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Scottish Elections
2021 Manifesto



Who are RNID?

RNID is the charity making life fully inclusive for deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus. Together, we campaign for an inclusive society. We connect people to practical advice and fund research to pioneer new treatments for hearing loss or tinnitus.

Why does this election matter to deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus?

In Scotland, one in five adults are deaf or have hearing loss – an average of nearly 13,400 adults in each Scottish Parliament constituency. With an ageing population, this is set to increase. In the UK, more than 40% of people over 50 years old are deaf or have hearing loss - rising to more than 70% of people over the age of 70.

We're calling on the next Scottish Government to take action and address this major public health issue.

This document outlines RNID in Scotland's current work and what we need from government and policy makers to make life fully inclusive for deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus in Scotland.

1 in 5

**adults are deaf or
have hearing loss**

What are our manifesto asks?

Support and Care

- Improve access to audiology services and ensure more people benefit from hearing aids.
- Ensure that any reform of health and social care meets the cultural needs of the Deaf community and offers services, equipment and support to those with hearing loss.
- Utilise new and emerging technology so audiology services meet the needs of people with hearing loss and are ready for the challenge of an ageing society.
- Introduce a National Tinnitus Standard, detailing the full range of information and support options available for people in Scotland who have tinnitus.

Employment

- Ensure all programmes aimed at helping disabled people into work, such as those within Fair Start Scotland Employment Programme, have specialist provision and are fully resourced to be accessible and supportive to deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus.
- Establish a clear strategy to support deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus to find and stay in work.
- Promote the Access to Work scheme to raise greater awareness amongst employers and employees of support available.

Information for All

- Ensure that deaf people and those with hearing loss get the support they need to communicate well when using health and social care services.
- Support to increase the number of appropriately trained and registered Language Service Professionals.
- Make inclusive communication a priority for all Scottish Government directorates and their related public bodies.
- Commitment that all future Scottish Government press conferences regarding public health issues will have a BSL interpreter present.

What will RNID be doing?

After the Scottish Parliament election, RNID will continue to campaign and challenge the Scottish Government to achieve an inclusive society. We won't stop until we see a world where deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus are fully included. Where everyone is treated with respect, dignity and understanding. Change needs to occur across society, but these are the three priority areas on which we want the next Scottish Government to show leadership.



Support and Care

What progress do we want to see by 2026?

People with hearing loss can access high quality health and social care services – utilising the latest technology to meet their needs.

What does the Scottish Government need to do?

- Improve access to audiology services and ensure more people benefit from hearing aids.
- Ensure that any reform of health and social care meets the cultural needs of the Deaf community and offers preventative services and equipment to those with hearing loss.
- Utilise new and emerging technology so audiology services meet the needs of people with hearing loss and are ready for the challenge of an ageing society.
- Introduce a National Tinnitus Standard, detailing the full range of information and support options available for people in Scotland who have tinnitus.

Why?

The Scottish Government must recognise and increase awareness of the growing prevalence of hearing loss – and the significant impact it has on people’s physical and mental health, social participation and quality of life.

On average, it takes ten years for people to seek support from a healthcare professional for their hearing loss – and only two thirds of those who could benefit from hearing aids have them.

If untreated, hearing loss affects the ability of people to communicate with others and can lead to social isolation. The effective treatment of hearing loss could prevent the onset of other conditions such as dementia and depression.

In Scotland, you have less opportunity to get your hearing tested, and access life-changing rehabilitation services on the high street and in your community, than if you have problems with your eyesight. This is despite the Scottish Government’s See Hear strategy highlighting the need for early diagnosis and intervention, provision of information and emotional support, and signposting at time of diagnosis.

New technology could allow people with hearing loss to access self-fitting hearing aids and undertake assessments remotely.

Our 2019 Tuning out Tinnitus report found that 47% of people with tinnitus in Scotland said their GP did not provide information about tinnitus, and 21% were not referred to any service. Introducing a National Tinnitus Standard would offer healthcare professionals, including GPs, clear direction on how best to support tinnitus patients.





Employment

What progress do we want to see by 2026?

Deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus have equal opportunities in the workplace so that they can fulfil their potential.

What does the Scottish Government need to do?

- Ensure all programmes aimed at helping disabled people into work, such as those within Fair Start Scotland Employment Programme, have specialist provision and are fully resourced to be accessible and supportive to deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus.
- Establish a clear strategy to support deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus to find and stay in work.
- Promote the Access to Work scheme to raise greater awareness amongst employers and employees of support available.

Why?

Being deaf and having hearing loss needn't be barriers to people applying for and excelling in most jobs. But when employers lack understanding about hearing loss and don't offer support, employees get left out, and left behind.

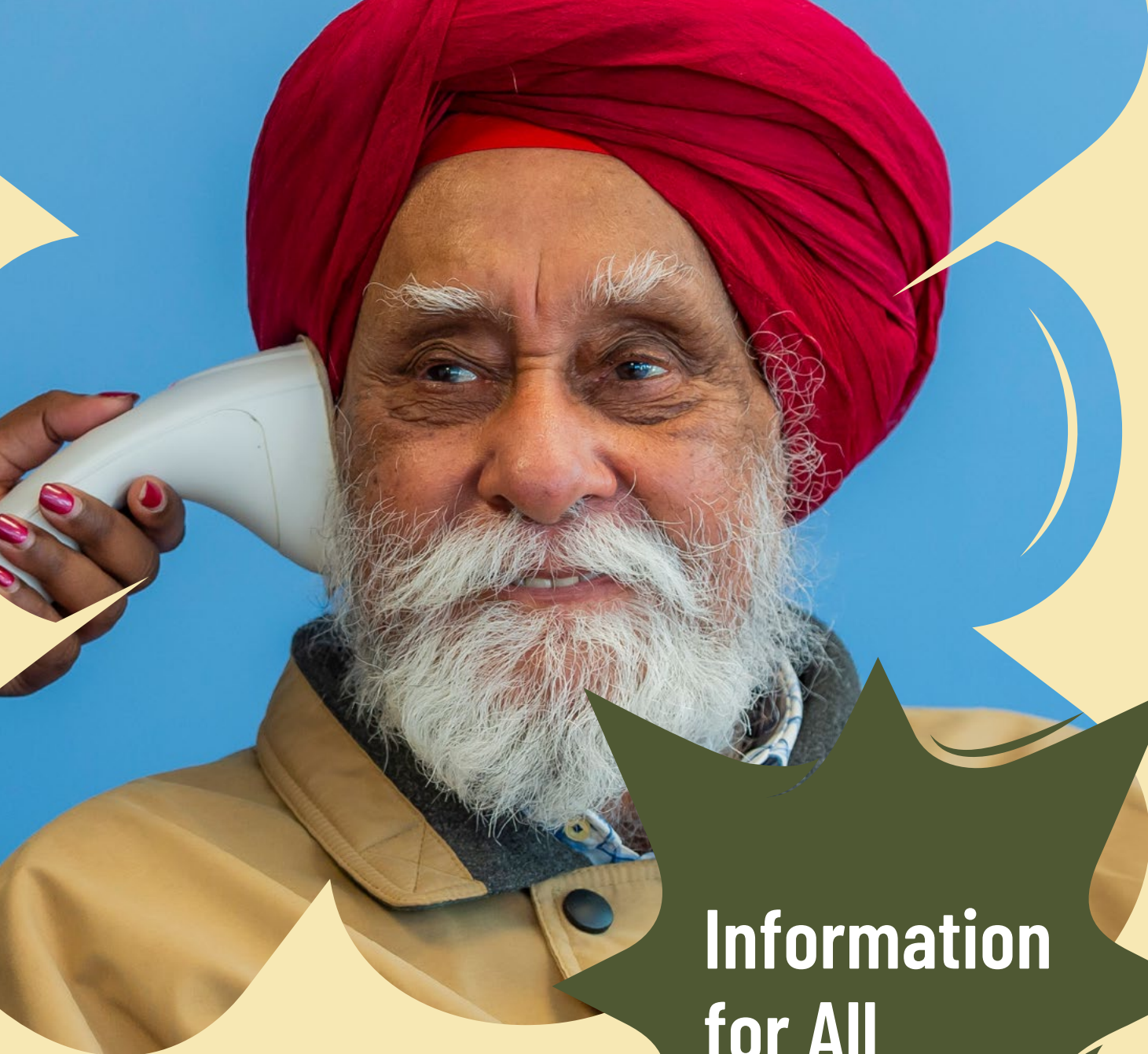
The Scottish Government's 'A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People' Employment Action Plan seeks to half the difference between the employment rates of disabled people and non-disabled people. We urge the Scottish Government to fully resource this work and ensure all projects are fully accessible to deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus.

RNID's 2019 Working for Change survey found that just over two-fifths (42%) of people who took the survey said they have not tried to seek support for their hearing loss or deafness at work. The most common reasons for not seeking support are that people aren't aware that support is available, or they don't know where to look for support.

In our YouGov poll of business leaders, 35% said that they would not be confident communicating with a staff member with hearing loss. Under the Equality Act 2010, employers have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' for people who have hearing loss, so that they're not put at a 'substantial disadvantage' in work compared with people who do not have hearing loss. A clear strategy to support deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus to find and stay in work is needed in Scotland.

Our YouGov poll of business leaders also found that 63% of business leaders had not heard of the Access to Work scheme. The UK Government's Access to Work scheme provides a grant to pay for practical support and specialist equipment in the workplace for people who have a disability or health condition. The Scottish Government must widely promote the UK Government's Access to Work scheme to employers, to raise greater awareness of the support available.





Information for All

What progress do we want to see by 2026?

A Scotland where information is accessible for all deaf people and those with hearing loss, and where everyday life is BSL accessible.

What does the Scottish Government need to do?

- Ensure that deaf people and those with hearing loss get the support they need to communicate well when using health and social care services.
- Support to increase the number of appropriately trained and registered Language Service Professionals.
- Make inclusive communication a priority for all Scottish Government directorates and their related public bodies.
- Commit to providing a BSL interpreter for all future Scottish Government press conferences regarding public health issues.

Why?

Many deaf people and those with hearing loss who use RNID's services in Scotland have told us their communication needs are not being met. Our 2018 Equal Treatment report showed that only half of our survey respondents said their hospital and GP surgery have their communication needs in their patient records, and only one in five respondents said hearing loops were available at health service receptions.

Patients and service users should get the support they need to communicate well when using health and social care services. This should include in patient records with preferred individual communication methods and any required communication support, such as a qualified British Sign Language interpreter or an electronic notetaker, that needs to be booked for people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

The BSL National Plan was a definitive starting point in removing the communication barriers which affect the everyday lives of people who are deaf in Scotland and ensure that vital services become fully accessible for BSL users. According to the 2011 Census, 13,000 people across Scotland use BSL at home; but as of November 2020, there were only 66 BSL interpreters and 13 trainees registered with the National Registers of Communication Professionals. One of the seventy actions from the BSL National Plan was that by 2020, Scottish Ministers would 'consider what further work is needed to ensure that a strong and skilled pool of BSL/English interpreters are working efficiently across Scotland'. We understand that the Scottish Government's British Sign Language Progress Report, due in October 2020, has been delayed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we await the publication of the report with interest.

Following our social media campaign in March 2020 asking for a commitment to have a BSL interpreter present at all Scottish Government COVID-19 press conferences, an interpreter has been present at each press conference since 16th March 2020.

People that use BSL as their first or preferred language should never have to learn public health information through second-hand sources. Prioritising inclusive communication and committing to having a BSL interpreter present for all future press conferences regarding public health issues will help make information accessible for all in Scotland.

How can you help?

Are you a candidate in the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections?

- **Tag @RNID on Twitter** and use the hashtag **#RNID2021SP** to show your support for RNID's manifesto asks.
- Contact RNID in Scotland at **campaigns.scotland@rnid.org.uk** to find out more about how to make life fully inclusive for deaf people and those with hearing loss and tinnitus.

Are you an RNID supporter?

- Contact your constituency and regional list Scottish Parliament candidates and ask them to support our manifesto.
- The biggest campaigning asset that RNID has is the passion and experience of our supporters. Our campaigns are defined by your experiences and your desire to tear-down the most frustrating barriers that society puts in your way. We work with our campaigns network to research the most important subjects for us to campaign on, define the objectives we work towards and then bring forward the testimony of lived experience through people powered campaign actions.

Join our campaigns network today at:
**[www.rnid.org.uk/get-involved/
campaign-with-us](http://www.rnid.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us)**



On average, it takes

10 years

for people to seek support from a healthcare professional for their hearing loss

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Together, we campaign for an inclusive society. We connect people to practical advice and fund research to pioneer new treatments for hearing loss or tinnitus.

We rely on donations to continue our vital work.

Contact our free, confidential and impartial Information Line.



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**RNID is the trading name of
The Royal National Institute for Deaf People.**
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