

Sensory Loss

Visual and hearing impairment and dual sensory loss can have a considerable impact on people's wellbeing.

According to Public Health England, in 2020 7.9% of the Somerset population reported deafness, significantly higher than the England value of 6.2%, and rising. As loss of hearing is often associated with increasing age, this finding is consistent with Somerset's generally older, and ageing, population structure (source: [Public Health England Fingertips](#)). For data on visual impairment please see the page on [Eye Health](#).

Studies of Sensory Loss in Somerset

The 2011 Somerset Sensory Review (downloadable below) estimates that there are about 98,000 people in Somerset experiencing some form of sensory loss and the overall number of people experiencing sensory loss is set to increase proportionate to the ageing population.

Based on national prevalence rates and ONS population projections, by 2020 it is predicted there will be around 13,000 people aged 18 or over in Somerset with moderate or severe visual impairment and 80,000 with a moderate, severe or profound hearing impairment. Of these, many will have some form of visual and hearing impairment (dual sensory loss).

At January 2015, around 230 pupils at state schools in Somerset had [Special Educational Needs](#) (SEN) where sensory loss was a primary need.

The Somerset Sensory Review was commissioned from Peter Fletcher Associates by Somerset County Council. It was undertaken between January 2010 and December 2010 and covered people of all ages experiencing a sensory loss including those with multiple disabilities/needs.

As well as reviewing needs based on existing data and consultation with patients and specialists, the report appraises existing services, identifies any perceived gaps and lists recommendations for the future.

The full report is available below:

- [Somerset Sensory Review](#)

Dual Sensory Loss

In 2014, the charity Sense launched a project funded by the Department of Health's Innovation, Excellence and Strategic Development (IESD) fund, which seeks to raise awareness of age-related sight and hearing loss with health and social care professionals nationally.

Questionnaires were sent to all Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Health and Wellbeing Boards and 30,000 care homes run by leading provider organisations.

Overall, those who responded to the questionnaire seemed to be aware that older people can experience combined difficulties with hearing and vision loss. However, across the board there

was less knowledge about what training and support staff have in working to identify and support older people with dual sensory loss effectively.

The full baseline report can be read [here](#)

Other pages in this Section

- [Eye Health](#)