

Using Near Me to support mental health services for people who are deaf

The Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf People (SMHSDP) use Near Me to provide support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The SMHSDP supports people who are deaf and require mental health support. The service supports people who communicate using methods such as British Sign Language (BSL), lip reading, or by using deafblind manual.

In this case study, the SMHSDP share their success in installing and using Near Me to support people who access their service during the Covid-19 pandemic.



Barbara Brown, Senior Occupational Therapist, provides instructions on using Near Me using BSL

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“Using Near Me has been instrumental in allowing our service to operate during the Covid-19 outbreak”

Scottish Mental Health Service for Deaf People

Background



The SMHSDP provides a national service and works with local service providers to hold monthly clinics across Scotland. The service is hosted by NHS Lothian.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the SMHSDP has not been able to hold clinics or see their service users. Using the telephone is not possible for people who access their services because of their communication needs.

Approach



SMHSDP recognised that Near Me would be beneficial for people who access their service, and were put in touch with Healthcare Improvement Scotland to support their set up. Healthcare Improvement Scotland guided the team through the technical set up, training and process changes required to start using Near Me.

The service took the following steps to set up their Near Me service:

- The service notified service users of the new process, and shared the web link for appointments in letters.
- The team provided guidance for people who access their service about using Near Me on their [website](#). This included instructions in BSL, as well as screen captures alongside written guidance. They also shared their BSL instructions on their social media channels including [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
- The team worked with the Near Me team in NHS Lothian to set up their IT infrastructure. They arranged for a dedicated virtual waiting room to be set up. As the waiting room includes written messages, they have not had to adapt this for their service users. Support from NHS Lothian management was crucial to making connections with the Healthcare Improvement Scotland team and in setting up the Near Me infrastructure.
- The team completed [online training modules](#) to learn how to use the Near Me.

More information



Visit the [SMHSDP webpages](#) to find out more about their work.

Visit the [Near Me webpages](#) to find out more about Near Me. If you are a clinician interested in using Near Me, visit the [National Video Conferencing Service website](#) for more information.

Impact



- **Positively received by service users**
Feedback from people who access the service has been very positive.
- **Easy and effective service**
The service's four clinicians report that Near Me is easy to use, and has provided great clarity during the calls.
- **Ability to continue providing care while maintaining social distancing**
The service reports that Near Me has been instrumental in allowing their service to operate during the Covid-19 outbreak.
- **Reduced clinician travelling**
The team have been able to use Near Me at home during the pandemic to minimise their own travelling. Once the monthly clinics restart, the service plans to use Near Me to contact people who access the service in remote areas, or to link with consultants during the clinics.
- **More frequent calls with service users as needed**
Previously, people who accessed the service attended monthly appointments at their local clinic. Near Me has enabled the SMHSDP to offer calls more frequently if needed, which has been welcomed. SMHSDP plans to continue offering additional calls once the monthly clinics can restart.