

## S36-02

### THE CHALLENGE OF PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENTS IN THE DEAF POPULATION

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Delivering appropriate psychiatric treatments to a Deaf population faces many challenges:

- The geographical spread of this client group, who comprise about one in a thousand of the general population.
- The complexity of the treatment needs of Deaf people, who may have neurological, psychiatric, social, emotional and psychological difficulties, in addition to a deprived history, which can include significant language delay or deprivation.
- The challenge of delivering multi disciplinary treatment programs in conjunction with locally based mainstream resources. Most specialist Mental Health services for Deaf people do not provide out of hours or crisis services, and some do not have sufficient community based staff, or any day or in patient provision.

The specialist Deaf mental health services need to undertake major awareness, teaching and liaison programs:

- With any agency in contact with Deaf people, including Health, Mental Health and Social work and voluntary organisations.
- With the Deaf Community to raise awareness of mental health issues, to give information and remove stigma.

All these initiatives need to take place locally as well as at national policy making level.