 27 respondents respectively). Thirteen responded that the club helped them in three or more respects; to socialise; make friends; reduce isolation; improve their mental health; and, improve confidence. It should be noted that the five people who responded, ‘None of these’ (Table 7) did not attend any club events, they received home visits for their hearing aids.

Table 6: Experiences of isolation, loneliness and depression

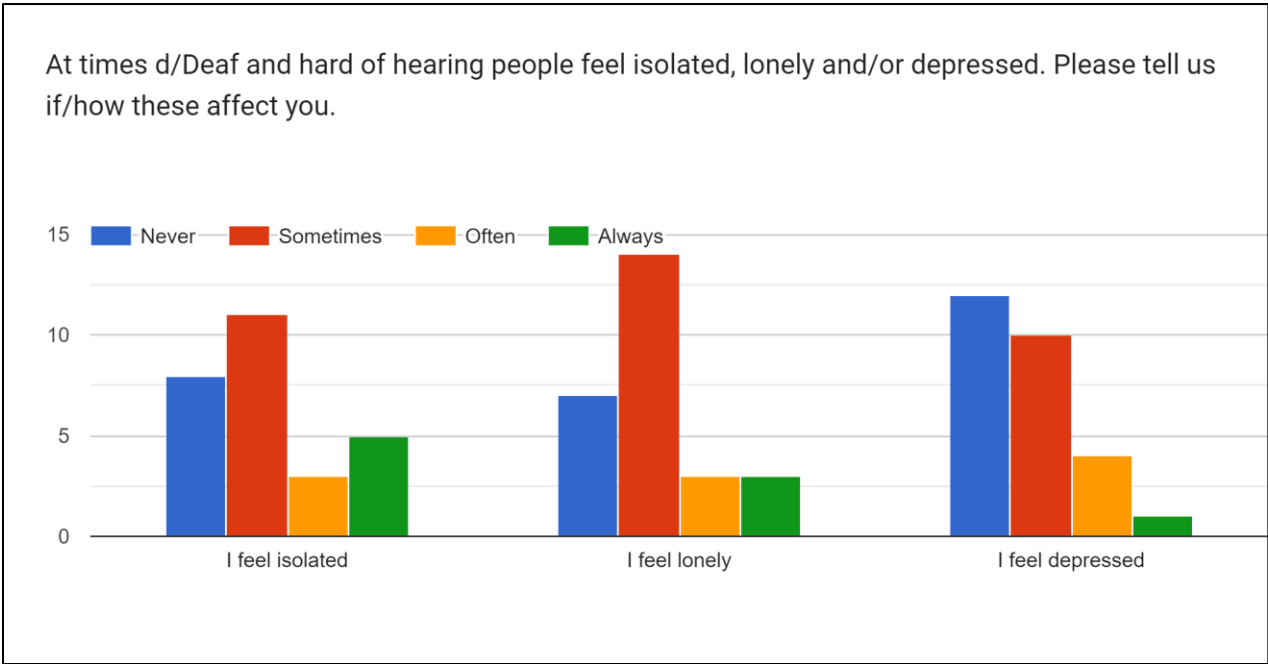
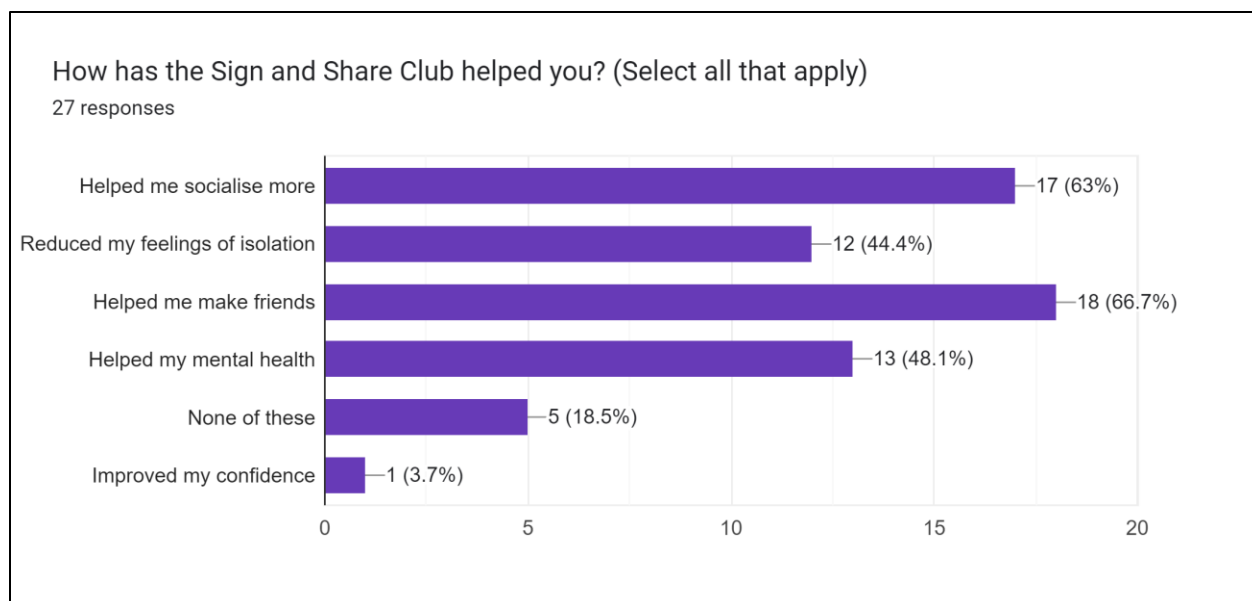


Table 7: Effects of Sign and Share on isolation, loneliness and depression



Club Meetings and Trips

Of questionnaire respondents who had attended club meetings online or face-to-face they rated club meetings as excellent (12) or good (7). With questionnaire respondents saying,

‘Finding out about and joining this group is the best thing ever. I hated going out and meeting new people. Now I love going to the group, on trips and meeting everyone.’

‘Because of age and health problems I am not now always able to attend all Club activities but those I can are excellent and helpful.’

Questionnaire respondents had mainly been to the Johnston (18) or online (10) club meetings, three to Pembroke and two had been to the Fishguard meetings (some had attended more than one meeting venue). Seven had not been to any meetings and had only used the hearing aid repair service.

There was a suggestion from one respondent,

‘More Saturday trips useful for those who work Mon-Fri.’

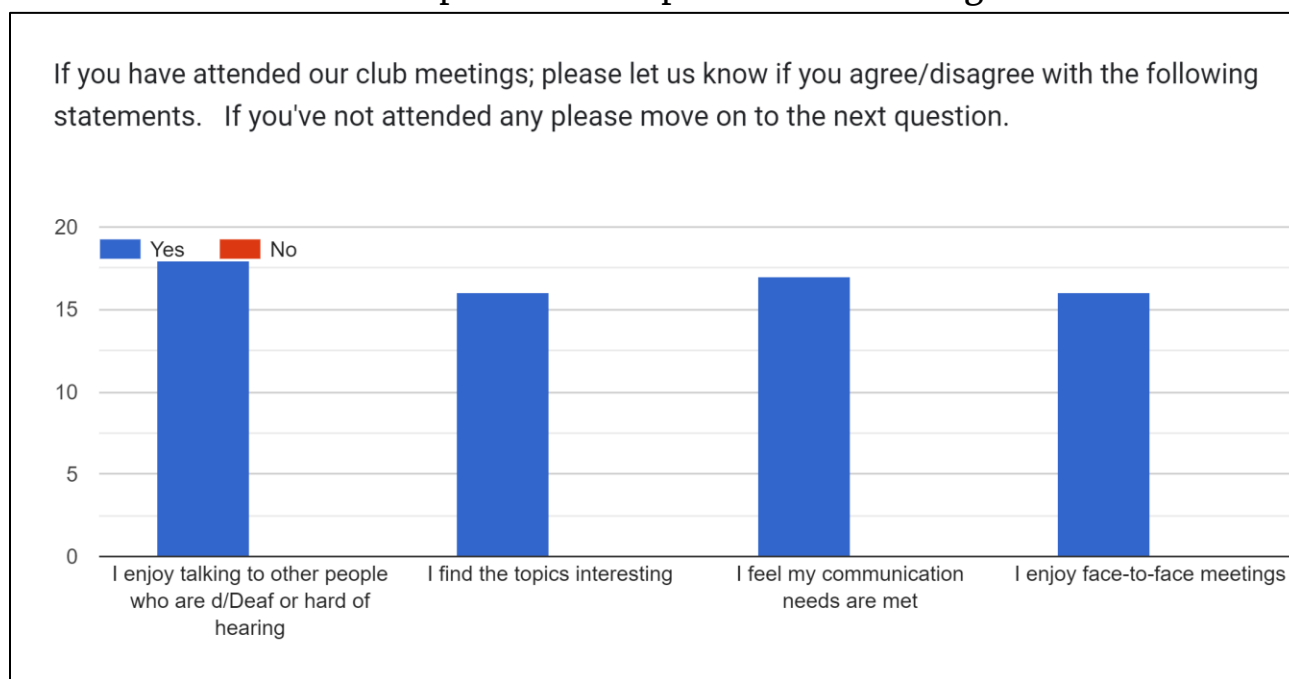
Another comment highlights that transport is an issue, this was reinforced in interviews with club members at the meeting,

‘Sign and Share sometimes helps with train fare to get from my home in Carmarthen to Johnston.’

‘[Deaf Community-Support Worker] gives me a lift here which is a great help. There is a bus but it’s not very often.’

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to in person meetings from questionnaire respondents, as seen in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Experience of in person club meetings



In the video interviews with club members about their experiences of the club (see Appendices) club members spoke enthusiastically about attending meetings and going on trips. They mention enjoying activities like bingo and art activities and having the chance to chat with other people. However, some older members find it difficult to attend meetings due to their age and mobility issues, mentioned in one video and by a questionnaire respondent.

Whilst there was some negative feedback (Table 9, below) about online meetings, comments were polarised. Online meetings yielded the most negative comments of all the questions on the questionnaire, likely due to the difficulty of communicating online for some D/deaf and hard of hearing people,

‘I really do not like online always prefer face’

‘I struggle a little with online meetings. More of not being able that familiar with technology rather than the meetings themselves.’

‘I do not like online meetings much better face to face meet’

'I find online/FaceTime/Zoom hopeless'

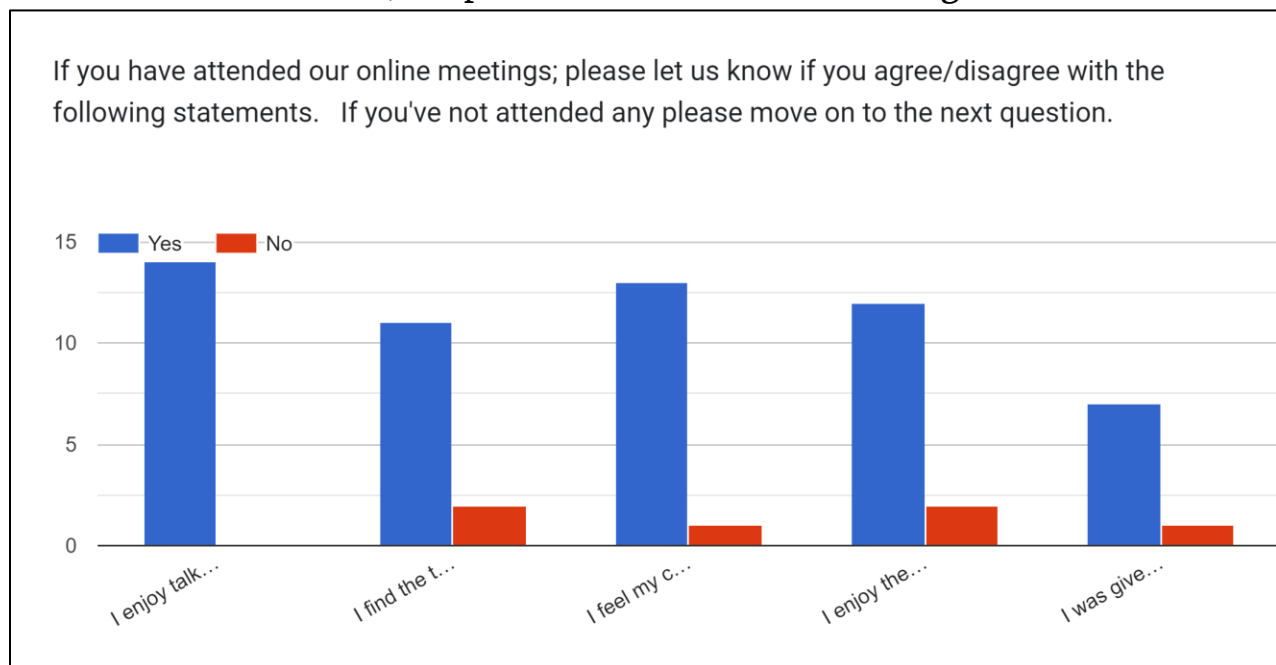
With some very much benefiting from online meetings,

'I want more meetings online'

'Tech phobia here! I was given easy clear help to join online. I am now much more confident to join other groups online e.g. Dementia and Alzheimers groups.'

One of the Deaf Community-Support Workers said they hold online meetings in the evening to allow club members who work in the day to join. In the interviews a club member said they really enjoy the Zoom meetings and the online activities such as bingo and art.

Table 9: Experience of online club meetings



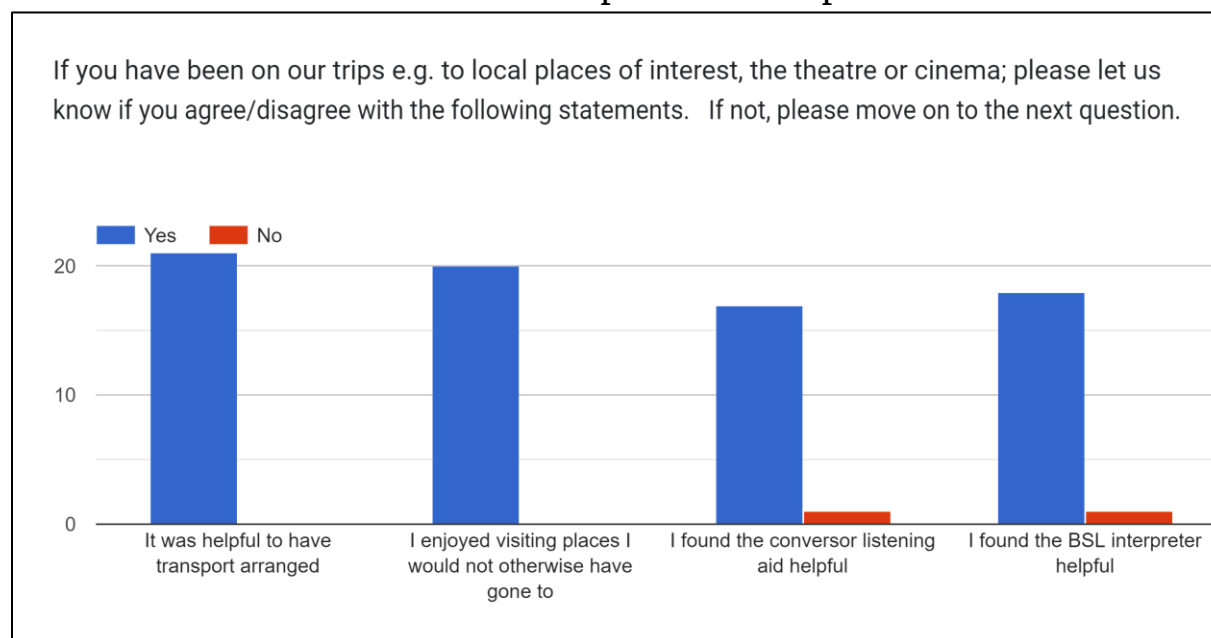
1. I enjoy talking to other people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing
2. I find the topics interesting
3. I feel my communication needs are met
4. I enjoy the online meetings
5. I was given help and support to get online (leave blank if you didn't need help to get online)

Interviewees and questionnaire respondents were also positive about the trips they had been on and agreed that having transport and communication barriers removed was

helpful, allowing them to visit places they would not otherwise have been to (Table 10, below).

There were two negative responses about communication support on the trips. The person who responded that they didn't find the Conversor listening aid helpful does not use this device. The person who responded that they didn't find the BSL interpreter helpful is not a BSL speaker and so would not use this method of communication.

Table 10: Experience of trips



In the interviews, the benefits of the club meetings and trips on mental health were reinforced. Some interviewees reported that the club meetings and trips were the main or only social and cultural activities they participated in. This was due to a variety of issues,

- Communication is a barrier for some as they need a BSL interpreter to communicate with non-BSL speakers and so don't attend other groups or visit places independently.
- Some weren't confident to travel or go out independently.
- Some have other disabilities which cause additional barriers (learning disabilities and/or mobility disabilities).
- Some couldn't get to other places due to lack of transport, one person said, 'Buses haven't gone back to the regularity they were [before Covid-19]'.

However, for some being part of the club has increased their confidence and they now have an active social life. They reported,

- They'd made friends who they saw outside of the club and/or chatted to on social media and messaging.
- Coming to the group had 'restored their faith [in people]' after a negative experience with another social group.
- A support worker who accompanies a club member said 'there's a big difference' in the club member following club meetings and trips. Club meetings and trips are an opportunity for the club member to socialise and communicate with other BSL speakers as there are few BSL speakers at their residential home (support staff or other residents).
- Club members are active in choosing where they would like to go on trips and the Co-ordinator organises the trips.

In the interviews club members said,

'[Coming to the group] 100% helped me be more social. After lockdown especially. If I don't go out I become agoraphobic.'

'I feel happy when I come. It gives me confidence. It makes me feel connected, included. Makes me smile! All my family like me coming to club. It makes them happy that I can go on trips.' (BSL speaker)

The Sign and Share Club staff reported that some members had not returned to the club meetings since they had resumed meeting in person. Some members have additional disabilities, and some are unwell with mental health illnesses which could be attributed to restrictions imposed due to Covid-19 (though no substantive evidence is available to support this).

When asked, 'What would you like to have happen?' club members at the club meeting gave various suggestions,

- Drop in sessions
- Ways of improving BSL skills for people in shops and cafes and for family and friends of BSL speakers
- More people to come to club meetings, including those who currently have home visits
- More regular club meetings or afternoon get togethers
- More funding to pay for materials, activities and speakers
- More art activities
- More regular sessions, trips and online sessions
- Personalised BSL courses and short courses for friends & family and support workers & colleagues

Telephone and Video Support

The telephone and video support services were used by sixteen of the questionnaire respondents, the majority of whom reported it was 'good' or 'excellent' service. Eleven of them agreed the Deaf Community Support Worker they spoke to was friendly and supportive. Ten people reported feeling less isolated following the telephone or video call and nine were able to discuss problems, get help and their mental health improved. One person commented,

'It's very helpful all round knowing they are there if needed.'

However, two people responded that they weren't able to discuss problems or get help and one responded that their mental health didn't improve. The nature of the anonymous questionnaire means no specific support can be offered to these specific people. The Sign and Share Club could review their procedure for telephone and video calls to identify if any improvements can be made to help their recipients discuss problems and get further help if needed.

Table 11: Experience of telephone and video support



Equipment Hire

Of the questionnaire respondents five had borrowed equipment and all found the service helpful, equipment in good working order and that it was a reasonable fee to hire the equipment. Three people went on to purchase the equipment after trying it out

and one person said, 'I was helped to purchase a Sonido Digital Hearer which has been amazing.'

In the club meeting one member was using a Conversor hearing device and others were using the loop setting on their hearing aids, having this equipment available for club meetings and trips is a huge advantage.

The club is considering partnering with another organisation to extend the reach of their equipment hire service. The Co-ordinator and Deaf Community-Support Worker recognise that this is an underused part of their offer and other organisations may be better placed (and resourced) to hire out equipment for those who need it.

Hearing Aid Repair Service

Over lockdown the hearing aid repair service became a much-used service and most of the staff time was dedicated to this. This was in response to audiology appointments being cancelled and subsequent difficulties getting appointments once the audiology department began returning to their usual service.

In recent months the Co-ordinator and Deaf Community-Support Workers have been working to reduce the service as the number of users is beyond their capacity. This decrease is reflected in some comments from questionnaire respondents, who have valued the service.

Of the questionnaire respondents eighteen had used the hearing aid repair service and the majority found the service friendly and helpful and their hearing aid was repaired or they were advised what to do (one person responded that their hearing aid was repaired and that they weren't advised what to do to repair it, which has been assumed to be a typo). All would be happy to use the service again (one person responded yes and no to this question, assumed to be a typo as they were happy with all aspects of the service). This service is valued by service users, as reflected in their comments,

'Quickly, friendly and competent service.'

'Aid cleaned and tubing exchanged. I understand why my name will be removed it was explained. But I wish you all the very best for this service to continue.'

'He put new tube in for me and I got batteries sent by post in lockdown by my Sign and Share club.'

'Hope the service will be continued'

'She was able to clear the blocked 'tube'.'

‘As I’m a Carer it’s useful that their staff will come to me home.’

Business Liaison

A wide variety of businesses and organisations have been supported by Sign and Share Club. They include local authorities and the health board, town councils, third sector organisations and charities, churches, care homes, theatres and arts centres, tourist attractions, hotels and tourist accommodation, universities and other researchers. Following the advice they received, many have taken steps to improve their services and accessibility for people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing.

As mentioned in the Mental Health and Wellbeing section above (p. 20), participating in arts and cultural events has a positive impact on wellbeing. Whilst accessibility to public and health services is essential. The business liaison work carried out by the club will benefit many of the club users and members. Some of whom have reported difficulties in accessing services and being able to visit local arts and visitor attractions.

Benefits to businesses/researchers highlighted in interviews and emailed feedback. In summary,

- Tailor made training, appropriate to the business’ need and experience
- One-to-one advice
- Support and help with organising an online focus group with simultaneous BSL translation and captioning
- Learned more about and understand the best ways to interact with D/deaf and hard of hearing people
- Report from audit identified what the business could do to improve their service to D/deaf and hard of hearing customers
- Training was very engaging
- Helped to inform the future development of the organisation
- Warm welcome and excellent communication throughout the process
- Working with people with lived experience of being D/deaf or hard of hearing was valued
- ‘Sign and Share Club staff are easy to work with and resourceful’

- When choosing a new venue one organisation has considered accessibility and chosen a more modern venue with better facilities
- Monthly film showing with a BSL interpreter
- Sign and Share Club have been helpful to facilitate connections with other organisations
- Being able to get feedback from D/deaf and hard of hearing people in the club has enabled progress in improving health services and arts and cultural events
- Sign and Share Club is an advocate for their members and users

Barriers for businesses/researchers,

- Limited resources (staff and financial) mean improvements have been slower than they'd like within their own organisation
- Change of management has led to a delay in setting up a Deaf Culture Week, in a theatre setting
- The report was delayed due to staff changes at Sign and Share Club, however when delivered the report was detailed

Other comments received,

'Engagement with Sign and Share has always been easy. People are reliable, when you arrive communication is excellent. You will be welcomed by a friendly group of people.'

It's good to see people who are keen to have a voice. People who are interested in taking part and having a voice in their community. It's always been a pleasure.

There's always been a warm welcome and adoption of new people is warm and lovely, it's genuine and really nice.'

'I hope they continue to have the funding as we know nothing happens overnight and everything is baby steps and building trust. The funding is important for them to continue what they are doing otherwise everything they have been doing which has been so positive is for nothing. Inclusion should not be a 'tick box' otherwise it will feel like tokenism.'

‘Overall I would like to say my experiences of being supported by the Sign and Share Club have been very positive, and I would even say invaluable, in helping me to connect with, understand and gather views from the D/deaf and hard of hearing community.’

Use of resources and value for money

Since receiving the five years of funding from the Big Lottery there have been a few changes which have impacted on Sign and Share Club and their plans for the project.

The most obvious being Covid-19 lockdowns. The club quickly adjusted their services and reassigned budgets accordingly to cover travel costs for staff to carry out many more home visits. During this time they had reduced costs for group meetings and trips.

Over the five years staff members have changed and they have increased from one part-time Deaf Community Support Officer to a small team of staff who all work part-time. They recognised the need for a Co-ordinator role as some of the role responsibilities were greater than those of an Officer. They now have a part-time Co-ordinator and three Deaf Community-Support Workers.

Sign and Share Club have exceeded the targets for all four of their Indicators and have delivered this in challenging circumstances. They are to be commended for this. More importantly, they have supported many people in their community and raised awareness which has supported others to improve the services they offer to D/deaf and hard of hearing people. The ripple effect of Sign and Share Club’s work is very effective and ongoing.

The club have been successful in securing sufficient funding to cover their core ongoing costs for the next twelve months. They are now considering their next steps and how to secure, and ideally increase their funding for even bigger impacts.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by findings in this report, responses to the questionnaire and interviews with members, volunteers and staff.

- Drop in sessions - though these weren’t well attended there is still a demand from some members and could be trialed again, especially if a new office space is found (see next recommendation).
- An office and meeting space in a central location with easy mobility access and for non-drivers (e.g. ground floor, on bus route). A place where people can drop in for advice, hearing aid repairs, social chat drop in (to reduce isolation).

- Doing drop in sessions/stall at other people's meetings (like the coffee morning at the church) and at events which are already happening.
- Meetings and trips at different times, e.g. on a weekend or evening, so people who work can attend.
- There is demand for more regular sessions (online and in person).
- Review procedure for telephone and video calls to identify if any improvements can be made to help their recipients discuss problems and get further help if needed (in response to questionnaire respondents, see page 28).
- Consider transport solutions and costs in future funding applications as transport could be a barrier for some members to attend meetings and visits (many commented on how much they value the support they receive with transport).
- For those who rely on public transport, evenings and weekend meetings and trips are very difficult to get to. Even weekday events can be difficult as public transport is still on a reduced timetable in some places (since Covid-19 changes). Some people do not have access to any transport, including public transport.
- Consider collaborating with another/other organisations to promote the equipment hire service. For example, Pembrokeshire Circle's [Library of Things](#) (they already list some 'disability aids') and Ateb (who the club has already considered).
- Review mailing list GDPR consent mailing options and procedures to encourage more contacts and members to consent to being contacted by the club. This is being recommended as some members didn't receive a postal copy of the questionnaire and they would have liked to; however they haven't given consent to be sent mailings by the club.
- Deliver BSL short courses in Pembrokeshire (and possibly elsewhere). These may be for specific groups (e.g. families, friends, support workers, colleagues) or for the general public.
- Deliver BSL training for businesses and organisations who provide services for people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing. This is recommended by club members. Engaging with businesses and organisations can be a challenge, especially with limited staff resources as has been found with this project. Partnering with other organisations who could introduce interested parties could help here, e.g. as the staff did with the Open to All project and with Pembrokeshire Access Group.

- Consider the above recommendations at the planned team building day on Saturday 13th May. Their aim of the day will be to look at going forward and to re-develop and re-focus for the next 5-year plan.

References

Page 18 – Reference 1. Age and gender data -

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimateswales/census2021>

Page 18 – Reference 2. Ethnicity data - [https://www.ethnicity-facts-](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest)

[figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest)

Page 22 – Wellbeing Assessment for Pembrokeshire can be found on the

Pembrokeshire County Council website - <https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/public-services-board/well-being-assessment>

Appendices

Interview questions at the club meeting

1. What is it like for you coming to the club?
2. Do you take part in other social activities, besides the club?
3. Has being a member of the club helped in other parts of your life?
4. What would you like to have happen?

Videos of members

Videos of club members talking about what the club means to them are available on the website: http://signandshare.org.uk/members_views.php

Questionnaire

Online: <https://forms.gle/tkRW2LKNyKgUwzUn6>

Paper copy:



Improved Inclusion Project Evaluation Survey

Please help Sign and Share Club know how the Improved Inclusion Project has been for you.

The Club have been running the project for 5 years, with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Now the Club has to tell the National Lottery what has gone well, what could be improved and what we would like to do in the future. We ask for some personal information about you because the National Lottery want to know what type of people complete this survey.

This survey is being carried out by Corinne Cariad, she is our external evaluator. Your replies will be confidential and anonymous.

If you would like to talk to Corinne in more detail about your experiences of the Improved Inclusion Project, you can speak to her at our Club meeting at Johnston Institute Hall on Friday 31st March (ask Maria if you want more information about this meeting).

About you section

1) I am (please tick):

☐ Hard of hearing

☐ Deaf

☐ Deafened

☐ Deafblind

☐ None of these

☐ Other: _____

2) My gender is (please tick):

- ☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Other: _____
☐ Prefer not to say

3) My age range is (please tick):

- ☐ Under 16
☐ 16-24
☐ 25-34
☐ 35-44
☐ 45-54
☐ 55-64
☐ 65-74
☐ 75-84
☐ 85+

4) I prefer to communicate using (please tick all that apply):

- ☐ English speech ☐ Lip-reading ☐ Hands-on Signing
☐ Welsh speech ☐ Loop systems ☐ Block
☐ Written English ☐ BSL interpreter ☐ PECs
☐ Written Welsh ☐ Note-taker ☐ Sign Supported English
☐ Captioning ☐ British Sign Language ☐ Makaton

Other (please state): _____

5) My ethnic group identity is (please tick):

- ☐ White ☐ Mixed or Multiple Ethnicity ☐ Asian
☐ Black/African/Caribbean ☐ Prefer not to say
☐ Other Ethnic Group: _____

6) At times d/Deaf and hard of hearing people feel isolated, lonely and/or depressed. Please tell us if/how these affect you (please tick):

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I feel isolated				
I feel lonely				

I feel depressed				
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7) How has the Sign and Share Club helped you? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Helped me socialise more
- ☐ Reduced my feelings of isolation
- ☐ Helped me make friends
- ☐ Helped my mental health

8) How confident are you when communicating one-to-one with:

	Not confident	Fairly confident	Confident	Very confident
A friend or family member				
A stranger				
Sign and Share Club members				
Sign and Share Club staff				
Other organisations' members				

9) How confident are you when communicating in a group with:

	Not confident	Fairly confident	Confident	Very confident
A friend or family member				
A stranger				
Sign and Share Club members				
Sign and Share Club staff				
Other organisations' members				

About Sign and Share Club Services Section

10) What do you think of the following Sign and Share Club services we provide?
(Please tick as appropriate)

Service	Not used	Poor	Ok	Good	Excellent
Meetings online and/or face to face					
Video and telephone calls					
Trips to local venues					
Theatre and cinema events					
Equipment loan service					
Home visit					
Hearing aid repair/ battery replacement					

Any comments: _____

11) Please select all the club meeting venues you have attended:

- ☐ Johnston
- ☐ Pembroke
- ☐ Fishguard
- ☐ Online
- ☐ None

12) If you have attended our club meetings; please let us know if you agree/disagree with the following statements.

If you've not attended any club meetings please move on to the next question.

	YES	NO
I enjoy talking to other people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing		

I find the topics interesting		
I feel my communication needs are met		

Any comments: _____

13) If you have attended our online meetings; please let us know if you agree/disagree with the following statements.

If you've not attended any online meetings please move on to the next question.

	YES	NO
I enjoy talking to other people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing		
I find the topics interesting		
I feel my communication needs are met		
I enjoy the online meetings		
I was given help and support to get online (leave blank if you didn't need help with this)		

Any comments: _____

14) If you have had telephone or video calls; please let us know if you agree/disagree with the following statements.

If not, please move on to the next question.

	YES	NO
The Deaf Community – Support Worker was friendly and supportive		
I felt less isolated by having someone to talk to		

My mental health was improved by having someone to talk/sign to		
I was able to discuss problems and get help		

Any comments: _____

15) If you have been on our trips e.g. to local places of interest, the theatre or cinema; please let us know if you agree/disagree with the following statements.

If not, please move on to the next question.

	YES	NO
It was helpful to have transport arranged		
I enjoyed visiting places I would not otherwise have gone to		
I found the conversor listening aid helpful		
I found the BSL interpreter helpful		

Any comments: _____

16) If you have loaned any equipment from us; please let us know if you agree/disagree with the following statements.

If not, please move on to the next question.

	YES	NO
Was the fee you were charged reasonable?		
Was the equipment in good working order?		

Was the equipment helpful?		
Did you decide to purchase the equipment?		

What equipment did you borrow? _____

Any comments about the equipment? _____

17) If you have had a hearing aid repair in the last year; please let us know if you agree/disagree with the following statements.

If not, thank you for completing this survey.

	YES	NO	Not applicable
Was the person you contacted to request the repair friendly and helpful			
Was the person who visited you friendly and respectful?			
Did the person who visited you wear PPE			
Did the person manage to repair your hearing aid?			
If the aid was not repaired; were you told why and what to do next?			
Did you receive any helpful advice and support?			
Would you be happy to use this service again?			

Any comments: _____

That completes the survey. Thank you for your support.

