

Deafness and hearing loss - Methods of communication



Information sheet G2

January 2020

This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape, disc and can be translated into different languages.

This information sheet is about:

- Ways of communicating if you are Deaf or hard of hearing
- Where to learn lipreading and British Sign Language
- Communication support and interpreting services

Under the Equality Act 2010, service providers and businesses should make provision for special communication needs. This includes enabling Deaf and hard of hearing people to access services by textphone, fax, email and SMS text messaging. Service providers should also provide BSL interpreters, lip speakers, notetakers and speech-to-text operators for all meetings and appointments. This includes health and social care providers, education, benefits agencies, housing associations and businesses. You should request an interpreter when you make an appointment.

There are several different ways of communicating if you have a hearing loss.

The **Action on Hearing Loss** website has lots of information about different ways of communicating.

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/your-hearing/ways-of-communicating
(hyperlink)

Lipreading

Lipreading involves watching the mouth movements of the speaker and identifying sounds from lip patterns. It is suitable for people who lose their hearing, but it takes some time to learn and requires a lot of practice. Lipreading groups are available throughout the county as described below.

Lipreading Communication Support Groups

Somerset County Council is working in partnership with deafPLUS to provide Communication Skills groups.

The aim of the groups is to provide an opportunity for people to learn and practise their lipreading skills in a friendly, informal atmosphere, and to share experiences and feelings about living with a hearing loss.

For more information, contact your social worker if you have one, or contact **deafPLUS** on:

Phone: 01225 446 555 (voice)

Fax: 01225 333505

Email: bath.office@deafplus.org (email hyperlink)

British Sign Language (BSL)

This is the language of the Deaf Community which is very different from English. It is used by over 30,000 people in Great Britain, but, like English, has regional dialects. It has its own grammatical system and word order. Most BSL users were born Deaf, or became Deaf at a young age, but anyone can learn it.

Courses in British Sign Language

Most local classes are for beginners or up to Level 1 or Level 2. Contact your local college for more information:

Communication methods

Everyday communication can be one of the most frustrating problems for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. There are methods of communication support to make this easier.

Finger spelling

This is not a language but is used with sign languages to spell words for which a sign is not known, or for proper nouns, for example, people's names. There is a special sign for each letter of the alphabet and the signs can be put together to make words. This is known as the Manual Alphabet. It is often helpful for lipreaders to learn finger spelling to clarify words which are difficult to lipread.

Sign supported English (SSE)

This is often mistaken for BSL, but although it uses BSL signs, it also uses English grammar, so you can sign the key words of spoken English. It is often used by hearing people communicating with Deaf people and is widely understood amongst BSL users. Some local classes are Sign Supported English, not British Sign Language. The signs are the same, but the word order is different.

Signed English

This is only used to teach grammatical spoken English, where a sign is required for every word, or occasionally in formal interpreting situations such as Courts of Law. Basic signs are the same as BSL and SSE.

Note-taking – electronic or manual

Note takers are trained to take notes for deaf people in meetings, on courses or at other events. They will write notes in a way that suits you.

They do not re-produce speech word for word. Deaf people often use note-takers as they are lipreading or watching an interpreter and are unable to write notes for themselves. Electronic note-taking uses 2 laptops, one for the deaf person and one for the note-taker. The note-taker types a summary of what is said, and it appears on the deaf person's screen. Individual speakers are identified, and the deaf person can take away a hard copy of the notes at the end.

Speech- to- text

Speech-to-text operators can produce a real time, written record of what is being spoken. They use palantype, or stenograph systems to type every word that is being spoken by the speaker. The spelling is 95 per cent correct and the remaining words are spelt roughly as they sound. Speech-to-text is useful for meetings or conferences. The text can be read from a computer screen or at large events projected onto a big screen. Speech-to-text is suitable for deaf and hard of hearing people who can read English at high speed, for long periods of time.

Email and text messaging

Email and SMS text messaging is a very popular method of communication with Deaf and hard of hearing people. These systems have made communication with hearing people much easier.

Fax

Some Deaf and hard of hearing people use fax machines to communicate.

Cued speech

This is where specific hand shapes are used with normal speech to denote certain letters. This enables lipreaders to distinguish sounds that have similar lip patterns.

Action on Hearing Loss Communications Service (formerly RNID)

This service provides sign language interpreters, deafblind interpreters, lip-speakers, speech-to-text reporters and note-takers.

Action on Hearing Loss Communications Service

Action on Hearing Loss provides a communications support service, which includes British Sign Language interpreters, electronic note takers, speech-to-text and lip speakers. Contact on:

Phone: 0845 685 8003 (voice)

Fax: 02890 327616

Email: csusouthwest@hearingloss.org.uk (email hyperlink)

SignTranslate

SignTranslate is a web-based computer programme for doctors/health professionals to use to communicate with BSL users. It is not a replacement for a face-to-face interpreter but can be used when it is difficult to book an interpreter quickly. The computer shows a BSL video clip of the doctor's questions. The Deaf person can answer "yes" or "no" or choose from pictures on a screen. The programme can also access an online interpreter through a webcam.

Ask your GP to install SignTranslate at your surgery.

Sign Health

Sign Health is a charity dedicated to making sure Deaf people get the same sort of access as hearing people to healthcare and health information.

Telephone: 020 3947 2600

Fax: 020 8772 3242

SMS/text message: 07966 976749

Email: communications@signhealth.org.uk (email hyperlink)

Website: <https://www.signhealth.org.uk/>



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Support with using the phone

Text Relay / Next Generation Text Service

The Text Relay service connects people who cannot hear on the phone with other people, using a text-to-voice and voice-to-text service. You can automatically connect to this service by dialling a prefix number before the telephone or textphone number you require.

To use this, you will need a text phone, which is a telephone with a keyboard and display. The Deaf person can speak or type into the phone and the message will go to an operator. The operator then relays the message by typing or speech, to the person you are ringing. The system operates in reverse for people wanting to contact you.

If you use a textphone, dial 18001 in front of the full telephone number of the person you wish to call.

People who want to contact you by phone can call you by dialling 18002 in front of your full phone number.

The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The Text Relay service is part of the Next Generation Text Service.

The Next Generation Text Service performs the same functions, using specialist software or an app which can be downloaded on to a smartphone, tablet or computer.

Using the app, you can type to a relay assistant who will speak your words to the person you're calling. The relay assistant will type their reply so you can read it on your display.

If you can't hear on the phone - the relay assistants will type what the other person is saying so that you can read their words.

If you can't speak on the phone - type what you want to say, and the relay assistant will speak your words to the other person.

If you still want to use a textphone – the Next Generation Text Service works with textphones in the same way as the old Text Relay.

For more information on how this works, contact the Next Generation Text Service.

NGT
c/o Internal Box 14
Telephone House
170-175 Moor Lane
Preston
PR1 1BA
Phone 0800 7311 888
Textphone and NGT Lite app 0800 500 888
Website: <https://www.ngts.org.uk/>

Your opportunity to feedback

We welcome your comments about the services you receive. If you would like to tell us what you think, please either:

- Contact us on our website www.somerset.gov.uk (hyperlink), or
- Phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224

SMS text: 07781 482858

Email: generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

- Contact the Adults and Health Customer Experience Officer:
Floor B2
County Hall
Taunton
TA1 4DY
Email: customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk (email hyperlink)

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