

Adult Social Care in Halton – Engaging with individuals or groups that are seldom heard, or ‘harder to reach’. **Information for ASC STAFF**

Defining ‘seldom heard’

The term 'seldom-heard groups' refers to under-represented people who use, or might potentially use, health or social services and who are less likely to be heard by these service professionals and decision-makers. *These groups used to be described as hard to reach – suggesting that there is something that prevents their engagement with services.*ⁱ

In adult social care, examples of seldom heard groups could include;


- Particular ethnic minority groups
- Carers
- People with disabilities
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people
- Refugees/asylum seekers
- People who are homeless
- Young people in transition from Children’s services into Adult services
- People with language barriers

These people may have particular needs when it comes to participating.


Additional barriers to engaging with adult social care (ASC) services may include economic deprivation, physical accessibility, lack of access to transport, cultural and social isolation, all of which can contribute to health and social care inequalities.


¹ [20200727 How to coproduce with seldom heard groups.pdf](#)


How HBC Adult Social Care in Halton is working to understand the needs of seldom heard groups


 **Understanding our local demographics** –Public Health profiles and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment ([JSNA](#)) consider the projected needs of various cohorts, including some who might be considered as seldom heard, in order to shape service delivery to meet the diverse needs of our communities. Other intelligence sources used to help understand our local demographics, and those most at risk of being seldom heard, include:


- [Wider Determinants of Health Summary](#)
- [Halton Profile](#)
- [Halton Health Profile](#)
- [Halton Area Profiles and Statistics](#)

 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** – ASC has developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan that considers actions that are required to improve EDI experiences within the ASC workforce and people who use our services, aligned to the corporate EDI vision.


 **Accessible information** – All our [ASC](#) printed/web information, policies and strategies can be provided in alternative formats and languages, including easy read, on request. Translation services are available on request.


 **Advocacy** - [Healthwatch Halton Advocacy Hub](#) offers free, confidential and independent advocacy support to Halton residents who need help to have their voice heard in relation to health and social care needs.


 **Corporate Values Framework** - We take steps to understand the needs of our customers, colleagues and stakeholders, ensuring those needs are reflected in how we deliver our services. We value, support and promote diversity and inclusivity in all that we do, treating everyone with dignity and respect.

 **Policy and strategy** – It is standard for all new and reviewed ASC policies and strategies to have an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken, which will consider the potential impacts of the policy/strategy against protected characteristics, along with some additional locally identified cohorts, and identify any mitigating actions, where required.

The [Health & Well-Being Board](#) brings together key leaders from the health and social care system to work in partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population and reduce health inequalities.

 **Co-production** - Co-production allows seldom heard groups to explore issues on their terms - with us facilitating, rather than driving, the direction of the work. Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) was approached to support Halton's place-based partnership, One Halton, to further develop and embed approaches to coproduction with people with lived experience of health and social care services. A co-designed [Co-production Charter was developed and published in 2024](#). This is organised to represent a shared definition for co-production across One Halton, how access and diversity will be thought about and addressed, what meetings could look like, the values and behaviours that people can expect to drive good co-production, rewarding people for their time and a checklist for evaluating co-production.

 **Comms & Engagement Framework** – The framework outlines how ASC aims to engage with people who use services and the general public, including the use of in person, [social media and web opportunities](#), so that people can contribute their voice to service development and provide feedback.

 **Building knowledge** – Through channels such as Service Development Days, team meetings, directorate info bulletins and training, staff have access to information from specialist services and the Vol.&Com. sector support for seldom heard groups to increase their understanding of needs and experiences.

How we engage with seldom heard groups

Refugees – A resettlement officer works intensely with arrivals for up to three years to support access to services, enable people to navigate for themselves and support positive integration. A Refugees & Asylum Multi Agency Forum co-ordinates support with 3rd sector partners, in particular faith organisations, key to supporting those with no recourse to public funds. Halton Borough Council has information sharing protocols with the Home Office and regional migration partnership. HBC Lead: patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk

Rough Sleepers – The HBC commissioned Outreach Team – [Whitechapel](#), proactively supports rough sleepers in helping them off the streets, providing advice and assistance, securing temporary accommodation and secure move on accommodation. There are a number of drop-in advice sessions across the Borough for rough sleepers to get support with any issues they may have, such as drug/alcohol abuse, mental wellbeing etc. Other opportunities to engage with rough sleepers in Halton include; Health Nurse - Health awareness and prescribing medication, Health Bus - Out of hours health service and support and Hostel providers - Designated key workers who advocate on clients behalf. HBC Lead: patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk

LGBTQ+ and HIV+ - [Pride in Halton CIC](#) and [Northwest HIV Support](#) - A community interest company that celebrates and supports the LGBTQ+ community in Halton through a range of activities, information and support opportunities.

Sensory Impairment - [Integrated Sensory Support Service](#) - Commissioned Service for the provision of information, support/equipment for people with sensory impairment. HBC Lead: helen.moir@halton.gov.uk

Translation and alternative formats – [Interpretation and translation services](#) for use by HBC staff. See [HBC Comms Guide](#) for info about providing information in alternative formats.

Veterans - Halton Borough Council and the Armed Forces community are working together through the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) to:

- 1) Encourage support for the Armed Forces community working and residing in Runcorn & Widnes.
- 2) Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces community.
- 3) Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life.
- 4) Encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community.

HBC Lead: jim.chong@halton.gov.uk

Gypsy Travellers - A traveller Liaison Officer is situated at Riverview residential site and provides support, advice, and assistance for travellers within the Borough. Traveller Wardens - There are two commissioned wardens who manage the three local authority owned sites within Halton, who provide advice, assistance, and advocacy for travellers within the Borough. There are also a number of drop-in advice sessions held at the Riverview site, for travellers to get advice on health, education etc. HBC Lead: patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk

Older People - [Alzheimer's Society](#) – Commissioned service that provides advice and support to people living with dementia, and their families. [Age UK](#) commissioned Wellbeing and Engagement Service to reduce social isolation. HBC Lead: damian.nolan@halton.gov.uk

Learning Disability and/or Autism - [Halton Speak Out](#) – Commissioned Self-Advocacy Support Services for Adults with Learning Disability and/or Autism. HBC Lead: damian.nolan@halton.gov.uk

Young people (transition) - Our dedicated team is committed to supporting children and young people with moderate/severe learning disabilities and/or physical/sensory disabilities through their journey from Children and Family Services to Adult Social Care to ensure a smooth transition and personalised support. HBC Lead: debbie.o'connor@halton.gov.uk

Carers - [Halton Carers Centre](#) ICB contract for carer information, advice, support. HBC Lead: debbie.o'connor@halton.gov.uk

