

Enabling Effective Communication Between Hearing and Deaf / Deafened / Deafblind / Hard of Hearing People

Introduction

There are approximately 9 million deaf people in the UK, which is around 15% of the population. There are approximately 75,000 people in the UK who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language. Deaf People can often miss out on the chance to find out about and take part in what is happening, because their communication needs are not met, particularly in relation to sign language interpretation.

Under the terms of the Equality Act, the service provider is responsible for ensuring any “reasonable adjustments” are made to meet the participants’ communication rights. This factsheet gives some practical guidance on how to best meet these needs.

Types of Communication Requirements

- British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreter: is fluent in both British Sign Language and English, and translates from one language to the other.
- Sign Supported English Interpreter: interprets using signs in English word order.
- Deaf Relay Interpreter: works alongside a British Sign Language Interpreter to produce a “deaf modified interpretation” of British Sign Language where a deaf person is not a British Sign Language user or does not have fluent language skills.
- Deafblind/Manual alphabet interpreter: interprets for deaf people with a visual impairment.
- Lipspeaker: conveys a speaker’s message to lipreaders without using their voice. They are used by deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people who lipread English.

- Notetaker: records everything that is said manually or using a computer. Note-taking is useful because deaf people cannot write at the same time as watching an interpreter or lipspeaker.
- Speech or text reporters / Palantypists: type what the speaker is saying, enabling the deaf person to read the information on a screen or computer.

Before the Meeting

Publicising the meeting

- Make sure that the invitation to the meeting is publicised in plain English for people whose first language is BSL.
- Contact details should include a minicom / fax / email / postal address and staff should know how to use the textphone equipment.

Finding out what people's needs are to enable them to access the meeting

- You should ask the people attending if they have any "access requirements". You need to do this in advance, preferably two to four weeks in advance if possible, as interpreters are in short supply and book up quickly.
- It is good practice to ask if a person has a preferred communication provider. However, it is strongly recommended that people do not use family members or friends as interpreters as they are not impartial to the situation or deaf person, and may make judgments about how or what to convey back to the deaf person.

Booking the interpreter

- How many interpreters you need to book will depend on the content and structure of the meeting. It is a good idea to ask for advice at the time of booking.
- It is essential that any interpreter is NRCPD registered (see contact details for NRCPD towards the end of this factsheet). NRCPD registered interpreters are well trained and are bound by a code of ethics. If you are using a Deaf Relay Interpreter you should check they are also a fully qualified BSL user.

- When you are booking any interpreter, it is necessary to take into account that there are regional variations in sign language. You may also need to take into account areas of specialism (e.g. medical, legal, political, financial, etc).
- You can either book an interpreter directly or use an agency. The advantage of using an agency is that they should be able to advise you what is needed and match the interpreter to the type of meeting and any specialisms. The disadvantage is that you will have to pay an agency fee, which makes it more costly. See the useful contacts section for further information on where to find an interpreter.

Preparing for the meeting

- When choosing the venue for the meeting bear in mind that good lighting is essential. Also, ideally, the background should be plain. Patterned wallpaper and mirrors can be distracting and tiring on the eyes.
- The interpreter will not be able to interpret fully if they cannot hear clearly what is being said so any potential background noise should be taken into account when arranging the meeting.
- It is useful for both the deaf person and the interpreter to have any powerpoint presentations or written text (agenda, minutes, documents to discuss) in advance.
- If the meeting involves the use of acronyms / jargon, it may be useful to brief the interpreter before the session so that they understand the terms used.

During the Meeting

General points to note

- Interpreters are bound by confidentiality. This may be useful to know if any other participants are concerned about confidentiality.
- An interpreter's role is to facilitate communication, not to participate in the meeting.

Seating arrangements

- Interpreters need to be facing the deaf person. Let the deaf person and interpreter work out the best seating position for them and be prepared to ask other people to move accordingly.
- Interpreters should not be placed in front of the window as this places a shadow on the interpreters face and can make lip patterns and facial expressions hard to see. Also, neither the interpreter nor the deaf person should be facing bright sunlight.

Breaks

- Both interpreters and deaf people need regular breaks, on average every 20 minutes. Without this the quality of interpretation and concentration of the recipient may suffer, meaning that the deaf person will not have full access to the meeting.

Referring to written information / presentations in the meeting

- Allow a pause for the deaf person to look at written materials (e.g. reports, flip charts, powerpoint presentations) as they cannot watch the interpreter and read at the same time.

After the Meeting

- Any complaints about interpreters would need to be directed to the NRCPD (see contact details below).

Booking an interpreter directly through a website

National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind people (NRCPD):

c/o Mersey House, Mandale Business Park, Belmont, Durham, DH1 1TH.
Tel: 0191 383 1155. Textphone: 0191 383 7915. Fax: 0191 383 7914.
Email: enquiries@nrcpd.org.uk. Website: www.nrcpd.org.uk.

Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI):

Fortuna House, South Fifth Street, Milton Keynes, MK9 2EU.
Tel: 0871 474 0522. Textphone: 18001 0871 474 0522. Fax: 01908 32 52 59.
Email: office@asli.org.uk. Website: www.asli.org.uk.

Signature:

Mersey House, Mandale Business Park, Belmont, Durham, DH1 1TH.
Tel: 0191 383 1155. Textphone: 0191 383 7915. Fax: 0191 383 7914.
Email: durham@signature.org.uk. Website: www.signature.org.uk.

Association of Lipspeakers:

ALS Information Office, 5 Furlong Close, Upper Tean, Stoke-on-Trent. ST10 4LB.
Tel: 01538 722482. Fax/Textphone: 01538 722422. Mobile: 07973 359824.
Email: information@lipspeaking.co.uk Website: www.lipspeaking.co.uk

Booking an interpreter through an agency

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People does not necessarily support or promote any organisations or companies mentioned in this factsheet.

SEA Recruitment Services Ltd:

PO Box 690, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 7ZD.
Tel: 0870 0802940. Text (SMS): 07503 379213. Fax: 0161 332 7732.
Email: info@searecruitment.co.uk. Website: <http://searecruitment.co.uk>.

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) Communication Services Central:

The Plaza, 100 Old Hall Street, Liverpool, L3 9QJ.
Tel: 0845 685 8000. Textphone: 0845 685 8001. Fax: 0845 685 8002.
Email: communication.services@hearingloss.org.uk. Website: hearingloss.org.uk.

Manchester Deaf Centre:

Crawford House, Booth Street East, Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester, M13 9GH.
Tel (Voice/text): 0161 273 6699. Fax: 0161 273 3299. Mobile: 07766 208 253.
Email: bookings@manchesterdeafcentre.com
Website: www.manchesterdeafcentre.com.

Interpreter Booking Services:

The Old Post Office, Market Square, 7 Market Street, Denton,
Manchester, M34 2JL.
Tel: 0161 320 0400. Textphone: 07966 694 295. Fax: 05603 443608.
Email: enquiries@interpreterbsl.co.uk.

Deafinitely Able Interpreting Services:

Earnshaw Business Centre, Hugh Lane, Leyland, PR26 6PD.
Tel: 0845 111 0711. Text (SMS): 07540 799 256.
Email: enquiries@deafinitelyableinterpreters.com.

This information sheet is available in a variety of formats, including: large print, Braille, audio and electronic.

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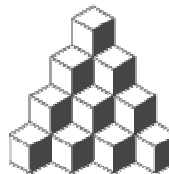
GMCDP, BEVC, Aked Close, Ardwick, Manchester. M12 4AN

Phone: 0161 273 5154 Text Relay: 08001 0161 273 5154 Fax: 0161 273 6141

Email: info@gmcdp.com

Web: www.gmcdp.com

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