



# **“Ageing Deaf Access” Accessible Summary of Manchester Deaf Centre Equalities Board Research Project**

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*Led by:*

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## Glossary / List of new terms

**AFA** = Ambition for Ageing  
= a new Greater Manchester programme that aims to make communities more age-friendly and improve older people's quality of life

**BAME** = Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic  
= anyone in the UK who does not identify as White British

**BSL** = British Sign Language: The sign language used by Deaf people in the UK.

**Commissioning**  
= choosing someone to do a special piece of work

**D/deaf**  
= Deaf and uses sign language, or deaf - hard of hearing but has English as their first language and may lipread and/or use hearing aids

**EB** = Equalities Board

**Equalities Research Co-ordinators**  
= the AFA staff supporting the Equalities Board

**Manchester Deaf Centre**  
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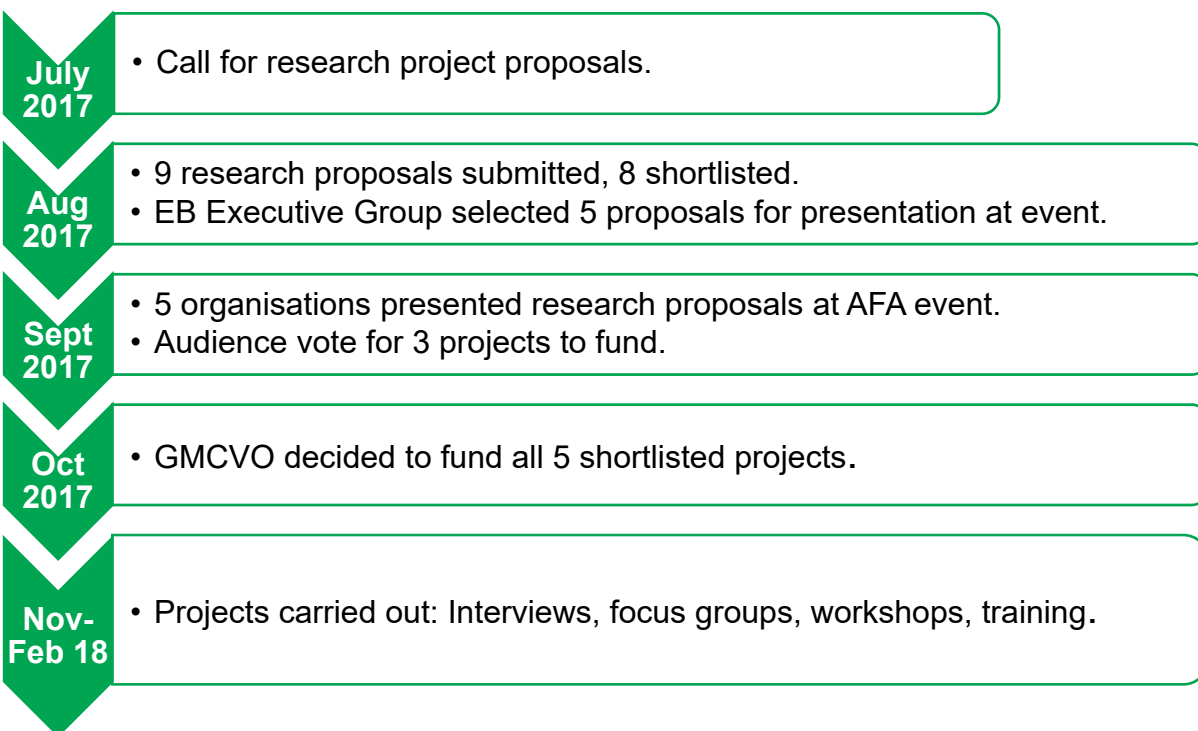
**LDL** = Local Delivery Area: the areas around Greater Manchester where the Ambition for Ageing community development projects are working

**marginalised**  
= not noticed by the majority, or treated as if they are not important by the majority

## Background to the research projects & timeline

In 2017 the Equalities Research Co-ordinators visited the LDLs and noticed that there were gaps in how well the projects were reaching people from Black and minority ethnic (BAME) and other very marginalised communities.

AFA gave £1,500 each for research by community-based organisations into issues that they wanted to understand better. The Equalities Board held a commissioning process to decide which research project ideas should get funding.



# “Ageing Deaf Access”

## Manchester Deaf Centre community research project

### What did Manchester Deaf Centre (MDC) want to find out?

Manchester Deaf Centre (MDC) carried out research to make visible the reality of Deaf people’s experiences of ageing, social isolation and loneliness, and their hopes for the future.

MDC also wanted to find out what Deaf people need in order “to feel independent, fulfilled and more included in society”.

**“Negotiating a world built for hearing people is not easy if you have reduced hearing, and you identify as part of a cultural minority.”**

### What was the context for this research?

Deaf and hard of hearing people who use British Sign Language (BSL) are a minority in the UK. They often feel isolated, because they do not speak English very well, or at all, and cannot take part in many of the things that other people do. Some Deaf people identify as part of a separate culture.

It is not easy for people with poor hearing to deal with “a world built for hearing people”. MDC note that people who culturally identify with a minority community you face many barriers both internally and in society to engaging with the majority hearing community. The researchers ensured Deaf people were involved BSL users in co-designing and carrying out the project, for example, advising on the wording of survey questions and giving 1 to 1 support for BSL users to complete the questionnaire.

### How did they do the research and what did they find out?

MDC held a focus group with deaf people to co-design the questionnaire and make sure it was accessible to BSL users. The survey was carried out with 96 people: 72 people filled in a hard copy of the questionnaire with help, and 24 people accessed it online.

The results of the survey showed a high level of separation, and risk of isolation for vulnerable Deaf older people:

- **74%** of survey respondents do not “involve themselves with their local hearing community” – when people do, it is via family or only if other Deaf people are involved
- **30%** are afraid of going out, especially at night – for a variety of reasons, including feeling unsafe, fear harassment and abuse
- **16%** do not travel around GM
- **60%** know other d/Deaf people who are lonely
- **45%** know about Deaf history – but **33%** don’t know about the history of Deaf culture.

The survey results also showed there is an urgent need for care and support services to become Deaf aware and Deaf-friendly:

- **56%** of survey respondents know of Deaf people living in residential homes where no staff have BSL training
- **96%** feel there should be Deaf awareness training in residential homes
- **85%** want dedicated residential home availability “tailored for specific cultural, linguistic and social needs of the Deaf community”

- **52%** don't see Age Concern / Age UK as places to get support; 56% said there was not enough BSL provision there; 36% don't feel they would be Deaf aware
- **62%** are confident they know where to get support – 48% get it from Deaf Club, 42% from friends or family - but **32%** don't know where to get support
- **74%** don't know where to get Dementia support
- **64%** don't know where to go for MH support

## Main conclusions

The Manchester Deaf Centre's main purpose in carrying out this research was to raise awareness of the reality of many older Deaf people's lives. The MDC's research results and report give a clear picture of the isolation of Deaf and hard of hearing people who speak BSL, because services, charities, and cultural activities are not aware of how to make their services accessible. The social isolation and loneliness that many Deaf people experience is easier for hearing people to understand when they are understood as speaking a different language – it would be like someone who speaks only English going to China for the rest of their life but not being able to speak Chinese, and no one speaking English to them.

**“The main purpose of this research was to raise awareness of the reality of many older Deaf people's lives. The results give a clear picture of the isolation that results when organisations are not aware of how to make their services accessible to BSL**

### What next?

Manchester Deaf Centre hope these research findings will be used by other organisations in the voluntary sector, and service providers, to raise awareness of the needs of older Deaf people for accessible and the specific support that should be available to them to prevent social isolation. One idea, for example, is to run Deaf Awareness Training, and they are talking to the Equality Board about this.

You can find out more about Manchester Deaf Centre at:

<http://www.manchesterdeafcentre.com/>

## Equalities Board next steps

### Sharing the research results

We aim to make the research results accessible to people who can use them to improve life for older people in their communities, and people who can use them to improve the work of Ambition for Ageing. All the full reports and accessible reports will be available to read on the Equalities Board website: <https://lgbt.foundation/ambition-for-ageing/publications>

### More community-based research

These projects showed that community-based research is an important way to find out about the needs of the most marginalised people. AFA will be funding more research like this later in 2018.