



British Sign Language (BSL) Charter Project

Tuesday 31 October 2017 @ 7pm
Hamilton Lodge School, 7-9 Walpole Road, Brighton BN2 0LS

Feedback report

Purpose of the event:

An opportunity for the Deaf community to tell Brighton & Hove City Council (B&HCC) their views and experiences of using council services particularly for Deaf young people and their parents.

The questions asked were framed around the British Deaf Association's (BDA) British Sign Language (BSL) Charter pledges to enable the council to find out what was working well, and where improvements needed to be considered in order to meet the criteria.

Background:

- In 2015 the council set up an independent Fairness Commission to find out how to make the city a fairer and more equal place to live and work. The commissioners explored issues that cause inequality and heard from Deaf and BSL User groups that felt that they were unable to access council services, or had opportunities to be consulted on, to the same extent as other groups.
- As a consequence, one of commission's recommendations was 'To improve access and rights for Deaf people who use British Sign Language, the council should sign up to the British Deaf Association's Charter for British Sign Language and implement the five pledges set out within it'.
- The BDA's Charter for British Sign Language aims to promote better access to public services for Deaf people who use BSL. It contains 5 pledges:
 1. Consult formally and informally with local Deaf community on a regular basis
 2. Ensure access for Deaf people to information and services
 3. Support Deaf children and families
 4. Ensure staff working with Deaf people can communicate effectively using BSL
 5. Promote learning and high quality teaching of BSL
- This is a key project for the Labour Administration. The work is championed by the chair of the council's Neighbourhood Inclusion Communities & Equality (NICE) committee, Cllr. Emma Daniel. A report went to NICE Committee in March 2017 recommending that the council sign up to the Charter and this was agreed.
- Initially the council are looking to achieve three of the pledges (No's 1, 3 and 5) and will work with the BDA and local Deaf and BSL groups towards fulfilling the requirements under the charter including -

- ~ holding a signing ceremony;
- ~ preparing a self-assessment in conjunction with the Deaf and BSL User community;
- ~ identifying areas that need development;
- ~ creating a three year action plan
- The council carried out a review internally of current practice against the pledges looking at what the council is already doing to provide services and engage with local Deaf and BSL Users. We also contacted other local authorities that had already signed the charter to find out their experiences.
- The official signing of the Charter by the Leader of the Council Cllr. Warren Morgan, Mayor of Brighton & Hove Cllr. Mo Marsh, BDA representative Mr. Paul Redfern and Ayeshaa Denny, a student from Hamilton Lodge School (on behalf of the Deaf community) took place on 10 June 2017.

What happened on the night?

B&HCC Communities Equality & Third Sector Team held a one hour session during DeafCog’s ‘Our Space’ meeting. We held a world café style engagement activity – where we had four tables with key questions themed for young people; parents and guardians; teachers and support workers and an ‘anyone’ table. B&HCC Sports Facilities colleagues also provided a table top Batak activity which got everyone feeling competitive and energised!

Participants were asked to choose a table and question that they felt strongly about and, with the help of facilitators (B&HCC staff) and BSL interpreters, discussed the questions and wrote their feedback on the paper tablecloths provided. Every ten minutes people were given the opportunity to move to a different table or continue with the discussion where they were.

All the verbatim feedback is attached as appendix 1.

Table 1 below details the themes that emerged and improvements that were suggested. We also received feedback from some people who could not be present on the evening, and this has been incorporated.

Table 1 - Themes we heard

	Theme	Improvements you suggested
1	Communicating with the council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple language not technical words • Raise profile on Accessible Standard • Make the website fully accessible with live chat facility • Offer of translation to BSL or option of video to explain leaflets • New council buildings and improvements to old ones, need to ensure good acoustics are specified and taken into account to improve acoustic qualities • The council to employ a Deaf liaison officer who can gather information from the community to help improve access in Brighton & Hove.
2	Young Deaf People can feel isolated and find	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for hearing and Deaf young people to attend activities to help learn social skills • BSL taught to Hearing children

	it difficult to build friendship groups with hearing YP and other Deaf YP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SURDI report that they considered setting up a Deaf hub in the centre of Brighton. Aim is to have a 'space' where young people can go for training, youth club, our space meetings. This is dependent on funding being available.
3	School issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Workers need appropriate level of BSL skills to work with Deaf young people • Head Teachers, teachers and staff supporting Deaf young people need Deaf awareness training i.e. keeping eye contact, appropriate noise levels, giving time, physical contact • Teaching assistants using online resources and teaching skills –need to make sure young people understands what is needed • Schools ensure the right technology is available to link hearing aid/implant for Deaf oral children • Deaf parents need qualified BSL interpreters booked for parents evenings and longer time given for the meeting • Deaf parent peer group could be set up to support Deaf parents whilst their child is going through education
4	Deaf Awareness and BSL training for council staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness with staff and help change culture by supporting the annual Deaf Awareness Week • Deaf Awareness training and BSL skills for reception staff at all civic buildings and other front line staff, to increase confidence and provide improved service when communicating with Deaf people
5	Funding for interpreters at schools for Deaf children and Deaf parents of hearing children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify whose responsibility is this – Education Authority or School • Policy needed and budget identified
6	Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to get funding for more complex subjects and lower level issues don't meet criteria – council do not have enough funds – is there scope for this to improve?
7	Sports related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information about sports activities needed via online and social media • Not enough sports activities suitable for Deaf people due to communication issues • Taster sessions specifically for Deaf people to build confidence • Invite Deaf people to sports activities to get feedback on how they could be more Deaf friendly • Employ Deaf trainer to work in Leisure Centre(s) especially for GP's referrals of Deaf people to sports activities
8	Other council departments and organisations.	<p>Parking Team: Parking meters – no text available – app unreliable (poor Wi-Fi) – extra charge for use while phone is free.</p> <p>Museums Service: Deaf led guide and BSL interpretation of tour i.e. on tablet (same loan arrangement as audio). Greenwich Observatory and Queen Mary in Edinburgh both offer tablet for Deaf people and are good examples</p>

		<p>Where feedback does not relate to council departments this will be fed back to the relevant organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighton Taxis – hard to contact as they don't reply to texts and Deaf people can call them. Fed back via the Taxi Drivers Forum. • Citizens Advice Bureau in Hove – is the only one in Sussex without Interpreters due to service cuts – all others do. Fed back via the city's Advice Matters Network • B&H Buses - Drivers need Deaf Awareness training as there are mixed experiences. Suggestion that company provides 'single' and 'return' ticket option in picture form. Fed back to Brighton & Hove Buses • NHS waiting time made harder if BSL Interpreter needed. Fed back to CCG • Job Centre (Edward Street) – poor staff attitude and no interpreter provided. Hove and Portslade are good examples. Fed back to Job Centre Brighton
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On the evening we also presented a flip chart of some of the work the council is already doing (see appendix 2). We received some feedback, as follows, which we will follow up:

- SEN Team sends out bi-annual questionnaires to families to receive feedback – several parents present didn't recall receiving a questionnaire and it would be useful to know the criteria and/or how families are selected to receive feedback questionnaires.
- SEN Team provides 6-8 week training in BSL to parents, siblings, grandparents as part of the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Sign Language curriculum. A parent reported that no BSL training had ever been offered – what are the criteria to qualify for this and how is the training communicated.

What are the next steps?

We will –

- Continue to work with the local Deaf community and BDA, strengthening relationships and keeping you up to date on what we are doing
- Complete the self-assessment based on views and experiences gathered and those heard on the night
- Identify gaps in service provision and explore solutions looking carefully and creatively at resources and partnership working
- Prepare an action plan linked to the BSL pledges with guidance from the BDA and present this with the annual progress report to the Neighbourhood Inclusion Communities and Equality (NICE) committee in March 2018.

Thanks and acknowledgements:

Our thanks go to:

- 👍 Deaf Cog for their help and advice and allowing us to use their 'Our Space' meeting for the event
- 👍 Hamilton Lodge School for hosting and helping us to get organised on the evening

- 👍 Everyone who took part in the activity and made us feel welcome; especially the young people who gave up their free time to attend

thank you



Appendix 1

As a parent, guardian or family member of a Deaf child, how involved do you feel in the development of your child's communication skills at school?
Parent of hearing children go to hearing school, issues are need for interpreter, school saying can't provide – this is education responsibility – education saying school responsibility. Pillar to post. Needs to be a clear policy.
Not funding interpretation support for parents. Fight for TA support for Deaf child, got great results when TA was provided. Only Deaf child in the class –difficult without this support
As child is older more difficult and children are socially isolated from peers. Some schools in other LAs provide support to meet other Deaf children across schools
BSL as first language can be isolating – encourage more learning of BSL early
Deaf family, trying to place them and see where they could be in the world. I hearing and 1 deaf child
At school isolated –saw how difficult it was to make friends, other children playing left out
Creates mental health issue – frustration with communication
All heads of school need to understand needs – eye contact, physical contact, time
Hearing children love to learn BSL
Not teachers or hearing parents fault – feel strongly that babies learn more skills if hearing, could be more learning at very young age BSL when young for all
Those that depend on sign language stay in school longer until ready
Director of national organisation Friends for Young Deaf People aims to build confidence, to be part of the hearing world, this is no longer happening. Director, Morag Rosie wrote book 'You can do it' and consulted with many parents and children
Good for Deaf children in mainstream school to be able to sign to meet up with other Deaf children
Events for Deaf and hearing children together to learn social skills
Ensure support staff have the right level of signing, often the child is supporting their 'support worker' to sign
3 mainstream units in Brighton – teacher is Deaf – would know more because they are Deaf as well.
Some children told to go on You Tube to find information – doesn't make sense to Deaf children. Teaching skills and resources - need to make sure teaching staff use appropriately as part of teaching practice so Deaf YP understands what is needed
Need to prepare for hearing world, mentoring for children/parents
Deaf parents involved when I was in Deaf school, but in mainstream of unit it was very difficult to be involved as no support for parents
Balfour – good experience hearing parents with Deaf child – both children in primary school. Understand it's more difficult for Deaf parents
Should have a budget set aside to support either parents or children who are Deaf – interpretation for Deaf parents – clear policy on this
Aldrington Primary - Positive experience of school/mainstream. PATA very accessible
Kings School – positive experience of sport or lessons/academic, but not support with friendship groups. Sport big help be part of social activities
Adaptions for oral Deaf children use loop system that links with hearing aid/implant - positive

Good training for staff, where children should sit, other noise etc.
Education and health care plan battle – already over legal limit on how long it should take. Doesn't fit legal standards. No support from council in some subject with complex language (as above) other than core (maths/English) TA support. Would not be able to without NDCS (National Deaf Children's Society) could not fight the council for the right support without help on EHCP. More and more difficult to get EHCP, council saying not enough funds
Lower level hearing issues don't met criteria to get EHCP, has statement of educational need. Support from school is good – not from B&HCC
Deaf parents are not the opportunity to be a governor of the school – sit on the board and be involved in decision making
What has been your experience of using services provided by the council, how accessible did you find the information/buildings etc?
Letters are always hard to understand. Need to use simple language 'not technical words – we need someone to explain the letter
Text or voice only option on letter – website no option
Deaf parent -Too much reliance and assistance is assumed and expected from family by service providers – we are adults
Council staff nice and good helpful attitude but need training
Exercise activities signed eg swimming, health related training to encourage participation
Offer to use video on demand and instant signing service at Bartholomew House
Art MusicInterest audience – i.e. cultural activities could be more inclusive
Parking meters are not Deaf friendly – we can't call number –no text available – app don't always work (poor Wi-Fi) – extra charge for use while phone is free!
Some offices can't use texting only phone –not easy services
Council website – need live chat – can't call /text – email too slow (up to 7 working days)
Museums & galleries – Deaf led guide and BSL interpretation of tour i.e. on tablet (same loan arrangement as audio) Greenwich Observatory and Queen Mary in Edinburgh both offer tablet for Deaf people
Brighton Taxi – won't reply to texts – can't call them!
Bad experience contacting council, DWP or other services using minicom/textphone. Feels there is probably only one special minicom number per department so it's always engaged. Have to use TYPETALK 99% of time. Staff in council buildings seem to have no training in sign language, and most seem a bit anxious
Would like a group of Deaf secret shoppers who try out council services and feedback their experiences
Citizens Advice Bureau in Hove – is the only one in Sussex without Interpreters due to service cuts – all others do
Immediate access to interpreters needed at reception desks
Language modification and simplify letter vocabulary
Physical access also is a problem
Job Centre (Edward Street) staff attitude poor and they won't provide interpreter (Hove and Portslade is good)
Leaflets - Offer of translation to BSL or option of video to explain
Online not Deaf friendly

B&H Buses driver training Deaf Awareness mixed messages
B&H Buses Single/Return pictures
Prevented from contributing to speeches – public debating forums (no BSL)
Need dedicated text line in council – info from text quick and easy
Access to culture/theatre is limited
Cinemaviewings are restricted
NHS waiting time make it discriminatory as I need an interpreter
Carers assist with.....contacting services
Council buildings (that are quite old) need to be better acoustically and also new building projects should ensure good acoustics are specified and taken into account as well as looking at making retrospective improvements to various BHCC buildings to improve their acoustic qualities
Parks & Countryside – information is limited for Deaf people
Deaf people struggle with the English language and therefore do not have the confidence to go into libraries
Museum & Royal Pavilion have good access to information; they provide a device which translates information into sign language and some of the staff have basic knowledge of how to communicate with Deaf people.
A lot of information is available online but not in BSL – City of Westminster website is a good example – clear, simple and easy to navigate – also Lewes and Eastbourne council website displays very clear information, icons work well.
As someone working closely with Deaf young people to provide teaching and support at school, how confident do you feel in your communication skills?
Hamilton Lodge School is a hub of Deaf culture and BSL. The school now offers BSL levels 1 and 2 to the public (participants need to pay for themselves)
Students at Hamilton Lodge School are able to accredit their skills by taking BSL level 1 and 2 (Signature Sign Language exams). Certain criteria needs to be met.
Deaf organisations are proposing there is a GSCE in BSL for both Deaf and hearing young people
I am employed by the council working in the Library Service -previously my colleagues had access to funding to do Level 1 BSL but when I went to do it in 2014 the funding had been cut. Some colleagues in Libraries are currently doing a short course funded through the council. Once I had my level 1 I was able to communicate in a basic way with Deaf customers – I am now doing my Level 3 – paid for privately and I am using flexi time to attend the training
Deaf Awareness Week held annually is good a opportunity to raise awareness and help change the culture
As a new member of staff with the council's SEN Team I am beginning BSL Level 1 training with the in-house Deaf Family Support Worker who is a BSL teacher. There are opportunities to practise with colleagues at work
SEN Team use basic Makaton with pre-school children with speech and language difficulties
SEN Team Deaf BSL Family Support Worker also teaches BSL to teachers and teachers assistants
All staff at Bevendean Hearing Support Facility are taught BSL levels 1 and 2.
All staff in the Sensory Needs Team are BSL level 1 and offered level 2

NOCS family sign language curriculum taught to parents to pre-school children to encourage signing as part of language development
This is a lack of opportunity for Deaf parents to develop their skills; something as simple as hearing parents chatting to each other at the school gate when picking up their child; they share information, tips and daily information, that Deaf parents miss out on
How do you like to lead an active lifestyle in the city?
Sussex Deaf Association tried to start a Deaf youth club but young Deaf people did not attend
Young people walk about in the evening and go to MacDonald's or 'hang out' in Churchill Square
Deaf sports, events, arts etc., + events + arts etc. better organised in Hamilton Lodge School or a Sports Centre?
Orienteering
A Deaf working group could visit a sports session to make suggestions to make it more Deaf friendly
Gentle exercise Deaf friendly i.e. ballroom dancing ideal for older people
Line dancing sessions challenging because difficult to keep visual contact with signer /ballroom dancing
Taster sessions for Deaf only groups in sports centres
Theatres should be accessible – they need an interpreter
Problems with studio classes specifically yoga – hard to follow the class
GP Wellbeing referral – prefer to be referred to Deaf wellbeing person/trainer not hearing/interpreter – more accessible and helps you feel more confident
Yoga class – visual prompts? Instructed on TV? Closed eyes/complicated Freestyle instructor – prefer Deaf yoga teacher – more comfortable.
Deaf yoga teacher had contacted council's Health trainers to offer services for Deaf people referred by GP – but had no response.
Difficult to interact with hearing group feel left out due to communication
King Alfred Leisure Centre school swimming classes – worked well but teacher needs awareness that without hearing aids Deaf child finds it difficult to hear - and got into trouble for not listening
The acoustics in Leisure Centres make it difficult for Deaf children to hear at children's parties etc. Staff at parties also need awareness if there a Deaf child present
Cycling / Swimming popular activities for older Deaf people
Activity choice is limited due to communication issues
Not many places are supportive for Deaf people
Action on Hearing Loss – provide awareness training (at cost)
Deaf Children may prefer to do sports activities with school team/staff – so that communication needs are met

Appendix 2 - What are the council currently doing for and with our customers who are Deaf and BSL Users?

Corporate

- Signed BSL Charter Jun 17
- Increasing BSL communication skills for council staff by providing basic BSL sign language courses June 2017
- BSL trained member of staff in Registrars, Adult Social Care Assessment Team, Revenues & Benefit, Active for Life
- ICT - Deaf User Group for testing pages on council's new website
- Promotes the use of qualified and registered BSL interpreters
- Uses BSL signed DVDs on the council's website to convey key public messages
- Brighton Centre has achieved Gold Status with the 'Attitude is Everything Charter', which covers the whole process a Deaf customer will experience from seeing shows advertised, buying a ticket, getting to, around and from the venue and watching the show
- Library services provides monthly signed story time for under 5s and space for community groups to meet, ie Brighton Deaf Café
- Royal Pavilion & Museum Services Access Advisory Group (includes Deaf and BSL Users) meets every three months

SEN Team

- Holds Children's Hearing Services Working Group meetings which include two parent reps
- Sends out bi-annual questionnaires to families to receive feedback
- Provides 6-8 week training in BSL to parents, siblings, grandparents as part of the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Sign Language curriculum.
- Provides specialist advice and support
- Provides a specialised hearing support facility at Bevendean School for moderate to profoundly deaf children who may also have significant language delay or other educational needs.
- Offers BSL support to pre-school children's families
- Promotes NDCS activities which gives opportunities to meet other Deaf children and runs "springboard" and 'time out' events
- Supports BSL supported and statemented students to accredit their BSL learning
- Provides specialist teachers and Family Support Worker who are native/fluent in BSL or have BSL level 1

Engagement

- 2017 Met with various Deaf representatives groups and providers to build relationships and seek advice on the way forward to engagement with the wider Deaf community including 2 engagement workshops

Commissioning

- Communities & Third Sector Prospectus monitoring returns report sustained and improved engagement and communication with the Deaf and BSL Users community, stronger relationship building with Action Deafness, and improved and raised the profile of Deaf and BSL users at various meetings held with local organisations.