

Mario's insights to hospital visits

Tell us a little bit about yourself

My name is Mario and I'm partially sighted and moderately deaf.

I wanted to add my contribution to this work as each person with sensory impairments has different challenges, unique to them and their situation. My struggles won't be the same as someone else's although there is lots of shared common ground.

What's your biggest challenge?

Mainly within hospitals; there is the lack of consistent and visible signage throughout any given department. When combined with poor lighting within certain departments (most notably Moorfields Eye Hospital, ironically) it can be a struggle.

What helps?

I love that Moorfields have a guide in the form of a green line running from Old Street station to the hospital entrance. While this isn't something that massively benefits me, it is something that I know is a great help to many people who visit the hospital. Something so simple can be a source of reassurance for the visually impaired - especially in an area as busy as London. This would be an excellent addition to all major hospitals in general, perhaps a guidance line from the entrance to the Ophthalmology department. GP surgeries however are significantly smaller so this isn't much of an issue.

Tell us a little bit more about the GP surgery experience

GP Surgeries do occasionally present other challenges for the deaf and visually impaired. Most GP surgeries these days use an electronic system in the form of a screen and an audible sound to notify patients that they are ready to be seen. Rather than having to listen out for a high pitched beep I would personally benefit from my name being spoken out via the same system, artificial text-to-speech software has come a very long way in recent years. An

additional screen in another part of the waiting room would also be helpful as the seating plan in general practices I have used are not always set up with the notification screen in mind.

What else can you suggest?

My last suggestion is to do with the lack of overall awareness when it comes to the difficulties that the visually impaired and deaf experience. This ranges from having your name called out by a doctor or a nurse from the other side of the room to being told to "concentrate harder" in regards to a visual field test when my visual field is practically non-existent.

I am extremely proud of the NHS and I owe a lot to them. Writing this was not an easy task as I did have to think about the issues I have experienced; they were not immediately apparent. I understand that the blind and deaf community consists of a small group percentage of the general population but this also applies for people in wheelchairs - who receive a lot of assistance that is not just exclusive to medical practices. The same should apply to other disabilities.