

What is Deafblindness?

What do we mean by deafblind?

Deafblind is a term that is used when a person has a combination of both impaired vision and hearing. Dual sensory loss and/or combined vision and hearing impairment are other terms that may be used to describe deafblindness.

Definition of Deafblindness

"Deafblindness is described as a unique and isolating sensory disability resulting from the combination of both a hearing and vision loss or impairment which significantly affects communication, socialisation, mobility and daily living."

Australian DeafBlind Council (ADBC) 2004

How many people are deafblind?

- Studies have reported from 0.2% to 3.3% of the population may be deafblind
- In Australia nearly 100,000 are reported to be deafblind, two-thirds are over the age of 65 years
- One study reported 36% of individuals over the age of 85 years are deafblind

Effects of deafblindness

- A small number of people will have no sight or hearing
- Other people who are deafblind will have varying degrees of vision and/or hearing
- Experiences and understanding of the world will be different depending on whether the person was born deafblind or acquired combined vision and hearing impairment later in life

Emotional impact of deafblindness

- **The impact of deafblindness on a person's life will vary**
- **The impact on a person who has a severe sight and hearing impairment can be complex**
- **Deafblindness can affect a person's ability to access information, to communicate and socialise, leading to feelings of isolation**
- **A person can experience low self-esteem, lacking confidence to move about independently and to carry out daily tasks**

Types and Causes of deafblindness

- **People who are born deaf and blind. This could be due to hereditary conditions or because of diseases contracted during pregnancy such as Rubella (German Measles)**
- **People who are born deaf or hard of hearing and later experience deteriorating sight - Usher Syndrome for example, causes deafness at birth and vision impairment later in life**
- **People who are born vision impaired or blind experiencing significant hearing loss at a later stage in their life**
- **People who are born with vision and hearing and acquire deterioration of both senses**
- **Other causes include accident, injury and disease; and for significant numbers of people the ageing process is a cause of deafblindness**

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