

Families Failed by Lothian Audiology Action Group (FLAAG)

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Following the catastrophic failings in NHS Lothian we welcome this review. The independent review to the Scottish Government into audiology services in Scotland sets out in grim detail how audiology services are under-resourced, badly trained, and unaccountable.

Our action group, FLAAG, supports 100 parents of late diagnosed deaf children. But there are many more in West Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian, Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders we have not yet reached.

This report is focused on the failings of the whole audiology system in Scotland. It shows:

- The service is working at 65% of the staffing that is needed
- There is a chronic shortage of audiologists in Scotland. It is a forgotten service with no clear management in place nationally or locally.
- Scotland has no current undergraduate audiology course so there is not enough supply
- There is no monitoring yet of the ability to carry out important technical hearing tests on babies and young children
- There are not yet performance targets for key services such as testing of young children

FLAAG is pleased to see that the whole system will receive an overhaul. The government need to prioritise audiology because the consequences for deaf children of department failure is devastating to children's future life chances.

FLAAG would like to see further improvements, not mentioned in this report:

- A comprehensive assessment of need for all affected children across Scotland.
- Include the viewpoints of parents of deaf children and deaf people in any overhaul of the audiology system
- Check the complaints procedures, not mentioned in this report but one reason why the terrible situation was hidden for so long in NHS Lothian. Complaints did not leave the department.
- Make audiology an attractive occupation to fill vacancies and cut waiting times
- Include training in understanding the diversity of families and how to follow up every family whose child does not attend appointments.
- Check standards in joint working such as listening more to nursery teachers, speech therapists, teachers, doctors who refer and particularly listen more to parents.
- Make sure audiologists learn more about the importance of what they do by receiving further training in understanding language development.

Our children are still waiting for appropriate support. There have been no more teachers of deaf children, and no more British Sign Language teachers who know how to work with families. We are fundraising ourselves because language development is urgent. Families have missed out on years of contact with specialists because of audiology failings.

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Note to editors: FLAAG does not have the capacity to supply families with affected children for quotes and pictures. This media view of our activities takes its toll and exhausts us. We are focusing on supporting the families in our group and finding more.