





Resident Feedback Report - Sensory Support Services

Contents

Background	2
What we did	2
Survey responses	3
Equality Monitoring Information (About You) Section	10
Summary	10
Next Steps	11
Appendix 1: Sensory Support Services Survey	12
Appendix 2: List of organisations	17

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Background

City of York Council (CYC) has a statutory duty to provide sensory support services for its residents under the Care Act 2014. CYC currently funds The Wilberforce Trust (YorSensory) to provide these services. The YorSensory service provides a wide range of support for adult customers with sight and / or hearing loss. This includes putting people in contact with other specialist services.

As the current contract ends in September 2024, we conducted a survey so we could hear from people who use sensory support services, and those who might need to in the future (and their families and carers). We hoped this would give us a better understanding of what sensory support people need and what needs to improve. The survey was open for 10 weeks from 1 November 2023 to 8 January 2024.

This report summarises the outcome of the survey. The feedback will help us shape the future of the sensory service(s) we commission.

What we did

A copy of the survey can be seen in Appendix 1 of this document.

We met with a task and finish group on 5 October 2023 to review the survey questions and discuss the communication and engagement plan. The group included people with lived experience of sensory loss and other stakeholders, including representatives from The Wilberforce Trust (YorSensory), MySight, York Older People's Assembly and North Yorkshire Sight Loss Council.

The key messages were that the survey should focus less on services funded by the council and more on understanding what people with sensory loss need locally, and how they can access services. And that it was important to promote the survey widely and make it accessible.

We offered different ways to complete the survey, including online, by email (with help to access a computer if needed), by hand, BSL video relay service, and help to complete over the phone. We also provided the survey in alternative formats, including standard and large print electronic and paper copies, braille, Easy Read, British Sign Language (BSL) and audio.

We promoted the survey through the council's website and internal and external newsletters. We asked partner organisations and service providers to help us reach more people, including those supporting people with learning disabilities (who are more likely to experience

sensory loss). Posters were put up in local libraries and we also sent posters to local opticians and hearing centres.

Paper copies were posted to more than 1,000 residents known to have sensory loss, and we tried to contact over 100 people by phone to support people to complete the survey, which included the use of a translator.

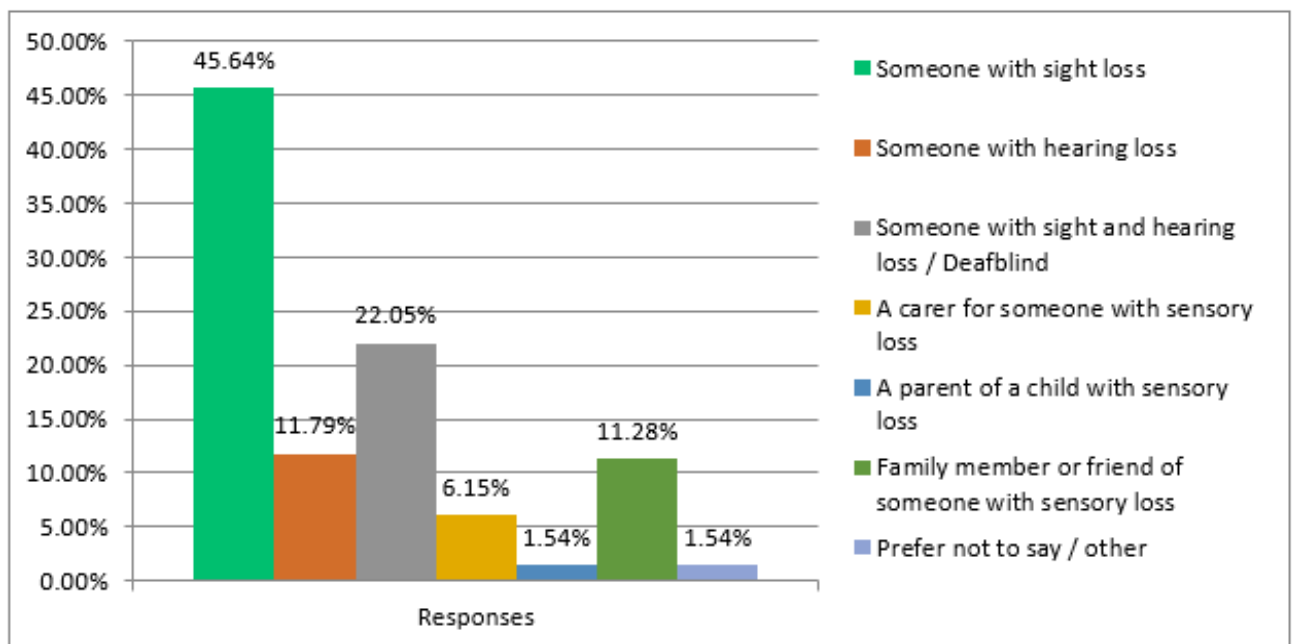
Survey responses

253 people started the survey. The highest number of responses to a single question was 195.

Question 1: How would you describe yourself?

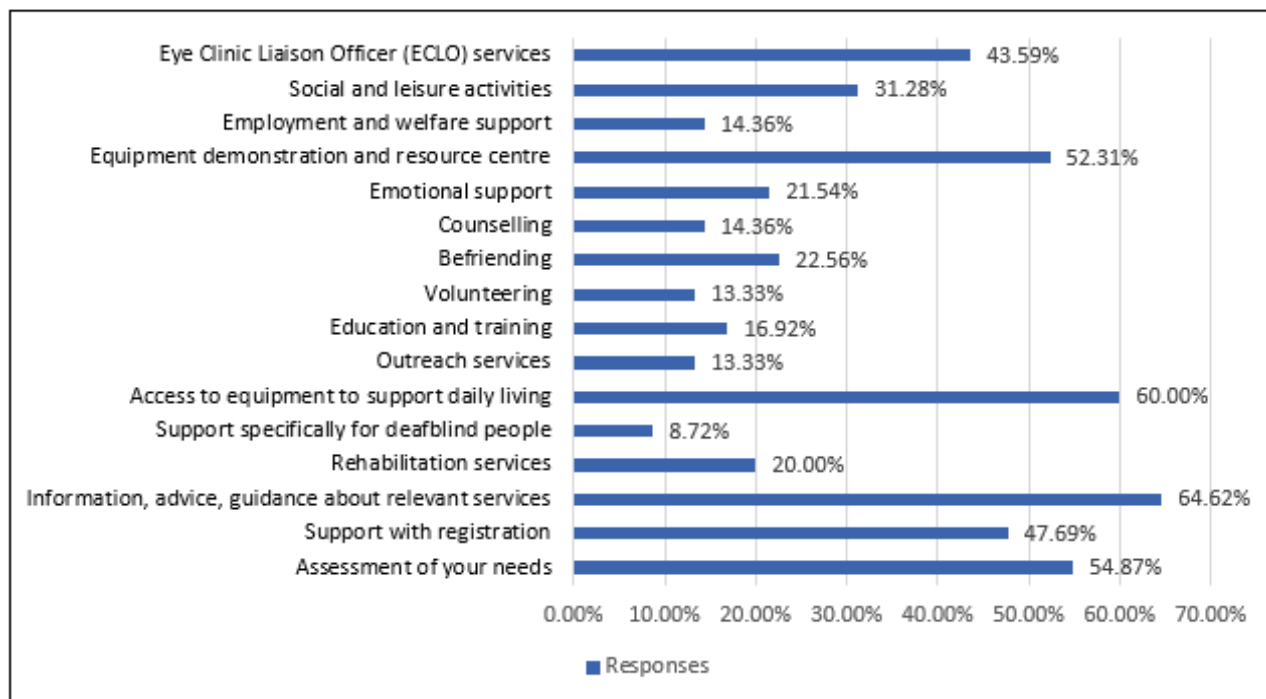
Most responses (46%) were from people with sight loss. 22% described themselves as being deafblind or having sight and hearing loss, and 12% with hearing loss. We also heard from a small number of carers and family members of people with sensory loss.

Figure 1: How would you describe yourself?



Question 2a: Have you (or the person you support) received any of the following support? Which organisation / service provided the support?

Figure 2: Type of support



175 people responded to this question and the responses give a clear indication of the types of support that are widely accessed.

The support received the most was information, advice, and guidance about relevant services, followed by access to equipment to support daily living, and then assessment of needs.

Over half of the respondents had used an equipment demonstration and resource centre and just under half had received support with registration, and support from an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO).

Over 50 different organisations had provided support to people with sensory loss (confirmed by responses to questions 2a, 2b and 3). People also received support through various NHS and council services. A small number of respondents had also received support through the fire service and DWP / Access to Work.

We have included the full list of organisations in Appendix 2.

In response to questions 2a and 2b, the organisations people mentioned the most (according to how people described themselves) were:

Someone with hearing loss

- YorSensory / Wilberforce Trust

- NHS / hospital services
- Deaf Café
- Council services

Someone with sight loss

- MySight
- Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO)
- YorSensory / Wilberforce Trust

Someone with sight and hearing loss

- MySight
- Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO)
- YorSensory / Wilberforce Trust

Question 2b: Please specify any other sensory loss support you've received along with the organisation or service (if known) that provided it.

The other types of support people had used the most were:

1. Audio / talking books
2. Home assessment / alterations
3. Benefits information / advice
4. Guide dog services

Question 3: Please list the 3 types of sensory service support that help you (or the person you support) the most.

This was a free text question and 131 people told us the types of sensory support service that had helped them the most. These came out on top:

1. Equipment / tech for daily living or work. One person said, "The equipment my aunt tried out kept her in touch with life for years."
2. Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO)
3. Information / advice / guidance
4. Social / leisure activities
5. Audio / talking books
6. Open / ongoing access to support
7. Befriending
8. Training (mobility / use of tech or equipment etc.)
9. Home visit / outreach and Assessment of needs

Question 4: Thinking about your sensory loss, what is the one thing that would improve your life the most?

This was a free text question so that people could tell us what would help them live well with sensory loss. There were 156 responses.

Not surprisingly, many people just wanted to have their sight and / or hearing back or improve it.

These were the most common themes, and some of the suggestions:

Access to information and communication

- Better access to interpreter services, staff trained in British Sign Language (BSL) for face-to-face organisations, like the council, and free sign language tuition for families.
- Not having everything online – call people, provide phone numbers, offer manual systems.
- Provide alternative and appropriate formats to meet needs (large print, audio, BSL etc.). One person said, “Human voice should be included as an accessible format.”

Access to public spaces and services

- Better access into buildings.
- Improved pavements and roads, and better lighting.
- Less street furniture / clutter.
- More hearing loops at venues, better acoustics, more papered walls.
- More audio when out and about, public announcements should be in men’s voices because deaf people lose higher sounds first.
- Clearer notices / signs with better positioning.
- People who work in York establishments being more open to the needs of people with sensory loss.

Assistive technology and equipment

- Technology that is simple to operate and easier to reset when it goes wrong.
- Help to access the right technology / equipment and support with using it.
- Simple descriptions of innovations.
- Technology that takes into consideration old age and hearing loss.
- Voice controlled equipment.
- Better quality equipment, especially hearing aids.

Transport

- A transport service to get to appointments.
- More accessible and affordable transport.
- Improved transport links.
- Being able to contact transport services (buses, taxis etc.).
- Talking bus stops.

Although not specifically related to sensory loss, one person reported that it was almost impossible to get a taxi if you are in an electric wheelchair.

Improved awareness and understanding of sensory loss

- Greater population awareness of hidden disabilities.
- More deaf awareness and understanding, and better campaigns. One person shared that, “people rarely understand the impact and have too high expectations on what a hearing aid actually does.”
- More support and recognition in workplaces.
- Sympathetic understanding by public bodies.
- Businesses and services to be aware of what would help and more training.

Help getting out and about

People shared that they wanted to get out more, and that they needed someone to accompany them (particularly in winter when it is darker).

“I’m struggling to go anywhere after dark, which includes coming home from work. I fell over today because of uneven pavements in the city centre. I need help getting about outside my own home.”

Other common themes were around access to healthcare and appointments, help with mobility and independence, having the opportunity to socialise, and emotional support and befriending.

A few people wanted an accessible hub that provides a range of services in one place.

And others wanted simpler processes, and more linked up systems for applying for benefits, council tax discounts, blue badge etc. One person told us that, “having to do this every few years and provide evidence is just a nightmare and unnecessary for something that is clearly not going to get better.”

Question 4(b) How would this help you (or the person you support)?

There were 135 responses to this free text question. Below are some of the main themes, and some of the comments people made:

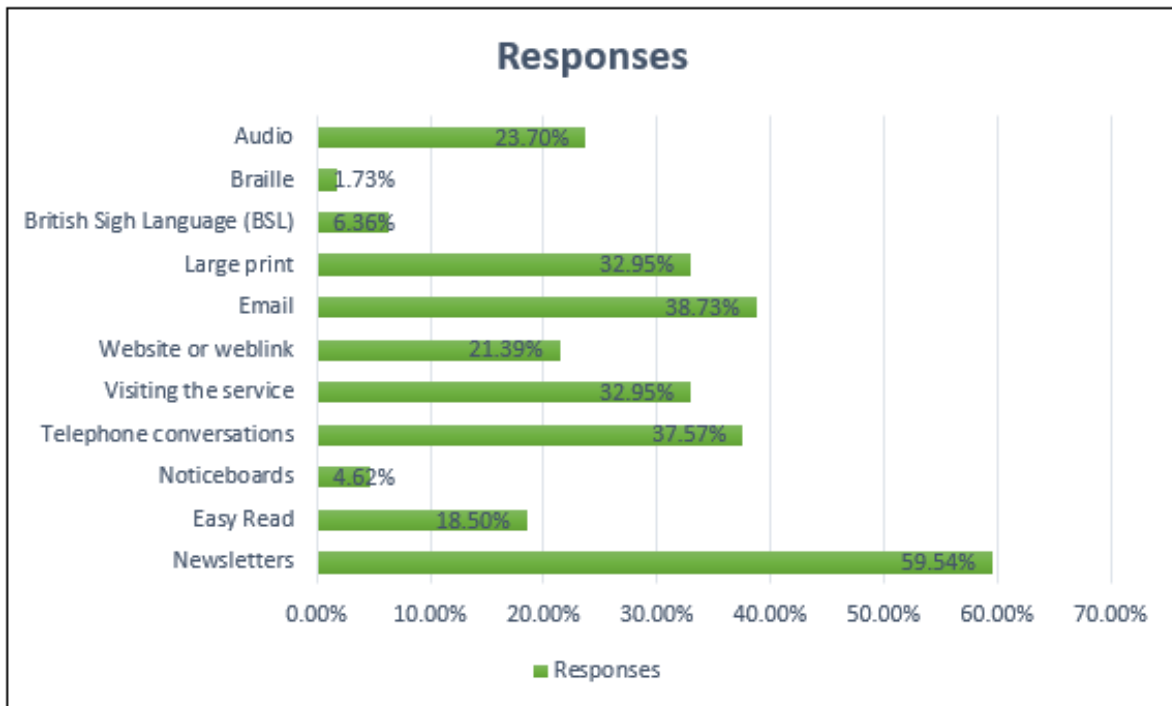
- **Being independent** - “Give me more freedom and independence.” “I would be less reliant on others when shopping / taking medication.” “My wife struggles with her mental health and the changes to her sight. She is scared about how she will cope if I am not around to help her. She relies on me for a lot of her care needs.” “Make life simpler, less frustrating.”
- **Staying mobile and getting out** - “it’s a necessity to get out.” “At the moment I am struggling staying mobile. I don’t want to be trapped in my own home but sometimes I just can’t face the obstacle course of the outside world.”
- **Improving communication** - “Not being treated like an idiot.” “Understand conversations better.” “Better and easier access to important services.” “With gradual hearing loss using sign language is essential, this is not available free. Potentially without self-funding our family would be unable to communicate in the future.” “Enable me to hear without so much background noise.”
- **Staying connected** - “eliminate the loneliness.” “less isolation / exclusion.” “support and company.”
- **Feeling safe and more confident** – “This would make me feel safer at a time that I am finding it difficult to retain my independence.” “Registration would help with safety and reassurance that people know.”
- **Being supported and ongoing support** – “Ability to contact a service when I need it rather than having to wait.” “Availability of information, help and advice.” “Speaking to someone who understands, someone with experience.”

Question 5: How do you prefer to access information about the services?

178 people answered this question, with most favouring newsletters, followed by email and telephone conversations, then large print and visiting the service.

Of those that described themselves as someone with hearing loss, newsletters and emails were the preferred way of communicating, followed by British Sign Language (BSL).

Figure 3: Access to information



In addition to the above, other forms of communication included:

- Telephone call with an interpreter
- Smart devices such as Alexa
- Noticeboard in large print
- Audio USB
- Newsletters via USB or Compact Disc
- Updates at Deaf Café and Deaf society
- By post

As well as answering the questions in the survey, people gave feedback relating to specific service providers. Most of the feedback was very positive, demonstrating how much services in the community are valued. Some concern was expressed about services not being able to continue to provide much needed support. There was a small amount of negative feedback, mostly relating to waiting times, poor quality equipment or not being shown how to use it. One person commented that they, “feel like I am going through all of it on my own.”

Equality Monitoring Information (About You) Section

165 people agreed to completing this section of the survey and varying numbers responded to each question. Of those that responded, the most relevant to sensory support highlighted that:

- Most were age 65 and over (65%).
- A high number were female (71%) compared to male (27%).
- 66% confirmed they had physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more. And 41% felt that their conditions or illnesses reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a lot.
- 22% of respondents look after or give help or support to someone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age (excluding that which is part of paid employment).

Summary

The survey responses show that people with sensory loss rely on a wide range of services in York, beyond those which are funded by the council. It is clear these services are vital in supporting people's independence and wellbeing, but that more needs to be done to make it possible and easier for people to get out of their homes, access services, and stay connected to people and the community.

The responses also highlight the need for:

1. Better promotion of sensory support services to ensure they reach out to all potential customers – some people did not seem to be aware of the range of support available or how they could access it.
2. Ongoing access to equipment and technology to support daily living, making sure it is of sufficient quality, and people know how to use it.
3. A range of options for communicating with services, to meet people's communication needs. These include newsletters, emails, telephone conversations, large print, the option to visit a service and better access to interpreter services and BSL learning.
4. Work to increase public awareness and understanding of sensory loss.

5. Ongoing support for people as their needs and circumstances change, and the ability to access services when they need them rather than having to wait.

Some of the feedback related to issues outside the scope of sensory support services but showed the need for improvements relating to areas such as transport and accessibility of public spaces and venues.

Next Steps

We will use this valuable information and feedback to help us shape the future of sensory services in York and ensure that residents with sensory loss are listened to.

The results will be shared on York Open Data. Responses that relate to other council services will be passed on to support improvements in other areas, such as making public spaces and venues safer and more accessible and application processes simpler.

Thank you to everyone that helped us produce and distribute the survey, and to those that took the time to share their views and experiences.

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Appendix 1: Sensory Support Services Survey

Sensory support services in York provide a wide range of support for adult customers with sight and / or hearing loss. This includes putting people in contact with other specialist services.

City of York Council (CYC) are looking at what services people with sensory needs use now, and what can be done to improve services in the future.

We welcome your feedback if you:

- are living with sensory loss, or
- are a friend or family member of someone with sensory loss; or
- care for someone with sensory loss.

Please help us by answering the questions below.

We produced this survey with the help of people with sensory loss and partner organisations.

What happens to my information?

Our survey asks for some personal information which you may choose not to give. We do not publish or share any information which can identify you. Please read the enclosed privacy notice to find out more about how we protect your personal information. We will ask for your consent to this at the start of the survey. You can withdraw your consent at any time by contacting allageconsultation@york.gov.uk

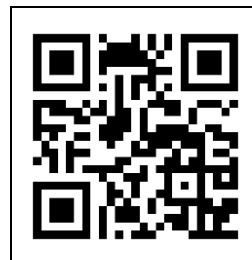
Thank you for completing our survey.

The results will help us better understand the needs of people in York with sensory loss, and how we can improve services.

Closing date: 8 January 2024.

Publishing the results:

We will publish the results of this survey online at:
<https://www.yorkopendata.org>








Privacy Notice

Please confirm that you have read and understood the privacy notice at the end of this document. You must select 'Yes' to take the survey.

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Different ways to complete and return this survey:

<p>Complete this form online</p>	<p>You can complete this survey at: www.york.gov.uk/SensorySupportServicesSurvey</p>	
<p>Or use this QR code:</p>	<p>You can use the camera on your smart device to scan the QR code which will take you to the online survey.</p>	
<p>Scan and email</p>	<p>Complete, scan and email the survey to: allageconsultation@york.gov.uk</p>	
<p>Access to a computer</p>	<p>Visit any Explore library or West Offices where staff can assist.</p>	
<p>Help to complete over the phone</p>	<p>Call Customer Services on 01904 551550 and leave your number and we will call you back.</p>	
<p>Drop off</p>	<p>Hand in your completed survey at West Offices.</p>	
<p>Return by freepost</p>	<p>All Age Commissioning Team FREEPOST RTEG-TYYU-KL TZ City of York Council West Offices, Station Rise York YO1 6GA</p>	
<p>Alternative formats</p>		
<p>If you require this document in an alternative format (e.g. large print, braille, BSL, audio or Easy Read) you can:</p>		
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	<p>Use our BSL Video Relay Service: www.york.gov.uk/BSLInterpretingService Select 'Switchboard' from the menu</p>	

Questionnaire

1) How would you describe yourself?

Someone with sight loss	
Someone with hearing loss	
Someone with sight and hearing loss / Deafblind	
A carer for someone with sensory loss	
A parent of a child with sensory loss	
Family member or friend of someone with sensory loss	
Prefer not to say / Other	

2a) Have you (or the person you support) received any of the following support? Which organisation / service provided the support?

If you have never used sensory support services, please skip to question 4 below.

Support Type	Tick all that apply	Specify organisation / service name (if known)
Assessment of your needs		
Support with registration		
Information, advice, and guidance about relevant services		
Rehabilitation services		
Support specifically for deafblind people		
Access to equipment to support daily living		
Outreach Services		
Education and training		
Volunteering		
Befriending		
Counselling		

Emotional support		
Equipment demonstration and resource centre		
Employment and welfare support		
Social and leisure activities		
Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) services		

2b) Please specify any other sensory service support you've received below:

Support Type	Specify organisation / service name (if known)
1	
2	
3	

3) Please list the 3 types of sensory service support that help you (or the person you support) the most:

No	Service
1	
2	
3	

4a) Thinking about your sensory loss, what is the one thing that would improve your life the most?

4b) How would this help you (or the person you support)?

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5) How do you prefer to access information about these services?

Suggestions	Tick all that apply
Newsletters	
Easy Read	
Noticeboards	
Telephone conversation	
Visiting the service	
Website or weblink	
Email	
Large print	
British Sign Language (BSL)	
Braille	
Audio	
Other (please specify)	

Appendix 2: List of organisations / departments

People said they had received support from the organisations and departments listed below. These were taken from the answers to survey questions 2a, 2b and 3.

Assessment of your needs:

Age UK, Older People's Advisory, Carers Centre, Council, DWP, ECLO, MySight, Eye clinic, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, GP, NHS, OT, Hospital, Hearing Teachers, Home Instead, Hearing clinic, Salvere, School, Assessment team.

Support with registration:

ECLO, MySight, Hospital, Council, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, NHS.

Information, advice, and guidance on relevant services:

Library, Council, Blind Veterans, MySight, Deaf Café, ECLO, Age UK, Hospital, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, Ability Net, Health centre, Eye clinic, Hearing Teachers, NHS, RNIB, York Deaf Society.

Rehabilitation services:

Council, ECLO, Hearing Link, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, Guide Dogs, MySight, NHS, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, RNIB, Hospital.

Support specifically for deafblind people:

CYC Hearing Teachers, Hospital, MySight, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, NHS.

Access to equipment to support daily living:

Hospital, Access to Work, Employer, Council, Be Independent, Blind Veterans, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, Community Care, MySight, ECLO, Fire Service, Ampliphone, Low Vision Clinic, Medequip, Hue Hearing, Local church, Talking Books, Occupational Therapy, Centre for Deaf and Deafened, RNID, Sound Advantage, NHS, RNIB.

Outreach services:

Age UK, Deaf Café, Guide Dogs, Health centre, IDAS, MySight, RNIB, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, Social Prescribing, Follow Prevention.

Education and training:

Ability Net, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, Blind Veterans, CYC Hearing Teachers, Deaf Café, DWP, Living Well with Sight Loss (MySight), privately paid sign language tuition, RNIB, Council, York College.

Volunteering:

Healthwatch, HMCTS, MySight, Guide Dogs, parkrun, Sight Loss Council.

Befriending:

Age UK, Café Neuro, Church, Deaf Café, Good Gym, GP, MySight, Social Eyes.

Counselling:

GP, chapel, Kyra, MySight, NHS, Women's Aid, Survive, Cruse, IDAS.

Emotional support:

Deaf Café, York Deaf Club, ECLO, MySight, Esme's Room, Court, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust.

Equipment demonstration and resource centre:

ECLO, MySight, Hospital, Low Vision Clinic, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, NHS, York Deaf Society.

Employment and welfare support:

Access to Work, Aviva, Carers, Council, DWP, ECLO, University, Job Centre, MySight, RNIB, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, York Deaf Club.

Social and leisure activities:

Church, MySight, Council website, David Lloyds, Deaf Café, York Deaf Social Society, Mind / YTT, Library, Social Eyes, YorSensory / The Wilberforce Trust, parkrun, Rotary Club, Salvation Army, U3A.

Other organisations that have provided support:

York Wheels, Dial & Ride, Sign Live, Disability York, Sign Solutions, Relay Service UK, York Talking News, Local Area Coordinator, Torch Trust, QTVI, Vision Express, Macular Society, Social Worker for the Deaf, Lidgett Church, Lollipop, Thomas Pocklington Trust.