

SENEDD ELECTION 2021 MANIFESTO

#RNID2021WS

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Who are RNID?

RNID is the charity working to make 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.

RNID was previously known as Action on Hearing Loss.



1 in 5
adults are deaf or
have hearing loss

Why does this election matter to people with hearing loss?

In Wales, 1 in 5 of the population are deaf or have hearing loss – that's around 600,000 people - an average of more than 15,000 adults in each Senedd constituency and more than 120,000 adults in each of the electoral regions. With an ageing population, this is set to increase as approximately 70% of people aged over 70 have hearing loss.

Over the last 12-months, during the global pandemic, never before have the inequalities in society been highlighted so starkly across Wales for those who are deaf or have hearing loss. The mandatory wearing of face coverings has resulted in far too many deaf people feeling isolated and cut off from the outside world and life itself, as they rely on facial expressions and lipreading to communicate.

What we want!

We're calling for the next Welsh Government to take action to address this major public health and societal issue. Action is vital because:

One in four people of working age with hearing loss are out of employment!

33% of those individuals who could benefit from hearing aids do not have them!

Hearing loss is the largest modifiable risk factor for dementia!

600,000

people in Wales are deaf or have hearing loss

This document outlines the current work of RNID in Wales 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 Wales.

What will RNID be doing in Wales?

RNID campaigns for an inclusive society here in Wales and across the rest of the UK. We won't stop until we see a world where deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus are fully included and where everyone is treated with respect, dignity and understanding.

After the Welsh Senedd election, RNID will continue to campaign and challenge the next Welsh Government to remove the barriers society places in front of people with hearing loss.

We welcome the recent debate in the Senedd that was passed, proposing that the Welsh Parliament “notes” a proposal for a Bill that would make provision to encourage the use of British Sign Language (BSL) in Wales, to improve access to services and education in BSL.

This is a significant step in the journey towards a BSL Bill and we will work closely with our stakeholders and partners to ensure any BSL legislation contains tangible improvements in the lives of deaf BSL users in Wales. We will also campaign to address the needs of the wider hearing loss community who rely on alternative forms of communication support.

Change needs to occur across society in Wales and this requires strong support and a firm commitment from the next Welsh Government. We have identified three priority areas on which we want them and the Senedd to show leadership.

What are our three key areas?

- Employment
- Health and Social Care
- Improve access to services

Our Commitment to the next Welsh Government and Senedd

Across Wales, RNID already works in close collaboration with partners from the public, private and third sectors.

We are fully committed to working with and offering support and advice to the incoming new Welsh Government to enhance the lives of those who are deaf or have hearing loss and support the development of policies and strategies to give those people in our Welsh communities equal life chances and opportunities as their peers, throughout their lives.

Karen Robson

Karen Robson, RNID Director, Wales

**Committed to
working with
the next Welsh
Government**

What progress do we want to see by 2026?

People with deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss have equal opportunities in the workplace so that they can fulfil their potential.



Employment

What does the next Welsh Government need to do?

1.

Establish a clear strategy to support people who are deaf or have hearing loss into work. RNID's JobSense operation, funded by the Welsh Government and European Social Funds until 2022, is showing that people with a sensory loss can be successfully supported into work with appropriate pre-employment support from specialised advisors.

2.

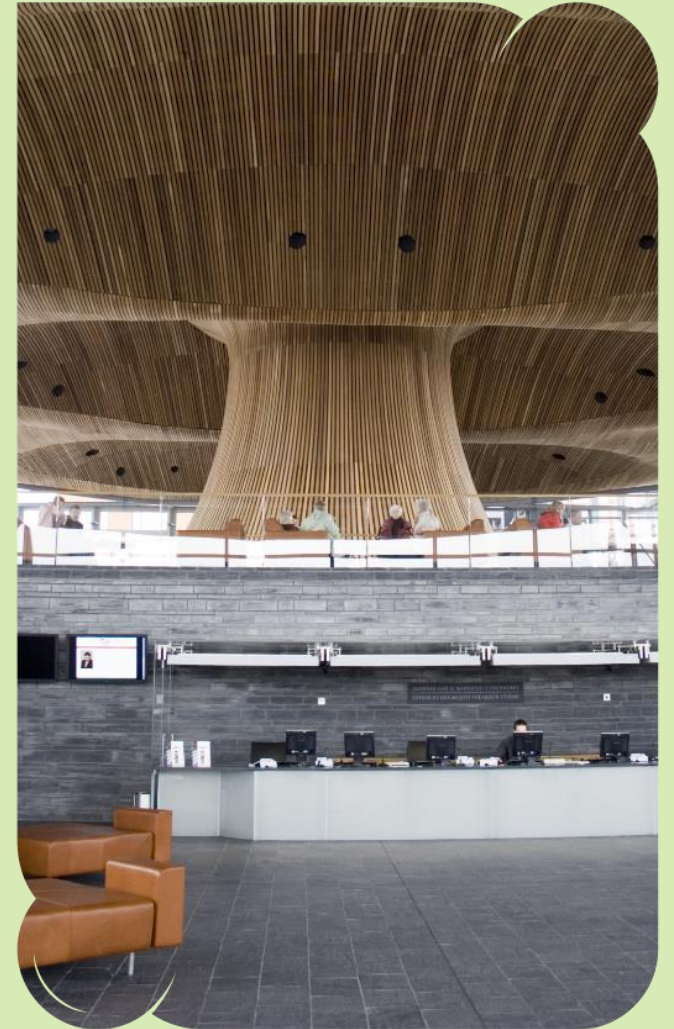
Ensure all other programmes aimed at helping disabled people into work, such as those provided by the Welsh Government Employability Plan 2018 and Covid recovery plans, are fully accessible to people who are deaf and have hearing loss.

3.

Promote the Access to Work and In-Work Support schemes to raise greater awareness of support available to employers and employees and by doing so, to increase the number of employers who create inclusive and supportive workplaces for disabled people.

Why?

- There are approximately 200,000 working-age people in Wales with some level of hearing loss – that's around 14 in every 100 employees.
- One in four people of working age with hearing loss are out of employment who would otherwise be contributing to Wales' GDP.
- People with hearing loss earn more than £2,000 less than individuals without health conditions – even when accounting for age and education.
- In our YouGov poll of business leaders, 35% said they would not be confident communicating with a staff member with hearing loss.
- The awareness of Access to Work amongst both people who are deaf/have hearing loss and employers remains low. 57% of business leaders agreed that there is a lack of support and advice available about employing someone with a hearing loss and two thirds surveyed had not heard of Access to Work.
- Half of those people with hearing loss, who received Access to Work, said that the support did not meet at least some of their needs.



Research conducted for our Working for Change report (2018) tells us that:

People of working age who are deaf or have hearing loss face major barriers to fulfilling their potential at work and that the biggest barrier they face in the workplace is the attitude of employers.

Employees who are unsupported to manage their hearing loss in the workplace have fewer opportunities for promotion and are more likely to retire early due to the difficulties they face at work.

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.



**Health &
Social Care**

What does the next Welsh Government need to do?

Ensure the widest possible compliance with the standards specified in The Framework of Action for Wales, 2017-2020 (Integrated framework of care and support for deaf people and those with hearing loss), published May 2017.

So that:

- People in care homes or residential homes should not wait longer for hearing aid maintenance and repairs than anyone else.
- People who are deaf or have hearing loss are able to access an Advanced Audiology practitioner service in primary care for their first point of contact in their hearing loss journey.
- Health Boards facilitate delivery of local ear wax management as recommended by the Welsh Government.

Also to:

- Ascertain the extent to which national deaf/hearing loss awareness training, including dual sensory impairment and links between hearing loss and mental health, are included within core training modules, for all health and social care professionals and including a particular emphasis on education departments, care homes, nursing homes and other residential care settings.
- Work with local authorities and the third sector to identify and support people living in care homes, nursing homes and other residential care so that their hearing needs are identified and met consistently though adequate provision of in-house care and referrals.

What does the next Welsh Government need to do?

The Welsh Government should also invest in new technologies to facilitate remote support and improve access to Audiology provision.

- Ensure the compliance with the Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017, as amended in Version 2 – April 2019, pursuant to The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

So that:

- Individuals are supported to identify and manage sensory loss appropriately.
- Where appropriate, service providers ensure individuals receive relevant checks and provide support to access ongoing reviews.
- Where individuals have been provided with aids, such as hearing aids and glasses, staff understand their importance and are proactive in supporting individuals to use them.
- Service providers ensure that any aids are appropriately maintained so they may be used effectively.
- Service providers consider the potential impact on individuals with sensory impairment when planning the environment, for example, the effects of noise in communal areas on individuals who have a hearing loss.

Why?

- On average, it takes ten years for people to seek help with their hearing loss.
- Only two thirds of those who could benefit from hearing aids have them.
- Hearing issues account for the lowest spend across all healthcare categories (0.6% and £11.57 per head) and private treatment is often sought to address, for example ear wax management, as a consequence of a lack of local, accessible services.
- The effective treatment of hearing loss could prevent the onset of other conditions, such as dementia and depression and reduce social isolation and loneliness.
- New technology could allow people with hearing loss to access remote support and improved connectivity with the world around them.
- 47% of people with tinnitus say their GP does not provide information about tinnitus, and 21% were not referred to any service.
- Hearing aids are considered by NICE to be a clinically and cost effective intervention and cost under £380 over a three year pathway.

What progress do we want to see by 2026?

People with hearing loss don't face constant barriers accessing everyday goods and services and society demonstrates increased deaf awareness.

**Access to
everyday
goods and
services**



What does the next Welsh Government need to do?

- Ensure that patients and service users do get the support they need to communicate well when using health and social care services, as stated by the Welsh Government's The Framework of Action for Wales, 2017-2020.
- Require inclusion in patient records preferred individual communication methods and any required communication support (e.g. a qualified British Sign Language interpreter or an electronic note taker) to ensure accessible communication. If required, establish a digital strategy to ensure this can take place consistently and reliably across Wales.

- Ensure that Welsh Government guidance promotes best practice regarding accessible communication and encourages engagement by the public, employers, retailers and public services.
- Commit to continue to provide a BSL interpreter for all future/post-Covid Welsh Government press conferences.



Why?

- 60% of people who are deaf or have hearing loss do not always get all the information they need, for example, at GP appointments.
- During the pandemic this has become particularly acute given the mandatory wearing of face masks and coverings impeding communication and people who are deaf or have hearing loss have felt isolated and anxious and less independent.



Are you a candidate in the 2021 Senedd elections?

Tag @RNID on Twitter and use the hashtag **#RNID2021WS** to show your support for RNID's manifesto asks.

Contact RNID in Wales at campaigns.wales@rnid.org.uk to find out more about how to make life fully inclusive for deaf people and those with hearing loss and tinnitus.

- 📞 029 2033 3034
- ✉️ wales@rnid.org.uk
- 🌐 www.rnid.org.uk/wales
- 📍 Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW



Are you an RNID supporter?

Contact your constituency and regional list candidates and ask them to support our manifesto. The biggest campaigning asset we have is the passion and experience of our supporters.

We work with our campaigns network to research the most important subjects for us to campaign on, define our objectives and then bring forward the testimony of lived experience through people powered campaign actions.

RNID is the trading name of

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People.

A registered charity in England and Wales (207720) and Scotland (SC038926). A211047/0221

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