

Specialist Communication



**Examples of resources for
providing specialist
accessible information**

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Deaf awareness

If you are a hearing person, think about how you have come to be the person you are today, how you have developed as a person and gained the knowledge that you have gained. Imagine again how different this might be if you were unable to hear.

People who grow up Deaf or with a hearing impairment, have a different experience of themselves and others compared with people who may never have had to think about their hearing. Most of us take our hearing for granted even though we rely on it everyday.

People who are Deaf and use sign language may consider themselves part of the Deaf community. In the UK, they are a linguistic minority who use British Sign Language (BSL), Britain's most widely used language after English, Gaelic and Welsh.

Deaf people enjoy a unique culture, as worthy of respect as any other. The Deaf 'way of life' is quite fascinating. It is only in recent years that research has begun to explore different aspects of Deaf relationships, communication and society. (British Deaf Association)

Many Deaf people are proud of their cultural identity and in spite of many accomplishments, integration and equality has not been an easy journey mainly due to the significant differences between spoken and signed languages. Additionally, there continue to be barriers such as information and access to Health and Social Care services. This can severely impact on Deaf people's everyday life.

Research shows that Deaf people experience poorer physical and mental health than hearing people. The Nottinghamshire Deaf Wellbeing Action Group (Gloria Pullen, et al 2011, 2014) carried out surveys to research local Deaf people's experiences of health and social care services in Nottinghamshire. The conclusion reveals that Deaf people:

- Make higher than average visits to GP
- Have difficulties in arranging appointments
- Want more information
- Continue to have communication problems

(<http://nottsdeafwellbeing.org.uk/research.html>)

Access to language, and freedom of expression in your own language is a human right. Providing information and access to services in British Sign Language needs to be considered seriously. Given the Accessible Information Standard, it is now the duty of all public bodies to consider how they provide information and services to Deaf people.



What do we understand about the terms hearing loss and Deafness?

The general interpretation and understanding of Deafness and hard of hearing varies considerably as there are many different terms to describe these. Some Deaf people are also more comfortable than others with some of the terms that are used. How a Deaf person describes themselves is down to their own preferences.

There are no hard rights and wrongs about the words you use to describe a person's hearing loss. However, generally accepted definitions are as follows:

- **Deaf** (upper case 'D') - refers to the cultural aspect of being Deaf. It is usually used by people who are considered members of a Deaf community and who communicate primarily using sign language.
- **deaf** (lower case 'd') - people who have hearing loss. They may be born deaf or become deaf. They may communicate orally and be users of sign language.
- **deafened** - people who were born with hearing and later lost much/all of their hearing.
- **Hard of hearing** - people who have lost some but not all hearing.
- **Hearing loss, hearing impaired** - anyone with any level of hearing loss.
- **Acquired hearing loss** - people who were born with hearing and later lost some/all hearing.
- **Acquired profound hearing loss** - people who were born with hearing and later lost a significant amount or all of their hearing.

(Hearing Loss and Deafness Facts)

What is it like to be Deaf?

(Deaf Awareness – SignHealth)

Communication and community are a hugely important part of life. Deaf people are often cut-off from the usual forms of communicating - a shout of warning, hearing your name at the doctors, overhearing information in the street, listening to a radio programme, or a passing word with a stranger.

It means Deaf people can feel isolated and can find it hard to get information or help in an emergency. That's part of the reason that Deaf people are twice as likely as hearing people to be affected by depression, anxiety and similar problems.

As a Deaf person you rely on your eyes for clues to what people are saying or feeling, and you rely on other clues like vibrations in floors to be aware of what is going on around you.

Often other people will change the way they act towards you, because they are irritated that they have to repeat themselves, or are frustrated that you don't understand them.

Other things to consider

- Announcing appointments from a clipboard or using their voice - this makes it difficult for people to lip-read
- Because someone is wearing one or more hearing aids, it does not mean that they no longer need any support to communicate. They may, for instance, be supporting their hearing via lip-reading.
- Written information - It should be noted that the ability of d/Deaf people to read and understand written English varies considerably and it should not be assumed that having a conversation via written notes is an appropriate way of holding a dialogue. Because of limited educational opportunities for Deaf children, many profoundly Deaf adults may have a reading age similar to that of a 9 year old hearing child, despite their intelligence being adult.
- Use of medical masks - this makes it difficult for people to lip read, therefore information is lost. The additional use of gestures, electronic display screens and interpreters are important.
- Never rely on a family member to take the place of an interpreter. Some family members may unintentionally provide inaccurate medical information, and the situation can become difficult and confidentiality can easily be threatened.
- Some hearing people can feel offended by the direct manner that some Deaf people communicate. This can give the impression of being blunt or rude but is not in any way intending to offend.
- Not all Deaf people lip-read. Lip-reading is notoriously difficult and prone to inaccuracies. Deaf people are not better at lip-reading than hearing people!

Your Communication

Do...

- Get the Deaf person's attention before starting
- Face the Deaf person
- Make eye contact
- Speak clearly, at a natural pace
- Use an expressive face
- Use natural gestures
- Ensure your face is in good light
- Keep your mouth visible
- Make sure the Deaf person knows the topic of conversation
- Check the Deaf person has understood you before continuing
- Speak one at a time
- Smile and relax!
- Use pencil and paper if you get stuck

Don't...

- Start speaking if the Deaf person is not looking at you
- Turn around or move away
- Look down or away
- Talk too quickly or too slowly
- Over-exaggerate your lip pattern
- Shout (this distorts your face and mouth, and can be painful for hearing aid wearers)
- Stand with a window or bright light behind you
- Cover your mouth
- Switch to a new topic without warning
- Switch to a new speaker without warning
- All speak at the same time
- Feel embarrassed
- Give up

Professional ways of supporting

The 5 key requirements of the Accessible Information Standard.

Ask Deaf Patients to describe their communication and information needs and how these can be met

Record those needs in a set way

Flag on the person's records so that it is clear that they have information and communication needs and how to meet those needs

Share information about a person's needs with other NHS and adult social care providers when they have consent or permission to do so

Meet those communication and information needs ensuring people get the right support in the right way

Develop information in a variety of formats so they are accessible in different ways for those who struggle with written words. This may include...

- Leaflets in plain English
- Leaflets in Easy Read
- Leaflets and DVDs on key areas of health information in BSL format
- Providing information about where to find translations of health information on the website
- Ensuring courses to help patients manage chronic health conditions are accessible to Deaf people
- Providing information days about health related topics for Deaf people that are supported by interpreters

Communication via other systems

- **Skype** - is a computer programme that can transmit video and text messages
- **Face Time** - an application by Apple that allows people to video chat to each other in real time. Both parties need to have Apple products to enable this interaction as well as an internet connection
- **Email** - the use of text via the computer
- **Text messages** - via mobile phones

As with all communication, please check that the system is secure. Often, generally available software and apps are not secure and information can easily be lost or open to others.

Services that can support

BSL Interpreters

Sign Language Interpreters are registered and proficient in both English and British Sign Language. They are sometimes referred to as BSL/English Interpreters.

BSL interpreters often train for over 6 years to gain their qualifications. They work as supervised trainee interpreters before fully qualifying. A BSL interpreter working in a health-related situation should have some experience and training related to the topic being interpreted.

Interpreters can help Deaf people access health information and health services in two ways. They can translate and explain things in BSL. They can also help adjust the language to match Deaf people's experiences in a culturally-appropriate way.

When working with a BSL interpreter it is useful to discuss the topic that will be discussed with the Deaf person and to clarify how clear communication can be achieved. Sometimes a Deaf person may know the interpreter and issues about confidentiality will have to be respected and managed.

All professional interpreters should be able to show you their identity and level of qualification. If they can't do this, do not proceed to work with them. All professional sign language interpreters will be registered with the National Register of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deaf-Blind people (NRCPD) and should have a current ID badge like this:



Nottinghamshire Healthcare has a contract with the Nottinghamshire Sign Language Service to provide fully qualified and experienced sign language interpreters. You can contact them on 0115 970 0516 / 0115 978 6984 or see their website: www.nottsdeaf.org.uk/

There is a shortage of BSL interpreters and so it can often be difficult to confidently book an interpreter within three weeks of the appointment. You may need to think ahead and plan any appointments with a Deaf person and an interpreter.

An alternative is to use an internet-based interpreter such as InterpreterNow run by SignHealth (see overleaf).

Other useful information related to working with interpreters:

Deaf Relay Interpreters (Deaf Relay - BID Services) - Deaf Relay interpreters are experienced Deaf people who work alongside BSL interpreters with users who are Deaf and may have a specific language need or not being a native BSL user. The Relay Interpreter further adapts the sign language provided by the Sign Language Interpreter. The Deaf Relay's signing can often assist with clearer understanding for both the client and the professionals involved.

Sign Translate - offers an online interpreting service for GPs and hospitals as a subsidiary of SignHealth. Most GPs and some health services can use this for free. For more information please see www.signtranslate.com

Video Relay- allows Deaf people to use their own language to make a call to a hearing person. Communication is relayed visually via an interpreter. Visual Relay services are common in the US and other countries. They are beginning to be used in the UK but funding and confidentiality is an issue. InterpreterNow is a video relay interpreter service run by SignHealth see www.interpreternow.co.uk Some health and police services are beginning to use this service with some success.

Benefits to health service providers of adapting information and services for Deaf-BSL users:

- Health services become accessible to a wider section of the local community, including those who have lower literacy skills or are unable to hear well
- Customer care is provided
- Deaf people can access services independently
- Compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Accessible Information Standard
- Effective communication and calling systems between the service and BSL users
- There are fewer delays and missed appointments
- Better 'outcomes' for Health professionals

(Extracts from British Deaf Association Improving Access for BSL Users)

Benefits for Deaf people...

- Access to all health and social care services
- Improved confidence with accessing services
- Improved relationships with staff within services
- Access to information in the correct format
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Feeling valued and respected
- Increased opportunity to be involved and make choices and decisions about their own care and treatment
- Better quality of life
- Better knowledge

References and information

Deaf Well-being in Nottinghamshire

A survey of Deaf people's experiences of local health and social support <http://nottsdeafwellbeing.org.uk/research.html>

Deaf Awareness - SignHealth

<http://signhealth.org.uk/>

Hearing loss & deafness facts - Hearing Link

www.hearinglink.org > Your hearing

Ways of communicating - Action On Hearing Loss: RNID

British Deaf Association | What is Deaf culture?

www.bda.org.uk/what-is-deaf-culture

BSL alphabet



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I



J



K



L



M



N



O



P



Q



R



S



T



U



V



W



X



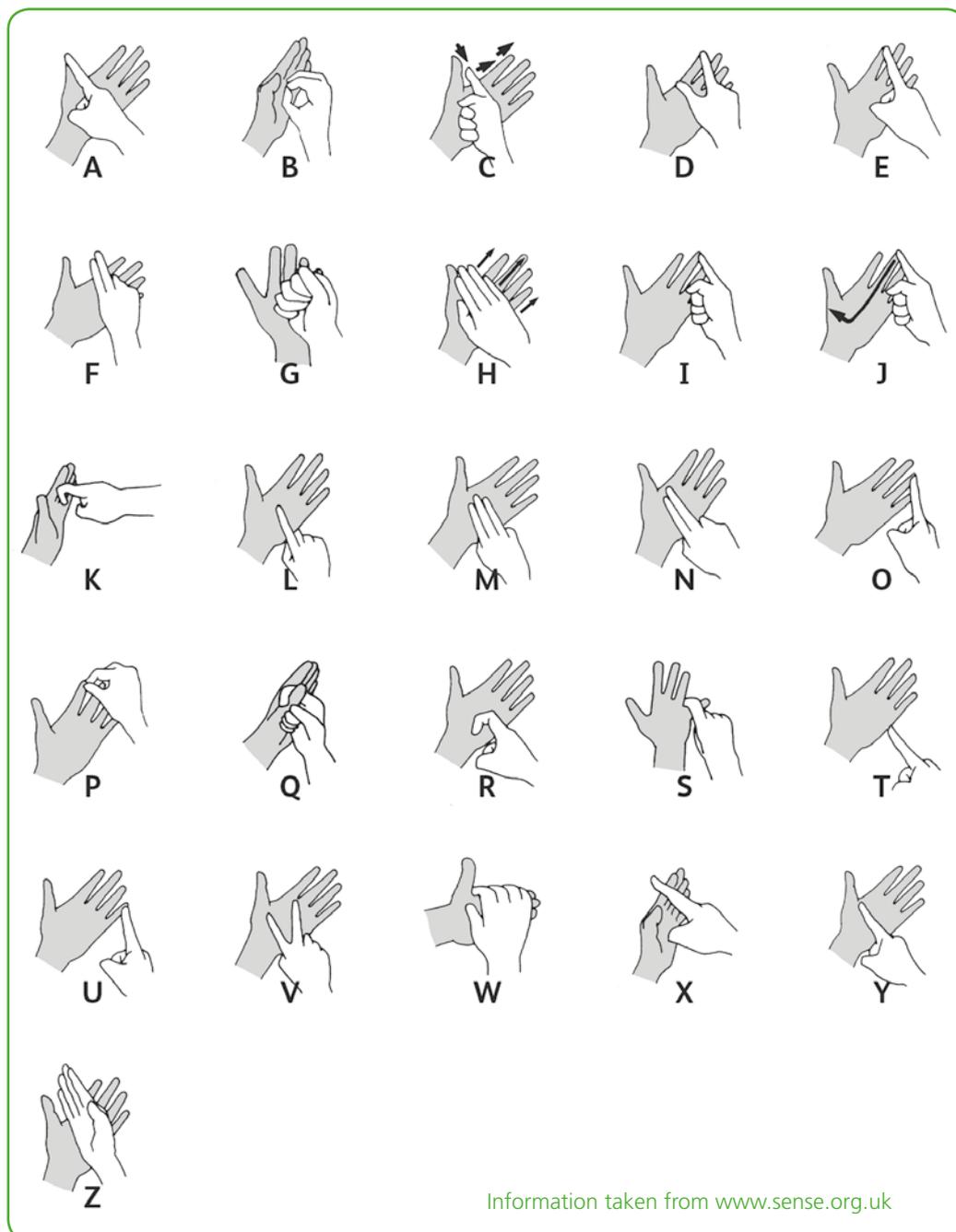
Y



Z

Deafblind manual alphabet

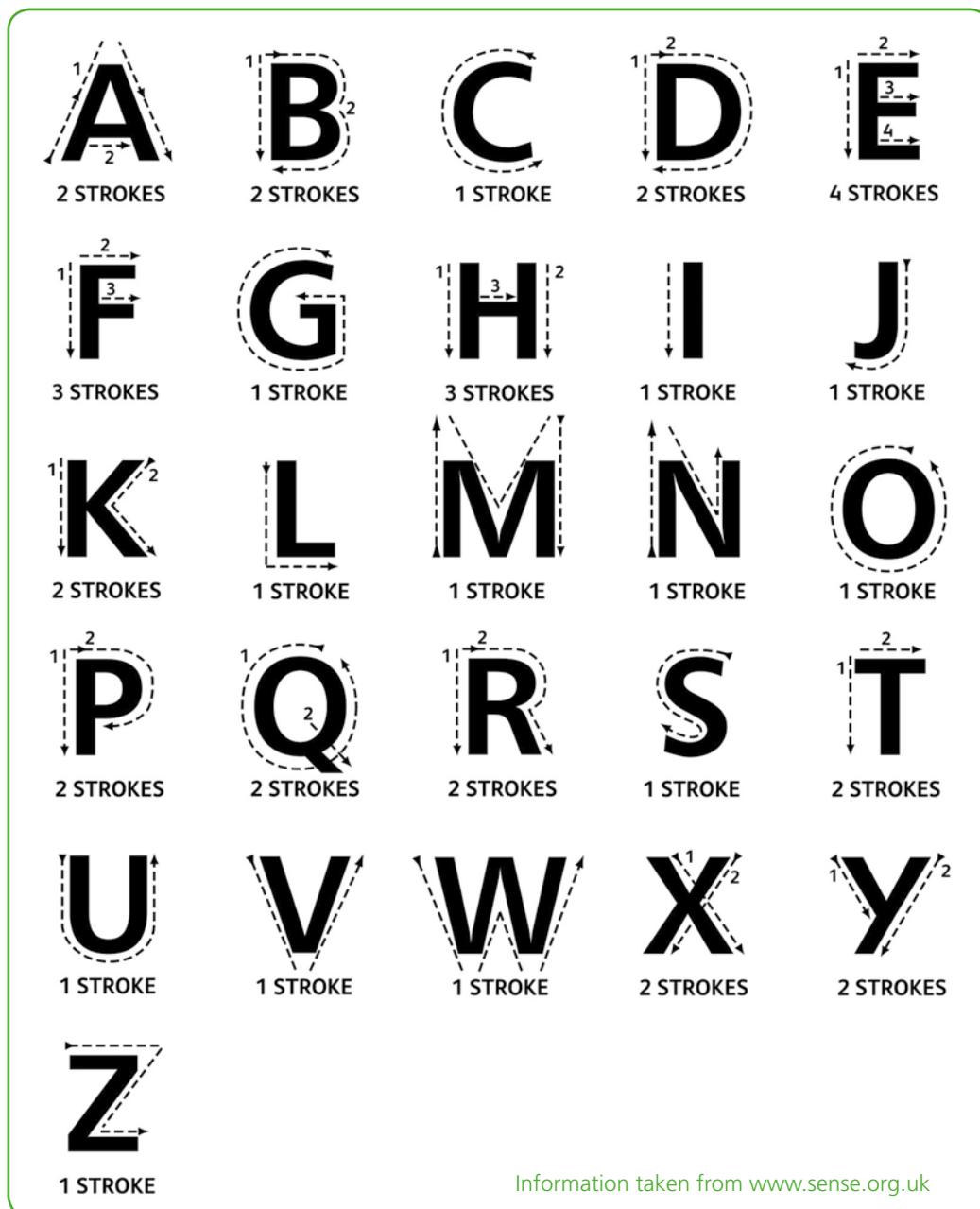
You might use the Deafblind manual alphabet, spelling out words to have a conversation. This alphabet involves you using signs that are made on the person's hand and fingers (similar to sign language).



Block alphabet

Imagine you couldn't see or hear - how would you communicate?

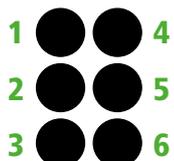
The chances are you would rely on touch to make sense of the world. When you first meet a Deafblind person it is a good idea to try the Block Manual Alphabet. To do this, trace the capital letters of the alphabet onto the Deafblind person's palm. The Deafblind person may then tell you of another method they like to use to communicate.



Braille alphabet

Braille is a system that enables blind and visually impaired people to read and write through touch. It consists of raised dots arranged in 'cells'. A cell is made up of six dots that fit under the fingertips, arranged in two columns of three dots each. Each cell represents a letter, a word, a combination of letters, a numeral or a punctuation mark.

The Braille cell



Alphabet

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
u	v	w	x	y	z				

Common punctuation marks

?	!	'	,	-	.	Capital #	#

Numbers - preceded by ()

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Moon alphabet

Moon allows people who are blind or partially sighted to read by touch. It is a code of raised shapes. As the characters are fairly large and over half the letters bear a strong resemblance to the print equivalent, Moon has been found particularly suitable for those who lose their sight later in life, or for people who may have a less keen sense of touch.

Letters

 a	 b but	 c can	 d do	 e every	 f from	 g go	 h have	 i	 j just
 k know	 l like	 m more	 n not	 o	 p people	 q quite	 r rather	 s some	 t that
 u	 v very	 w was	 x it	 y you	 z	 wh which	 ch child		

Numbers

 numeral sign	 0	 1	 2	 3	 4	 5	 6	 7	 8	 9
--	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Information taken from www.moonliteracy.org.uk

To view this pack electronically go to:
<http://connect/inclusive-communication>

positive
about integrated healthcare

For queries or guidance for support contact:
InclusiveCommunication@nottshc.nhs.uk