

Sign Vision

1 2 & 3

Conferences Report

*The Story of Sign Vision events and the
Devon Charter for British Sign Language.*

Devon BSL Charter Group
January 2008

Glossary

BSL = British Sign Language.

BSL has been officially recognised by the British Government as a language since 2003, although it has evolved over hundreds of years. It is the first or preferred language of nearly 70,000 Deaf people in the UK; that's more people than speak Welsh or Gaelic. This means that approximately 1,500 Devon residents are Deaf.

'Deaf' with a capital D describes someone who is 'culturally' Deaf; usually someone with profound hearing loss, who uses British Sign Language as their first or preferred method of communication. People who are 'deaf' (small d) are people with a hearing impairment whose first or preferred language is English.

Please note that some of the comments collected in this report are in a BSL form of English.





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Foreword



By Jo Hooper and Paul Valentine

Although partially deaf myself, my first encounter with Deaf culture was at the first Sign Vision conference in March 2005. The thing that struck me most was that I was 'in the minority' – I was the one who needed the Interpreter because I couldn't understand what was being said. I realised there was a whole world out there, a world of visual communication that mainstream culture had somehow missed; you might only be aware of BSL as an everyday language for many if you happen to turn on the television late at night or Sunday and catch a glimpse of See Hear or a few programmes with an Interpreter Signing in the corner.

This was my experience at a conference one Saturday. Returning to my hearing world, I wondered, what was it like for Deaf people every day - accessing public services, shops, education and leisure facilities, information and social activities alongside the 'hearing majority' who do not Sign?

Through Sign Vision events and the development of the Devon BSL Charter I have come to realise that Devon's Deaf community is probably one of the most socially excluded communities. Yet around 70,000 people across the UK are Deaf and users of British Sign Language. Many may visit Devon as a holiday destination.

Deaf people do not necessarily regard themselves as 'disabled'. They are proud of their culture and language.

Why is Deaf culture and British Sign Language not more widely understood? Why do we continue to see such poor practice such as announcements only made in audio (which also disadvantages those with mild hearing loss)? Why, with advancements in technologies such as the internet and digital TV, do we not see more things produced using Deaf BSL users (with the interpretation into English – not the other way round)?

When we looked at Devon in detail, we found that there were significant problems with the infrastructure. There were no BSL courses beyond Level 2 (Level 2 is the equivalent of a GCSE, BSL courses go up to Level 4) and the Level 2 courses were few and far between across a large county. There was also a significant shortage of Interpreters – between 6 and 8 across the South West peninsula. This situation was causing a communication breakdown and division of cultures - between Deaf and hearing communities.

The impact of deafness means that a lot of peripheral learning opportunities are missed as a Deaf person does not get to overhear or pick up general conversations or communications. This can have an impact on how people perceive someone with a hearing loss and how they present themselves. It may also mean that extra effort is needed when informing or discussing things with a Deaf person because their 'starting point' may be different to that of a hearing person.



Sign Vision has been a valuable experience for all those involved. It has brought Deaf people and service providers together to try to resolve some of the issues, improve understanding and break down barriers. However, all those involved have recognised the need to reach out further and raise more awareness. The campaign does not stop here.

This report has been written for five reasons:

- **To inspire other agencies and businesses in Devon to sign up to the Devon Charter for British Sign Language and support future Sign Vision events.**
- **To feed back to communities the progress that has been made.**
- **To inspire other counties and cities to develop their own consultation events and Charters for British Sign Language if they have not done so already.**
- **To capture 'history in the making'.**
- **For the Devon BSL Charter Group and its agencies to reflect on Sign Vision events over the past three years and decide future actions.**

We hope that this report and the ongoing work of the Devon BSL Charter Group will make a difference. Real improvements have already been made.

We are sending this to Chief Executives and Directors of public and private sector service providers, to raise awareness of what customers are asking for and help make improvements to services.

If you have not been involved before and feel somewhat overwhelmed at the scale of the task in hand but want to get involved, then just choose something you feel you can achieve. Every little bit helps – just by introducing a method of contacting by SMS text and using plain English can make a big difference: start with Pledge 1 of the Charter.

Jo Hooper
Chair of the Devon BSL Charter Group from June 2005
Corporate Equality Officer, Devon County Council
January 2008

At Sign Vision 3, I was delighted with the success. Sign Vision 3 was the result of 3 years work and was only possible because of the work by the Charter Group. The events are a unique opportunity for the local Deaf community to get together to discuss issues that affect them.

When the initial planning for Sign Vision 1 started, we used ideas from Bristol City Council and a major influence in our work was the recognition of BSL by the British Government.



However that doesn't mean that our work is now done, this is just the start! Now we have the official recognition we need to continue the work so that we get real equality for Deaf people in all aspects of society.

Sign Vision 3 was very successful; it was a great opportunity for the Deaf community and service providers to discuss realistic ways to achieve better access. Sign Vision 1 and 2 were more about increasing awareness, but now we are getting down to the practicalities.

I believe the work of the Charter Group has been a real example of people starting to make changes to services.

What I really want to see happening for us now is to move on from a paternalistic, patronising attitude about the 'poor' Deaf community.

I want all Deaf people to be aware of their rights, be informed and play an active part in society.

I want communication to be improved to the point that it is seamless between the two worlds – either through proper Interpreter provision, or more people using good quality BSL.

It's not been easy but we have made a start. The Devon Charter is out there – so please use it.

Paul Valentine

**Presenter at Sign Vision events and member of the Devon BSL Charter Group
Manager of BSL Services, Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education**

More information about the Devon BSL Charter Group, the Devon Charter for British Sign Language and any forthcoming Sign Vision events can be obtained from:

www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter





Sign Vision Profile

In March 2003 Paul Valentine (Deaf Project Co-ordinator, Living Options Devon), Angela Welch (Devon County Council, equality lead) and Catherine Mistry (Chief Executive, Living Options Devon) visited Bristol City Council to see a presentation on BSL recognition. They learned how local areas could develop their own Charter for BSL (based on the one developed by the British Deaf Association) and, in developing a Devon Charter, it was important to involve local Deaf people, to identify issues relevant to their area. From this visit, Sign Vision and the Devon BSL Charter were born.

Sign Vision has been an annual event which brings together Deaf people and service providers to address the needs of Deaf people in Devon and celebrate BSL and Deaf culture.

With access to public services very much in the spotlight through the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Equality Duty, Sign Vision was designed to raise public service provider's awareness of their duties in meeting the specific needs of Deaf people.

The first Sign Vision was held in March 2005. At that event Deaf people expressed a great deal of frustration. Many barriers in accessing a wide range of services and information were highlighted. The second event, in July 2006, looked at those barriers further in the context of a newly launched Devon BSL Charter, and explored solutions and best practice. The third Sign Vision was held in October 2007 with an emphasis on providing new information and feedback on progress.

Each year Sign Vision has tried to do something different and by the third year it juggled a challenging 14 workshops, ran a crèche, made video calls and operated a demonstration recycling bus outside!

Planning Sign Vision events has not been easy. It usually starts a few months after the last event with thoughts on 'what to do next year'. About 6 months before the event a planning sub-group is set up, and about 3 months before the event the 'engines' really 'get into gear' with pre-event advertising, bookings and firming up the content of the workshops and presentations.

Good co-ordination is crucial. Delegates have a variety of communication support needs including lip-speakers and speech-to-text typists (live subtitles) as well as BSL/English Interpreters. There may be other access issues that need to be addressed, and the workshop rooms have to be tested for potential 'bleed through' between loop systems. Skilled people are 'recruited' to facilitate the workshops, Interpreters are booked, Deaf people are consulted on the content and hearing presenters are briefed on Deaf Awareness and running workshops for BSL users.



It has also been important to ensure that all information is presented in an accessible way – ensuring signage is in picture format, and plain English/symbols is used as much as possible in conference literature. Another key requirement has been to provide tables and chairs where refreshments are served so that people can Sign and drink or eat at the same time.

Every year the BSL Charter Group review what progress has been made so that feedback can be given at the event – this reflects the requirement for on-going dialogue as laid out in Pledge 5 of the Devon BSL Charter.

The day itself has always been lively and well attended. At Devon’s County Hall in Exeter, the whole of the Committee Suites and Chamber are taken over so that more than a hundred people can enjoy the day. There has always been plenty of opportunity for social networking over refreshments. Food is a big thing in Deaf culture, so it’s important to provide plenty, especially desserts!

The success of Sign Vision has been strong partnership working, continuous investment, dedication and involvement.

The skills, knowledge and passions of those involved in its planning and delivery should not be underestimated.



Outcomes: Recommendations and Achievements of Sign Vision Events

Sign Vision and the Devon BSL Charter have created change. From Deaf Awareness training, new SMS text messaging and BSL videos, to Deaf inclusion workers and BSL tuition for Deaf pupils. More information about progress is available in subsequent sections.

There is still more to be achieved.

Deaf people who have attended Sign Vision have become more aware of their rights and, in some cases they have become aware of the challenges services have in making change (for example, where technology isn't able to support a desired outcome).

Common themes (from keynote speeches and workshops) which run through the events include:

- **The importance of Deaf Awareness training.**
- **The need for key staff/front-line staff to have BSL skills ranging from Level 1 to Level 4 as appropriate. And being aware of language limitations at each level.**
- **The importance of using a Registered Interpreter and not expecting a friend or family member to interpret, or member of staff 'with Level 1 or 2'.**
- **The need to improve the local infrastructure: more BSL courses and Interpreters.**
- **The need to continue to work together and recognise that we all have a responsibility and can make a difference.**
- **A request that the Government recognise BSL fully and place it on the National Curriculum as a language to be taught in schools alongside French, German etc (and not to treat it merely as a 'special needs/communication support' issue).**
- **Technology is important and breaks down isolation – use of SMS text, Internet videos in BSL, webcams etc.**
- **The importance of providing information in BSL where possible – at Sign Vision 3 it was suggested that a website is developed to provide information about services and 'Deaf friendly' businesses etc. in BSL.**
- **Use of plain English and 'easy read' (words with pictures/symbols) is vital – particularly in customer letters and forms.**
- **Visual alerting systems, subtitles and signage are needed alongside audio.**
- **The need to bring people together to communicate and reduce isolation.**

For more information, please see the full Devon BSL Charter:

www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter (English and BSL Versions available).







The day

On 19th March 2005 Devon County Council hosted the first conference that brought Deaf people and service providing organisations together to celebrate the two-year anniversary of the Government's formal recognition of British Sign Language as an official UK language. It was the first time an event like this had happened in Devon.

The event included personal stories, displays, demonstrations, workshops and speakers. It provided an ideal opportunity to move forward with the development of a 'Devon Charter for British Sign Language' to sign up to the British Deaf Association Charter which can be accessed at www.signcommunity.org.uk.

The event was planned by a partnership of Deaf people and local organisations through the Devon BSL Charter Group. Key players included the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI), Connexions, Devon County Council, Devon Fire and Rescue Service, Exeter City Council, Living Options Devon and the Royal School for the Deaf, Exeter.

Intended outcomes were for:

- People who work for public services to have an improved understanding of:
 - the experiences of Deaf people in Devon, their concerns and aspirations
 - their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act and how the British Deaf Association's Charter for BSL can help them fulfil their responsibilities to Deaf people.
- Deaf and hearing people to have increased their awareness of what BSL recognition means.
- Deaf people and service providing organisations to have had the opportunity to develop a new partnership and create a Devon Charter for BSL.

Main discussion points

Education, Employment and Training

1. BSL needs to be the teaching method for key skills education.
2. Need to gather/collect best practice and share best practice.
3. Set up support groups:
 - a. Peers
 - b. Families
 - c. Skills maintenance
4. Learning and Skills Council need help from the Deaf community to improve their services.

5. Separate discussions need to take place on education, employment and training.
6. Local authorities need to be more proactive at advertising their services and making information available in BSL friendly formats.
7. Provision of speech therapy needed for parents and children.
8. Employment Centres need Deaf awareness training and to improve support to Deaf people.
9. Mainstream BSL through educational structures.
10. Deaf awareness education needed for staff and wider community.
11. Continuous engagement is needed to develop and modernise services.
12. BSL should be a language option at an early age.

Interpreter Services

1. Need access to 24 hour service.
2. Improve emergency service awareness of availability of Interpreters.
3. Train (Rail) service providers need to know about access to interpreters. Also awareness within the Deaf community of availability.
4. NHS should improve access for Deaf people through technology.
5. Shortage of interpreters has negative impact. Commit to increase numbers.
6. Card to be carried by Deaf people giving information on how to access interpreters.
7. Agencies should provide clear guidance to professionals about when to use qualified interpreters.
8. More interpreters needed, particularly men and people from a range of different cultures.

Community Safety

1. Services should work in partnership to pool resources and share best practice.
2. Consider broader definition of hearing loss and deafness beyond BSL.
3. Agencies should sign up to BSL Charter but be aware of the commitment and resources needed.
4. More Deaf awareness training needed (delivered by Deaf people to staff at all levels including senior management).
5. Police and Fire Diversity Officers are a good point of contact to help promote messages in the community.
6. Continued involvement in developing joint solutions (by all sectors of the community) is key.
7. Alerting emergency services to look at solutions for Deaf people. (Text/Fax is preferable).
8. Enhance publicity/awareness of availability of smoke alarms for Deaf people.
9. Police should consider whether strobe light can be built into personal safety alarms.
10. Make interpreters available consistently across Police areas.
11. Ensure that employees at all levels of organisations are aware of guidelines on interpreters.



12. Police need to improve trust through Deaf Clubs.
13. Provide an alternative to handcuffs which prevent communication.

Leisure, Arts & Tourism

1. Co-ordination of services for Deaf people i.e. interpreters, visual packs (DVD), Deaf awareness training (staff).
2. Greater use of text messaging and computer messaging to inform the Deaf community.
3. Marketing of South West to Deaf community e.g. visual attractions, Deaf aware hotels, restaurants, Deaf centres and clubs.
4. Plain English needed (core information, subtitles).
5. More interpreters needed (preferably from Deaf community).

Transport

1. Visual indicators needed:
 - a. Where the bus is
 - b. Where the next stop is
 - c. At bus stops and train station
2. Driver training needed:
 - d. Be patient
 - e. Be aware
3. One travel card for the region = no confusion. Could it be free?
4. Communication with driver:
 - f. Free pass would make it easier – wouldn't have to discuss where going
 - g. Problems discussing unknown routes
 - h. Problems getting information from driver
5. Driver Deaf Awareness training needed.
6. Reservation of seats can be a problem.
7. Need Taxis to have SMS text facility.

Diary room video (interpreted).

2 Non-deaf people. 11 Deaf people.

1. I work for CVS, difficult to fund interpreters for courses for Deaf people. Negotiating with Exeter College but there are no specific funds for interpreting. Means it can be a struggle to be inclusive as there are not the funds to support. Need help with funding. (non-deaf)
2. Disappointed with the education workshop as the presentations were too long. Want more involvement from the Deaf community, not just talking. Think we all need to focus on the future and how to improve things not focus on the past. (Deaf)



3. Worried about Deaf children's education. Deaf schools are closing down and I'm worried about the affect this will have for Deaf children, especially Deaf children that have got hearing parents. What do the Deaf community think about the mainstreaming of Deaf children? Think the day has been fantastic! It's great to have an event like this locally, congratulations to all the organisers.(Non- deaf)
4. Think Deaf people should have free bus passes as communication is so bad. Bus drivers have no Deaf awareness, they have an attitude problem. It's so hard to communicate that it would be easier if we had a simple pass to show where we want to go so that we wouldn't have to worry about communication problems. (Deaf)
5. We need to improve access to services. Services need a lot more Deaf awareness training. Don't want to wait another 30 years for things to improve. Need things to change now. Government needs to support improving services. Need 24 hour interpreting, need a central agency especially for Health and Police. (Deaf)
6. I'm at college, find it hard and I'm often left out as not many people can sign. Lots of hearing students want to learn BSL but not enough courses and too expensive. (Deaf)
7. Great to have a day like this locally, fantastic day, thank you. I've really enjoyed working here as a steward. I go to college but find it hard to communicate with hearing people as they can't sign. Need hearing people to be patient and understand me. (Deaf)
8. I have a complaint about having no interpreter at a job interview. RNID were booking me an interpreter, they told me that they couldn't get me an interpreter as they were all full. I have asked 2 interpreters today and they told me that the RNID had never contacted them. Feel like the RNID lied to me, need smooth structure. (Deaf)
9. Fantastic day; really impressed with the whole day. Great to see Deaf people involved. I've loved working as a steward. The presenters in the morning were amazing. (Deaf)
10. Loved the day, really enjoyed it, the presenters were inspiring, loved the history part. (Deaf)
11. Worked today as a steward, loved it, want to do it again next year. Think it is great to bring the Deaf and the Hearing worlds together. But not happy about BBC 1 and 2 subtitles. They are not accurate; the colours don't change when it is a different person talking. Means I miss a lot of information. (Deaf)
12. Fantastic day, great way of raising awareness for everyone. Really pleased to have a local event. Need to make sure it is an annual event. (Deaf)
13. Great day, need to make sure it becomes an annual local event. Need to make sure the charter includes all services, the charter is about Deaf people's access and this affects all services. Deaf people have a right to information in their own language. Need to make sure the Charter is practical, makes a difference but most importantly includes the views of local Deaf people.



Part 2 - Development of the Devon Charter for British Sign Language and 'Sign up to Sign'



Following Sign Vision 1, the Devon BSL Charter group developed the Devon BSL Charter. An Education sub-group met to consider 'pledge 3' which covers the education of children and young people. The Devon BSL Charter Group was represented by: public sector agencies including Devon County Council, Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council, Primary Care Trust, Devon Fire and Rescue, Connexions Devon and Cornwall; Living Options Devon (Deaf Project) and the Association of Sign Language Interpreters.

The Devon BSL Charter:

The Charter contains a series of pledges that are aimed at improving the lives of Deaf people in Devon – providing a framework for organisations on how to ensure Deaf people access services and education fully and have their language needs met on contact.

The Charter contains a number of commitments which organisations will either have in place, or will be working towards achieving within a reasonable timescale (where there are significant problems with 'internal' resources or 'external' provisions such as BSL tuition in the area).

Organisations signed up to the Charter can achieve a 'Working Towards' or 'Achievement' award for the pledges.

It is expected that the Charter will give Deaf people, who use BSL, a basis on which to assert their rights to receive a minimum standard of service from an organisation. It translates the legal duties of the Disability Discrimination Act into practical, meaningful solutions.



Overarching commitments

In signing up to this Charter:

1. We recognise and acknowledge Deaf culture and British Sign Language fully.
2. We will work with partners to develop innovative solutions.
3. We are committed to promoting this Charter through service level agreements, contracts and taxi licensing.
4. We will develop action plans to implement pledges relevant to the organisation, commit funds and resources to implement the actions, and seek other funding opportunities from different sources.
5. We will work towards increasing the number and diversity of BSL/English interpreters locally and providing better access to interpreters.



6. We will work in partnership with agencies by promoting issues faced by Deaf people.
7. We will raise awareness and lobby government organisations to increase funding and resources to enable Deaf people to feel fully included in society.

Not all pledges will be relevant to all organisations and therefore an organisation may be exempted from a pledge that is not relevant to its business/service (e.g. Pledge 3 will only apply to educational establishments).

Pledge 1

Improve access for Deaf people to local services and information

We are committed to...

1. Promoting awareness raising/training of British Sign Language awareness and Deaf culture awareness corporately, in particular with front-line staff.
2. Implementing policies on the use of registered BSL/English interpreters (IRP and/or ASLI Member) and raising awareness of the use of registered interpreters.
3. Providing information in Plain English, and BSL when requested.
4. Ensuring our signage and buildings are accessible and clear.
5. Ensuring services we provide are accessible by use of technology such as SMS, text-phones, fax, and email or video-phone.
6. Adapting our web-pages to be more 'BSL friendly'.

Pledge 2

Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language

We are committed to...

1. Increasing the number and range of BSL courses in the area by working in partnership with learning providers and funders of learning to share best practice, promote resources and identify gaps in the market.
2. Ensuring tutors are native (Deaf) or fluent (Hearing) users of BSL, with a comprehensive knowledge of Deaf culture. 'Fluent' tutors will be qualified to NVQ level 3 (or equivalent) in BSL; by 2010, 'native' tutors will all have reached NVQ level 3. Ideally tutors will reach Level 4 BSL, and this will be encouraged.
3. Ensuring tutors have currently recognised Teacher Training qualifications and their skills are regularly updated.
4. Improving access to financial support for parents/guardians and siblings of Deaf children and young people who wish to learn BSL.

Pledge 3

Give all Deaf children the option of learning BSL and English

We are committed to...

1. Defining 'bilingual education'.



2. Offering Deaf children the option of learning BSL alongside English, taking into account communication and education needs as a child develops.
3. Ensuring children and families are supported from the point of diagnosis of deafness onwards, encouraging children to acquire age-appropriate language skills, taking into account additional needs.
4. Enabling Deaf children to be flexible enough to make a choice over BSL or English as a 'preferred language'.
5. Providing balanced information on the ranges of options to parents/guardians to help them support their child in being flexible about language.
6. Offering newly diagnosed young children and their families weekly access to BSL tutors.
7. Giving Deaf children/students the same educational opportunities in order to achieve good levels of attainment, social responsibility and citizenship.
8. Raising awareness of BSL and Deaf culture within the education/school community.
9. Developing the skills of staff who work with Deaf children/students so that they can communicate in BSL up to a minimum of N/SVQ level 2 or equivalent. Providing opportunities for key staff to train to level 3 and 4 where required.
10. Increasing the number of qualified Deaf staff within Education.
11. Providing opportunities for Deaf children/students to meet with Deaf peers and role models.

Pledge 4

Ensure key staff working with Deaf people meet minimum standards of BSL skills

We are committed to...

1. Ensuring staff who deal regularly with Deaf people face-to-face are trained to a minimum of NVQ Level 2 in BSL.
2. Ensuring staff who have involved dealings with Deaf people, on a daily basis, are trained to a minimum of NVQ Level 3 in BSL.
3. Ensuring staff maintain their skills and keep them regularly updated.

Pledge 5

Consult with our local Deaf community on a regular basis

We are committed to...

1. At an early stage, seeking views of Deaf people and providing information, ideally face-to-face.
2. Meaningful involvement where the outcomes are recorded and evaluated, and fed-back to those involved.
3. Supporting Deaf people and their representatives so they can engage fully in the organisation's consultation processes.
4. Ongoing dialogue between the organisation and Deaf community.
5. Giving Deaf people the opportunity to influence the consultation/planning agenda.



6. Working in partnership with other organisations to streamline consultation processes and avoid consultation over-load on small community groups.

The full Charter, which also contains 'suggested evidence' is available from www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter.

Launching the Charter

The new Charter was launched at the 'Sign up to Sign' Conference on 9th February 2006, at Devon County Council, County Hall, Exeter.

The afternoon event started at 1pm for a networking lunch, followed by presentations from the Devon BSL Charter Group. The aims of the event were to inspire others to sign up to the Charter.

The following invitation was sent out to Chief Executives and Non-executive Directors, Council Leaders and Community, Social Inclusion or Equality Portfolio Holders, Equality/Diversity and Social Inclusion Officers, PR/Communications Officers and Business Service Managers:

The final stage of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 was implemented in October 2004. You probably thought about making physical changes to your buildings: installing loop systems for deaf people, ramps for your main entrance, wheelchair accessible toilets and rooms. Did you think about the changes you would need to make for Deaf people who use sign language?

British Sign Language (BSL) is the first or preferred language of around 70,000 people in the UK. British Sign Language has its own grammar and vocabulary; therefore a BSL user will view English as a 'second language' and may have difficulties receiving and giving information in written form.

Deaf people do not have full access to information and services that hearing people take for granted, including education, health and employment. Without BSL, Deaf people are disadvantaged in many ways.

Since a large consultation conference with Deaf people in March 2005, a group from voluntary and public sector organisations in Devon have been working to improve access to services, interpreters and sign language courses through the development of a Devon Charter for British Sign Language.

Find out how you can ensure your services and businesses are Deaf-friendly, and why your organisation should want to sign up to the Devon Charter.



In addition to the development of the Charter, Living Options Devon, with support from public sector agencies, commissioned research into the provision of Sign Language Interpreting in the area. It was known that there was a shortage of Interpreters in the area, compounded by the lack of BSL/Interpreting courses available locally and increased travel of Interpreters across a large rural peninsula. The research aimed to find out what provision of Interpreting was needed for the area. The report is now available from Living Options Devon or www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter.

In preparation for Sign Vision 2, the Devon BSL Charter Group considered what progress it had made with the Charter, which had only just been launched:

Progress developing the Charter/campaign

- ✓ Wrote and launched a BSL Charter for Devon based upon comments made at Sign Vision 1 and a consultation activity at Exeter Deaf Club.
- ✓ Gave time limits to each of the Charter pledges (recognising they were ambitious).
- ✓ Worked with BBC Spotlight to raise awareness of the Charter (programme broadcast March 2006).
- ✓ Wrote statements for the Press on the launch of the Charter.
- ✓ Asked organisations to Sign Up to the Charter.
- ✓ Asked organisations to develop action plans when signing up to the Charter.
- ✓ Developed a webpage www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter.

Progress with the Sign Vision event

- ✓ Organised Sign Vision 2.
- ✓ Expressed desire to run Sign Vision events every year.
- ✓ Applied for Big Lottery funding to make the events bigger and better (unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful).

We couldn't

- × Hold an event over the whole weekend (we couldn't get enough sponsorship funding).
- × Likewise, hold an event more than once a year.

Progress with Interpreter Services

- ✓ Commissioned research in to the provision of Interpreter services.
- ✓ Rolled out a policy and comprehensive guidance on booking interpreters and translators so all staff know how to access the service. (Exeter City Council)



Progress with Access to services/information (Pledge 1)

- ✓ Introduced free bus passes for all disabled people. The bus passes are administered by Devon County Council, under the Devon-wide banner but they are the responsibility of, and funded by, District Councils.
- ✓ Developed a Devon Access Pass to help people communicate with bus drivers. (Devon County Council)
- ✓ Developed a BSL video on how to contact the council and make a complaint/comment. (Devon County Council)
- ✓ Ran Deaf Awareness training sessions and some staff are undertaking BSL training. (Devon County Council)
- ✓ Promoted Deaf/BSL Awareness training in the Charter.
- ✓ Funded Customer Service staff to go on Level 1 training. (Exeter City Council)
- ✓ Organised in house BSL taster courses to encourage staff from across the organisation to learn BSL. (Exeter City Council)

Progress with Learning/Teaching BSL (Pledge 2)

- The Devon BSL Charter Group has taken this up with the Learning and Skills Council at a national level.

Progress with BSL/English for all Children – Education (Pledge 3)

Devon County Council:

- ✓ Applied for funding to appoint another Deaf Worker, to ensure weekly visits to all preschool children who want BSL.
- ✓ Raised awareness with Schools – Deaf awareness week and inviting to Sign up to the Charter.
- ✓ Started BSL training courses for staff in pre school and foundation stage education where requested, parents of Deaf children are welcome.
- ✓ Informed parents of free sign classes at the school for the Deaf.
- ✓ Established a monthly parent group for babies and preschool Deaf children called 'Happy Hands' in Exeter. A BSL session takes place each time run by a Deaf worker.
- ✓ Established termly meetings with Hearing Support Centres and advisory staff to investigate how to work together and take the charter forward, action plans to be written by 4th July.
- ✓ Staff have been trained to assess BSL development on the national assessment tests and provide advice on how to develop individual BSL skills.
- ✓ All students using BSL at primary and lower secondary school have been assessed this year.



- ✓ Implementation of the Early Support Programme Protocol to assess development of BSL skills in pre school children.
- ✓ Investigating how to get individually included children to meet other Deaf peers, through planned visits, video conferencing and voluntary organisations i.e. National Deaf Children's Society.

Progress with Key staff working with Deaf people (e.g. regular direct contact) meet minimum standards (Pledge 4)

- We were unable to confirm progress at this early stage

Progress with Consulting with Deaf people (Pledge 5)

- ✓ Developed Pledge 5 and taken on board all the points.
- ✓ Support for Sign Vision 2.
- ✓ Set up a text messaging service for consultations (Devon County Council).
- ✓ Visited the Deaf Club on a regular basis to consult on Customer Services (Devon County Council).
- ✓ Worked with Exeter Deaf Club to develop our new Customer Service Centre (Exeter City Council).





The day

July 1st 2006 was a hot summer's day. 82 Deaf people and 44 representatives from public and voluntary organisations across Devon descended on County Hall for the second instalment of Sign Vision.

The main focus of the conference was the new Devon Charter for British Sign Language, launched earlier in the year. Sign Vision 2 aimed to continue the progress made and reinforce the relationship between the Deaf community and service providers; to present an opportunity to learn more about each other's culture and services and to discuss practical ways to implement the new Devon BSL Charter. Places were available to Deaf people (their partners, and parents of Deaf children) and representatives from organisations who were committed to, or considering signing up to, the Devon BSL Charter.

Keynote presenter was Clive Mason. Few people have done more to highlight issues facing deaf people than Clive. He has worked for many years as a Sign Media Consultant and is a long-standing presenter and reporter on the BBC's 'See Hear'. An inspirational Deaf icon, Clive was recently given a *Remark!* lifetime achievement award for Deaf media. We were very pleased that Clive returned to our annual Sign Vision event. 11 workshops were held and delegates were treated to a 'signed song' entertainer, Charles Hamilton, who had everyone laughing during lunchtime.

During the day, many issues and recommendations were highlighted:

Deaf people were saying that it's mainly simple changes that are needed to make services better. For example, staff should make sure their face can be seen and they speak clearly and directly when dealing with a customer who has a hearing impairment. When someone is waiting for an appointment don't just call out their name – use some sort of sign too – like the number alerting system that the post office counters have.

Text messaging is popular with Deaf people so any service should make sure it has the facility to send and receive text alongside its usual telephone system and to advertise this to Deaf people through Deaf clubs etc. We were made aware that some taxi firms provide this now.

Deaf Awareness training will help and if you come into contact with Deaf people on a regular basis then training in British Sign Language will make a big difference.

If you need to have a conversation with someone who uses BSL and you do not have adequate BSL skills then you should book a Registered Interpreter. We are aware that there are a limited number of Interpreters across Devon – so bookings need to be made in



advance and services may need to get an interpreter from outside the region if one isn't available. It's not appropriate to expect a Deaf person to bring a family member or friend to interpret – there are issues of confidentiality, dignity and accuracy.

At the conference a unanimous vote was taken to request that BSL should be part of the Government's Language Curriculum in schools, at present only foreign/oral languages are considered.

The video diary room, information stands and a comments/questions 'graffiti wall' were available all day.

Main discussion points

Pledge 1: Improve access for Deaf people to local services and information

- Access outside 9 – 5, Monday – Friday is usually by telephone – need alternatives.
- Screens at receptions are a barrier for lip-reading if light is reflecting on screen.
- Audiology departments – poor practice. No Deaf awareness. TV in waiting room - no subtitles! People call your name!
- Time and money is wasted if not done properly first.
- People felt there had been some improvements.
- Using family members to help/interpret is humiliating.
- Emergencies – 999 – SMS text in 'real time' is not guaranteed – how can Deaf people contact emergencies by mobile phone?
- Poor behaviours – no eye contact, poor communication, lack of visual methods of communication.
- Turn up for appointments – no interpreter booked.

Recommendations:

- Need interpreter policy.
- Provide 'up front' awareness raising:
 - Train staff to make sure an interpreter can be arranged – ensure they know the procedure
 - Eye contact important/able to see face
 - All front line staff need basic awareness skills
 - How do organisations train staff when staff move on frequently? - ensure Deaf Awareness is part of induction!
 - Blood donor service needs to train staff in BSL. (Service policy insists that blood-donating pre-discussion is done on a 'one to one' basis only – won't allow interpreters even when ASLI explained ethics / code of practice).
- Responsibilities on both sides - Deaf people and organisations need to take responsibility; advise for Deaf people:



- Keep coming forward and claim rights - make a complaint if needs not met (i.e. an Interpreter is not booked)
- Ensure any notes about you say you need an Interpreter
- Keep records of any problems
- You are powerful! You have rights! Use them!
- Contact the Citizens Advice Bureau if have problems
- Remind services that before appointment you need an Interpreter – Organisation provides this (you shouldn't have to arrange or pay for it)
- Influence: Join Forums to raise a point e.g. PALS – Patient Advisory Liaison Service (Plymouth PALS need to liaise with ASLI / Living Options / Deaf Community).
- Make more use of technology i.e. Text messaging, interpret information on to DVD. Do not use just audio intercom systems.
- Interpreters are sometimes available last minute because of cancellations. Phone to check.
- If need help in an emergency – try SMS text – may be able to get help (just can't be guaranteed – but better than not trying at all).
- Services should acknowledge receipt of text.
- Pagers (e.g. those allocated to staff who need to be alerted of fire alarm) need to work across all areas (e.g. where staff go to lunch, breaks and toilets).
- Deaf awareness info available on Internet.
- Access to work / employer – provides equipment etc so should not have to go without and struggle in job.
- Seating arrangements/visual alerting systems such as customer numbers (like post office) – important so can see when it's your turn for your appointment (e.g. hospital waiting rooms).
- Use common sense!
- Nokia SMS with mini-com would work well – but expensive. Can it be subsidised?
- Lobby ministers to ensure government services on Internet all have BSL links on website.
- Please hurry up! And provide all types of communication e.g. text, interpreters, etc all over Devon

Best practice identified:

- Text facility to contact the AA.
- Fire service – Information line available through SMS text.
- Merseyside Police and Hampshire PLOD – Police Liaison Office for Deaf
 - Emergency number 8099?
 - GPS
 - Videophone relay with level 3 trained officer
 - CCTV
- Living Options – good practice.



- Interpreters are free to the individual (do not have to pay self) – PCT making sure policy in place across whole of Devon.
- Text messaging via Devon County Council contact centre now available.

Priorities identified:

- Deaf Awareness training (and build services around needs).
- Keep community up to date on new things (i.e. communication methods).
- Training on Loop Systems.
- Organisations such as emergency services liaise about best practice across country – equal across all areas.
- Visual systems visible to all.
- Basic signing skills.
- Advertise services and how to access well. Correct any misinformation. Make sure the right info is out there.
- Signing clubs for new signers / use Deaf employees.
- Out of Hours contact that doesn't rely purely on telephone.

Pledge 2: Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language

- Need to have more than one person to link with at the Learning and Skills Council nationally who should be co-ordinating BSL learning issues.
- Need more BSL courses in Devon.
- Need help with funding of level 3 - nearest course was in Southampton, so travel costs on top over 2 years. Nearest level 4 course in Dorset.
- Would be useful to have list of people who were willing to help with developing evidence portfolio for level 3 and could sign to the right standard (quality issues).
- Issues around Sign Supported English (SSE) being used, not true BSL: structure and syntax of BSL different to English – WEA is very strict about that.
- Quality of teaching very important.
- Deaf teachers need information about access to courses.
- Very important to have Deaf people as teachers/trainers.
- Tutor/teacher training not available in Devon. BDA (British Deaf Association) is planning to run a “train the trainers” course for Deaf people so that they can do the 740/7 (adult tutor) course.
- Important that students of BSL understand Deaf culture and not just the language. Students should be encouraged to enter into Deaf culture and this will give better understanding of the issues. Important to go to Deaf Club and pub, and get involved. Visits should be part of courses.
- Shortage of interpreters causes problems.
- More Deaf awareness needed in schools.
- Devon and Cornwall Police suggesting the partner authorities/public services look at putting in funding for more employees in their organisations to have Deaf Awareness training.



- Information on the Internet needs to improve.
- Colleges can be patronising to Deaf people on teaching courses.
- Not enough advertising/marketing of courses – and in good time.
- Communication between the Deaf community and hearing needs to be more mainstream.
- Funding issues – need a champion who has political power.
- Deaf people need to use their democratic powers to challenge authorities, such as those that run the Police, and to lobby agencies.
- CVS can advise on courses.
- Disproportionate number of level 1 courses - no progression obvious.
- Promote BSL training in Schools and colleges via Connexions.
- More advertising of courses.
- More courses available during the day time.

Pledge 3: Give all Deaf children the option of learning BSL and English

- Isolation of students in mainstream education – work at remedying this and improving emotional well-being.
- Involve Deaf children and their parents in delivering the pledge.
- BSL should be part of language curriculum in schools (a unanimous vote was later recorded from Conference delegates that this should be taken forward to Government).
- Mainstream educational establishments and Deaf Schools to pursue more joint working.
- Deaf students should have access to BSL tuition and qualifications.
- We all (i.e. educational establishments; public bodies; Deaf community; service providers; employers; individuals ...) have a responsibility to carry this pledge forward and make it work.
- Involve children in choice.
- Video-link between all schools who have deaf pupils to chat to each other each week.
- Informed parental choice re education should be better in the future – we cannot undo what has happened in the past but we can move forward to a better future.
- Those who support the pledge need to support its good intent and move forward.
- Pledge 3 makes a promise to be proactive in raising awareness and improving access to all.

Recommendations:

Hearing Community -

- Awareness levels need to be raised amongst all students before Deaf students will feel included.
- Hearing students should have awareness training in order to communicate with and include deaf pupils – ideally BSL training as well.



- Hearing family members (i.e. parents, siblings etc) of Deaf children should have Deaf awareness/BSL to facilitate communication within families.

Professional responsibility -

- Mainstream and specialist schools should work together for the children's best interests.
- Implementation of the national programme for 0-3s which is intended to prepare children for education.
- BSL needs to be part of National Curriculum. All languages should be part of National curriculum – BSL needs to be accepted just like French, Spanish, Japanese etc

Deaf Students needs -

- Level 1 training should be available for Deaf students (and their parents); Deaf students in mainstream education experience isolation – remedies could include a Deaf “buddy” possibly from a Deaf School. Access could be face to face; via IT links etc. There is still a place for Deaf Schools – must be recognition that different students will have different and very individual needs. This may mean that there is a combination of schooling i.e. not all schooling needs to be solely mainstream or Deaf School.
- Children's forums should be introduced to provide emotional support.
- Deaf children and their parents need to be involved in moving the pledge forward.
- Pledge 3 needs to be promoted to Deaf children and their parents.

Deaf Community -

- Older Deaf people need to be more involved with moving educational agenda forward.
- We all have a responsibility to make the Pledge work and to highlight areas where there is room for improvement – accepting that not everything can happen immediately.
- Those who support the pledge need to support its good intent and move forward.

Best Practice:

- Deaf worker visiting families in the home.

Priorities:

- Deaf children to have contact with other Deaf children. (initiated)
- Inform and involve parents and deaf children in the pledge.
- Hearing families need support to develop BSL skills to improve communication in the home. (new Deaf inclusion worker appointment)
- Deaf students able to access BSL training. (some due to start at Clyst Vale)
- Implement the 0 – 3 programme with newly diagnosed families. (on going)



- Campaign for BSL to be part of the National Curriculum. (outcome of conference)
- Deaf awareness training in schools (0 -14+ courses).

Pledge 4: Ensure key staff working with Deaf people meet minimum standards of BSL skills

- Key staff need at least Level 2 BSL.
- Availability of courses is a problem.
- How can people maintain skills? - employ a Deaf person in workplace to maintain skills or visit deaf clubs.
- All agencies including health, police, Jobcentres have staff who come into contact with Deaf people.
- Infrequent contact: Issues with 'contact centres' – need to be Deaf aware.
- Include Deaf Awareness explicitly in Disability Awareness training. Understand that there are two worlds/cultures – hearing and Deaf.
- Much of this is underpinned by confidence and communication.
- Increase access to deaf clubs.
- Set up skills groups.
- Use technology – web cams.
- Continuum of communication tactics SSE – BSL.
- Issue of funding sign language training, (goodwill issue).

Pledge 5: Consult with our local Deaf community on a regular basis

- Deaf organisations need to network in an attempt to avoid overlap/duplication.
- Address agency gaps – often only 1 person in organisation moving things on.
- Deaf people need to take personal responsibility i.e. actively seeking opportunities to work with agencies and put across Deaf community perspective.
- Service providers need to sign up/commit to pledge.
- Service providers need to be proactive rather than reactive – need to be attractive to Deaf community.
- Educate Deaf representatives enabling them to be proactive on consultative forums etc (need to make sure that education is available and accessible).
- Service providers need to be flexible in approach to times of meetings – vary times and offer options of evenings or weekends so that working Deaf reps can take part.
- Consultation methods should reflect the different needs of different individuals.
- There needs to be more support for employees to have their say and to communicate the needs of Deaf workers (preferably before they are employed!).
- The need for public bodies to have a Disability Equality Scheme in place by December 2006 should focus our major service providers – the Charter will help towards this.
- Awareness needs to be raised for hearing employers/work colleagues/general public etc that Deaf people have rights and needs that must be met.



- Deaf reps are desperately needed to talk to service providers – tell them what is needed. One person cannot represent all the needs of all the people!
- Deaf reps need to know how to access forums etc.
- Consultation –v- Consultants (bringing in consultants is not always the answer if that Consultant knows little or nothing about the needs of Deaf people).
- Help is needed to raise Deaf awareness.
- There is a need to find out what forums currently exist in the County and get working together using SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-constrained).
- Often organisations devolve responsibility for Deaf issues/consultation to one person.
- It is important that where service providers commit to the pledge they keep to their promises.
- Interpreter provision needs to be available during consultation.
- Service providers need to provide information about what they do/what they need from Deaf community.
- Deaf people need to be proactive in consultation if we are to get the message across.
- There should be cross working across counties – particularly important where service providers cross Counties e.g. Devon & Cornwall Constabulary.
- How can workplaces be made more inclusive for Deaf employees? Need to consult employees – networks? Often no interpreter in the workplace – should be laws/protocol.
- More Deaf reps needed to sit on DEAF Forum.
- Many Deaf people say they are scared or that they are too old to learn new things or have too many other things going on that prevent them from getting involved – need for Deaf empowerment! Nothing will change unless Deaf people push for it and challenge.
- Agencies need to know what Forums are available already.
- Service Providers must be Deaf aware.
- Within organisations there must be greater working across all functions/departments – cross fertilisation. Currently many departments within the same organisation work in isolation and often do not know what has been done/not done by colleagues further down the corridor.
- Consultation should not just be a tick in the box for service providers – needs to be meaningful and appropriate.
- If not already in existence, police and other statutory agencies should have Community (outreach) Officers to work primarily with Deaf people.
- Meeting times – need for flexibility; plenty of notice required; re-schedule meetings to fit needs of reps (consideration of availability, particularly of working deaf reps); need to change the cultures of organisations that think 9-5.
- Deaf people may need help to enable them to get more involved – training in how to make their voice heard at meetings; how meetings work etc. Living Options provides training to achieve this – “Speaking Up” and “Assertiveness”.



- Deaf reps need not feel that they are on their own – support available.
- Not just those providers signed up to the Charter need proactive Deaf people to sharpen their service provision – public transport etc.
- May be issues over interpreter provision by Deaf people engaging in consultation forums? Access to Work will only provide one interpreter? Service Provider may pay for 2nd Interpreter.
- To change we must challenge – it has to be a two way thing. Service Providers will only be able to hear if Deaf people are proactive in helping change.
- Education (i.e. Deaf awareness) helps understanding.
- Different groups have different needs.
- Disability Equality Scheme – new requirement for public bodies by December 2006
- There is a lack of awareness amongst all service providers.
- The Charter needs to be publicised to a greater audience – people at the Conference today are already signed up to change.
- There is a need for employers to better know the needs of their Deaf employees – Deaf workers have to put up with lack of access and isolation. They also miss out on the banter/social interaction with colleagues (e.g. gossip!) because colleagues are unable to communicate; all employees need to be Deaf aware if they are to understand more about the Deaf culture which in turn will be more inclusive for Deaf colleagues (e.g. Deaf worker said she did not object to colleagues touching her to attract her attention although many were really concerned that she would be offended).
- Wish list from Deaf employee – access i.e. physical; resources; socialisation; BSL training for colleagues; Deaf awareness for all.
- Need to break down the barriers to communicate.
- Need to get communities and public services to LISTEN!
- All our responsibility – not just a tick in the box





The day

Deaf people of all ages were invited to the third Sign Vision conference. Again, the aim of the annual conference was to bring together Deaf people and service providers for a day of information, entertainment and discussion. Sign Vision 3 aimed to explore new avenues. Still with the Charter in mind, it looked at some wider issues of public information and emerging technologies. There was a greater emphasis on providing information to Deaf people whilst still enabling an opportunity for discussion and feedback on progress and service provision.

The programme for the conference included workshops about environmental awareness, information communication technology (use of webcams and free 'video call' services to communicate), healthy living and general access to services. There were also informative sessions dedicated to youth and leisure services, adult learning and interpreting services.

Living Options Deaf Project consulted with Deaf clubs on which subject areas to cover.

Outside Devon County Council's Information bus (with PC connections/webcams) and Exeter City Council's recycling truck, 'Denis' were available for demonstrations. 'Freebies' on the day included toilet 'hippos' (for saving water) and re-usable shopping bags.

Younger people were invited and a crèche was provided to enable wider participation of people with young dependants.

The **webcams** purchased for the ICT workshop were **donated to Countess Wear School and East the Water School** (Hearing Support Centres) to aid communication between Deaf pupils at the schools and Clyst Vale School (who already had webcams).

Main discussion points

Environmental Awareness

Presentations from South West Water, National Energy Action and Devon County Council raised awareness of saving energy and water and recycling. On the whole it was felt that people were doing 'environmentally friendly' things but were not necessarily aware they were. During lunchtime, Denis the recycling truck was able to give a demonstration on separating waste products for recycling.



Key recommendations made:

- Utilities companies and other private business must make more use of plain English. One delegate said they received a letter from a utilities company (such as gas or electric) and they did not understand it.
- Request for the Affordable Warmth BSL Video to be put on a website as it was no longer available on DVD. (After the event Devon County Council arranged for the video to go on the Devon BSL Charter webpage).

Information Communication Technology

CEDA gave a presentation on broadband and webcam technologies and how to access free services to make video calls such as Skype, Yahoo Messenger, AIM and MSM Messenger. The workshop was split in two – half went into the Devon Information Bus (parked outside) and half remained within the Committee Room and connections were made over the webcams, so people could see how the technology worked; some delegates had not seen this before.

Key recommendations made:

- Webcam pictures are not great quality but the technology is improving.
- Need BSL supported computer courses.
- IT 'helpdesks' need to be more 'BSL/Deaf friendly' and aware that a client may be Deaf and use English as a second (not first or preferred) language.

Healthy Living

The Devon Primary Care Trust Public Health Team, whose responsibility it is to help people find their own personal ways of improving their health, talked about things like eating well (raising awareness of the 'Five a Day' campaign), increasing activity, stopping smoking and looking after emotional well-being. The workshop explored what counted towards the 'Five a Day' – frozen, canned, fresh, juiced fruit and vegetables (excluding potatoes), that having too much of one thing (including water) can be bad for you, the benefits of food rich in 'omega 3' and appropriate salt and sugar levels. People were told about the Government's recommended amount of exercise (30 minutes x 5 a week), and what would count as exercise: Housework to music counted! The workshop included a tasting session of fruits and vegetables.

Key recommendations made:

- Good general knowledge about healthy eating but more needs to be done to dispel some of the myths.
- Doctor's out-of-hours minicom is poor quality.
- Deaf people can't contact NHS Direct.



Access to Services

Natasha Kitson, Customer Services – Devon County Council, showed delegates the progress Devon County Council had made including a dedicated SMS text number as part of its new ‘telephone contact’ customer service centre and customer service information provided in BSL video on the website.

Debbie Williams, Devon Fire and Rescue, explained the latest developments in a Texting Pilot for 999 calls – something which has been requested at previous Sign Visions:

The pilot will be national, as it needs to be tested when people are out of their area across a large number of users. The RNID is leading the communication cascade for the Deaf Community. The RNID will select certain organisations to publicise the pilot. The target group is hoped to be 100,000 people. This scheme will not cost mobile operators very much. BT and Cable & Wireless will run the pilot using ‘text direct’ 1800. Calls will be intercepted by BT operators who will relay the information to the appropriate control room. The pilot will begin mid ’08 at the earliest.

Key recommendations made:

- Develop a web-based database of useful information for Deaf people such as ‘BSL/Deaf friendly’ leisure facilities. Have this information in BSL.

Young People

This workshop began with a presentation outlining the progress made towards achieving Pledge 3 by the Support and Advisory Teacher Service in Devon (Devon County Council area). This was accompanied by a slide show of some of the activities/events.

Alison Wells, of the advisory service, pointed out that “all the time we need to remind ourselves of what is right for the students. There is of course no one answer to this, each child is unique and responds differently. We try to approach each child as an individual and fit to their needs”.

Service development has happened in 2 ways: Top down change i.e. management and staff development; Bottom up i.e. more Deaf staff in schools and homes, assessment of BSL skills and action plans based on these for schools, Deaf peer support.

1. Isolation addressed through ‘Together Days’ and video conferencing.
2. Working more closely with the Royal Academy of Deaf Education, Exeter - set up ‘working together’ meetings and asked the school to be represented on these. Meetings ensure staff are up to date with latest publications and developments in bilingual education and how to achieve Pledge 3.



3. Regarding Deaf students access to BSL, tuition and qualifications – BSL Level 1 courses on offer to all Deaf students at Clyst Vale community college funded by the service. Plans to offer this at Bideford College and other secondary schools with a significant number of Deaf students. Courses have been going well and intend to develop further. Funding 3 students' level 2 training.
4. BSL part of curriculum – Lobbied parliament in February, petition, letter to local MP. Some schools have started themselves offering it as an additional language, getting involved through 'learn to sign week', awareness raising.
5. More suggestions needed on how Deaf children and parents can help promote the Charter.
6. Providing opportunities for Deaf children to meet one another and Deaf role models – three events last academic year: Dance and drama day, Circus day and Music day.
7. Offering newly diagnosed children and their families weekly access to Deaf role models - now employ 2 Deaf role models (deaf inclusion workers) and do provide weekly access where required.
8. During Deaf Awareness week, packs were sent to every school in Devon with suggested activities and sign handouts.
9. Deaf inclusion workers toured schools and taught basic BSL awareness to groups of children.
10. Introduction to BSL courses run across Devon to schools and nurseries especially if a Deaf child attends.
11. Developing the skills of staff who work with Deaf children so that they can communicate in BSL up to a minimum of N/SVQ level 2 or equivalent: Currently running a Level 2 for advisory teachers, awaiting a level 3 to be available, running a Level 1 course in Bideford, ran a curriculum sign course in Clyst Vale for Teaching Assistants and introductory courses to BSL for all nurseries and foundation education providers.

Debra May, who now works for Devon County Council's Support and Advisory Teacher Service, can provide Deaf Awareness sessions to schools.

Key recommendations made:

- Mainstream schools need to reduce the background noise.
- Sports coaches in Devon need basic British Sign Language skills so that Deaf children can also go to after school clubs without the need for an Interpreter (as there are not enough).
- Deaf adults can get involved with teaching basic sign language in primary schools.
- More opportunities for Active Learning for parents and young children to learn together.
- Continue to lobby government to recognise BSL as a language to be taught in Schools alongside French, German etc.



Adult Learning

This workshop provided information and developed a debate about: availability of BSL courses locally; access to adult learning for Deaf people – ‘lifelong learning’; and the skills of staff working with Deaf people.

The workshop was attended by BSL tutors from Devon County Council Adult and Community Learning/Freedom to Communicate, who gave a presentation, and Next Step and Devon Library Service provided information on:

- Local BSL courses and higher level courses outside the area.
- Websites that provide support in learning BSL.
- Ideas that might support Deaf people in becoming tutors.
- How Deaf people access support in continuing learning.
- How to access learning resources.

Key recommendations made:

- More support to help Deaf people become Adult Education Tutors for Deaf people (then no need for an Interpreter).

Interpreting Services

The Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) and Deafinite Interpreters (represented by Carly Renaud) gave information about accessing interpreters and the latest developments in launching a local independent Sign Language Interpreting Agency.

Key recommendations made:

- Improve access to interpreters to support Adult Learning or leisure activities.
- There was full support from the Deaf community for the new agency Deafinite Interpreters.
- There were calls for the new agency to operate a 24 hour service as soon as possible.
- Questions were asked what funding was being provided to support the agency.





At the time of writing this report, the Devon BSL Charter Group is exploring the following themes for Sign Vision 4:

- A family and community event with arts/drama and celebration of BSL (to also include an element of consultation/feedback on Access to Services and other issues relating to the Devon BSL Charter, but on a much smaller scale than previous Sign Visions).
- ICT workshops – specific training for Deaf people/BSL users on Information Communication Technology such as basic PC use/set up, Internet, Email, Webcam/Video-call.
- Sign Vision Roadshow – an information stand or tour about the Devon BSL Charter, with leaflets and information, encouraging businesses to sign up to the Charter and raising awareness with the general public (who may be able to influence through their own work or schools).

Through this range of events we aim to -

- Raise more awareness with general public/business.
- Reach out to more Deaf people – across rural Devon and Exeter.
- Engage younger Deaf people.
- Get more organisations signed up to the Charter.
- Continue to celebrate BSL.
- Address ICT training needs identified at Sign Vision 3.

At the moment, these are ideas and whether they go ahead will be subject to:

- Views of the Deaf community
- Funding
- Capacity and interest (organising, venues, involvement of other agencies etc)

We hope that Sign Vision will continue as an annual event, and secure sustainable funding to be bigger and better.

Organisations wishing to sponsor Sign Vision are welcome to contact the planning group through equality@devon.gov.uk or 01392 382260 or SMS 0789 610 3530.



Part 6 - Conference Statistics



	Sign Vision 1	Sign Vision 2	Sign Vision 3
Date	19 th March 2005	1 st July 2006	6 th October 2007
Day of week	Saturday	Saturday	Saturday
Venue	Committee Suites and Chamber, Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter.		
Number of people	100+	126	107
Number of feedback forms received	44	38	44
Feedback Excellent/Good	19	37	41
Feedback Good/OK	23	1	3
Feedback Poor	1	0	0
Cost	c£5,500	£5,797.41	£6,245.34
Financial support (all other costs met by Devon County Council)	Exeter City Council £500 Devon Fire and Rescue £500 Connexions £500 The Health Forum £200 Unison £200 Western Power Distribution £200 Dartmoor National Park £50 BT £500 Teignbridge District Council £50	Exeter City Council £500 Devon Fire and Rescue £500 Devon and Cornwall Constabulary £500 Constabulary £500 Connexions £200 Teignbridge District Council £200 Income from exhibitors £240	Teignbridge District Council £100 Devon and Cornwall Constabulary £500 Devon Fire and Rescue £500 Exeter City Council £500 Clare Milne Trust £2,000

<p>In-kind support (includes assistance with presentations or support on the day)</p>	<p>Living Options Devon. Royal School for the Deaf, Exeter. Association of Sign Language Interpreters. South Hams District Council. Exeter Deaf Club.</p>	<p>Living Options Devon. Royal School for the Deaf, Exeter. Association of Sign Language Interpreters. East Devon PCT. Deaf community representatives: Angela Hill, Justine Smyth, Debra May, Gilson Sly, Dean Coles. Devon Fire and Rescue (Debbie Williams, Andy Oaker, Pete Smith and Barbara North). Devon County Council Sensory Team (Alison Steggals and Graham Morford). Devon County Council Support and Advisory Teacher Service (Alison Wells). Exeter City Council (Melinda Pogue-Jackson and Carrie-Anne Bainbridge).</p>	<p>Living Options Devon. Royal Academy of Deaf Education, Exeter. Association of Sign Language Interpreters. CEDA (Paul Bowden). National Energy Action (Nicky Swetnam). South West Water (Steve Wallace). North Devon Deaf Children's Society. Exeter City Council for 'Denis the recycling truck'. Devon Primary Care Trust (Jacinta Jackson and Wendy Protheroe). Devon Information Bus (Peter Folland). Devon County Council Customer Services (Natasha Kitson). Devon County Council – Environment Service (Iain Stevens). Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue (Debbie Williams, Andy Oaker and Barbara North). Devon County Council Sensory Team (Alison Steggals and Graham Morford).</p>
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			<p>Devon County Council Support and Advisory Teacher Service (Alison Wells and Debra May). Exeter City Council (Melinda Pogue-Jackson and Carrie-Anne Bainbridge). Devon County Council consultation team (John Amosford). Devon County Council Adult and Community Learning (Fi Drummond and Steve Wassall). Devon and Cornwall Police (Teresa Berridge).</p>
Organised by	Devon County Council	Devon County Council, bookings by Exeter City Council	Devon County Council, bookings by Exeter City Council
Lead co-ordinator	Angela Welch with Dave Slocombe, Devon County Council	Jo Hooper, Devon County Council	Mark Lane with Jo Hooper, Devon County Council
Stewards	Students of the Royal Academy of Deaf Education (previously Royal School for the Deaf), Exeter		
Aims	<p>Celebrate recognition of BSL as a language. Public services have an improved understanding of the experiences of Deaf people in Devon and their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act in relation to</p>	<p>Continuation of Sign Vision 1. Celebrate BSL and raise awareness. Discuss practical ways to implement to new Devon BSL Charter.</p>	<p>Feedback on developments in meeting the Devon BSL Charter commitments. Explore new subject areas through interactive workshops; raise awareness with Deaf community of some national initiatives such as 'Green' living, healthy eating</p>



	<p>Deaf people/BSL. Deaf people have increased awareness of what BSL recognition means. Deaf people and service providers develop a partnership and create a Devon BSL Charter.</p>		<p>and ICT – use webcams and Skype/Instant Messengers to communicate. Invite children and young people to participate, to explore their issues further.</p>
Keynote speaker(s)	<p>Clark Denmark, Carolyn Nabarro, Melody Scott, Neil Spencer, Clive Mason. Councillor Jill Owen.</p>	<p>Clive Mason.</p>	<p>Paul Valentine. Councillor Brenda Taylor.</p>
Workshops	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employment, education and training. 2. Interpreting Services. 3. Leisure, arts and tourism. 4. Community Safety. 5. Transport. 	<p>Based upon the 5 pledges of the Devon BSL Charter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to local services and information 2. Learning and high quality teaching of BSL 3. Deaf children learning BSL and English 4. BSL skills of key staff working with Deaf people 5. Consulting with Deaf people Plus 6. BSL taster session 7. Information about Interpreters (session for all) <p>Each workshop had a facilitator</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Awareness – recycling, energy, heat, water saving etc. 2. Information Communication Technology – discover the internet, try out broadband, use ‘webcams’ and Sign over a video link. 3. Healthy Living – 5-a-day (healthy eating) and other health campaigns. 4. Access to Services – public services and ‘999’. 5. Young people – education and access to youth and leisure services. 6. Adult learning – BSL skills of



		and Deaf representative who opened the discussion with a viewpoint.	<p>staff working with Deaf people, access to BSL courses and access to evening classes.</p> <p>7. Interpreting services – latest developments, outcomes of David Jackson’s research and ASLI.</p> <p>Each workshop had a facilitator.</p>
Special features	<p>Information stands.</p> <p>Video diary room.</p> <p>Comments boards.</p>	<p>Information stands.</p> <p>Video diary room.</p> <p>Lunchtime entertainment with Charles Hamilton (humorous signed songs).</p> <p>Display boards, BSL video and leaflets of the new Devon BSL Charter.</p> <p>DVDs of the Devon BSL Charter.</p> <p>‘Graffiti Wall’ to add comments.</p>	<p>‘Denis’ the Recycling Truck and Devon County Council’s ICT/Information Bus parked outside: delegates tried out communications via webcams between the workshop room and the ICT Information Bus.</p> <p>‘Green’ freebies such as toilet hippos and bags.</p> <p>Roving video diary.</p> <p>Lunchtime entertainment by students from the local Deaf school (*see note below).</p> <p>Display boards, BSL video and leaflets of the Devon BSL Charter.</p> <p>DVDs of the Devon BSL Charter.</p> <p>‘Graffiti Wall’ to add comments.</p> <p>Workshop specially aimed at young people.</p>



Crèche provided	No	No	Yes Ladybirds Nursery, with additional help from North Devon Deaf Children's Society.
Communication support	Interpreters (provided via ASLI) Loop systems.	Interpreters (provided via ASLI) Lip-speaker and speech to text typist. Loop systems.	11 Interpreters (provided by Deafinite Interpreters) 2 lip-speakers and speech to text typist. Loop systems.
General support for delegates		Access Officer and First Aider.	Access Officer and First Aider.
Successes (summary)	Powerful; highlighting needs of local Deaf community. Information gathered helped develop the Devon BSL Charter. Hearing people enjoyed experience of being 'in the minority' for first time. Challenge and learning. Presentations by Deaf people.	Great atmosphere – lots of fun. Lots of valuable information. Able to feed back on progress with the launch of the Devon BSL Charter. Deaf people provided practical solutions for organisations to implement the Charter.	Good variety of subjects. New issues identified. The crèche was a popular addition to the event and helped some people attend.
Learning points	Use of visual presentation materials for Deaf people was not accessible to person with sight loss. Physical access in to the diary room was a problem for one delegate. Education, employment and	Single queue for lunch was too long. Video diary room was accessible but not welcoming room. More general subjects wanted.	Need to reach out to a wider Deaf community across Devon. More involvement with arts/drama. *Disappointed lunchtime entertainment didn't take place due to illness. Low attendance of young people – need to find a different way of



	<p>training workshop was too broad.</p> <p>Some workshops needed to be less about presentation and more about discussion.</p>		engaging Deaf young people.
Note	Not all information held	Not all information held	





Sign Vision 1 Programme

- 9.30 Registration, refreshments and opportunity to view displays and stalls
- 10.00 Welcome – Councillor Jill Owen, Equality Champion, Devon County Council
- 10.05 Introduction and what we hope to achieve – Paul Valentine, Living Options Devon, Conference Chairman
- 10.10 Respect for our language and culture, the journey to BSL recognition – Clark Denmark & Carolyn Nabarro
- 10.50 Illustrated lives – the experiences of local Deaf people – Melody Scott and Neil Spencer.
- 11.10 Refreshments and opportunity to view displays and stalls.
- 11.40 Workshop one – opportunity for Deaf people and service providing organisations to discuss improvements in key service areas and the priorities that need to be included in a Devon Charter. Delegates to choose one of the following workshops:
- Employment, education and training
 - Interpreting services
 - Leisure, arts and tourism
 - Community safety
 - Transport
- 12.40 Lunch and chance to vote for what you want to see in a Devon Charter for BSL and visit displays and stalls. Highlighting the work of local organisations, training opportunities, new equipment and technology.
- 2.15 Vision of the future – Clive Mason.
- 3.00 Workshop two – opportunity for Deaf people and service providing organisations to discuss improvements in key service areas and the priorities that need to be included in a Devon Charter. Delegates to choose one of the following workshops:
- Employment, education and training
 - Interpreting services
 - Leisure, arts and tourism

- Community safety
- Transport

Refreshments will be served to delegates during their workshop.

4.00 Open Forum

4.15 Challenge from the Chair

- for service providing organisations
- for local Deaf people

followed by closing remarks.

4.30 Refreshments and final opportunity to visit stalls and displays.

Guest speaker biographies

PAUL VALENTINE, Deaf Project Coordinator for Living Options Devon. Paul joined Living Options in May 2003. He previously worked for two years at the Hearing and Sight Centre in Plymouth as a Focus Project Support Worker, acting as a role model for Deaf and hard of hearing adults and children in mainstream schools. He also worked for 1.5 years for the RNID Care Service. Paul has taught British Sign Language for the past four years.

CLARK DENMARK, Sign Language tutor at the Centre for Deaf Studies at Bristol. He has been a member of the Board of Trustees at the British Deaf Association since 2003. Clark is the Curriculum Development Manager with the “BSL Tuition in the hands of Deaf people” project (funded by the Department of Work and Pensions). He developed the British Sign Language Tutors Training Course at Durham University, was a member of the BSL/ English Dictionary Team. He also appears on the BBC’s See Hear programme.

CAROLYN NABARRO works at the Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol and is a Deaf People's Communication Worker at Bristol City Council. Carolyn has worked as Community Support Worker supporting the social worker team and Deaf clients at Social Services in Gloucestershire, as a Mentor in Oak Lodge School for Secondary working on a one to one basis working with the Emotional Behavioural Support Team and is the chair of Deaf Professional in Mental Health Organisation since 2000. Carolyn is also a presenter of news headlines on HTV West in Bristol.

CLIVE MASON is a Deaf professional working with the BBC for over 20 years. He presents See Hear and other programmes on Deaf issues. Clive has taught Deaf Studies and Interpreting at Wolverhampton and Bristol Universities.

(Note: Paul Valentine is now working for the Royal Academy of Deaf Education, Exeter).



Sign Vision 2 Programme

- 9.15am Arrival, registration, coffee and time to visit the information stands
- 10.00am Welcome from Paul Valentine (Deaf Project, Living Options Devon) and presentation by Clive Mason
- 10.40am Discussion workshops – how public services can meet the needs of Deaf people, facilitated by the Devon BSL Charter Group and colleagues (choose up to 3):
1. Access to local services and information
 2. Learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language (BSL learning providers)
 3. Deaf children learning British Sign Language and English (schools and colleges)
 4. British Sign Language skills of key staff working with Deaf people
 5. Consulting with Deaf people
 6. Plus: British Sign Language taster session
- 3.30pm Essential information about Interpreters (ASLI presentation)
- 3.45pm Question Time
- Lunch, with Deaf entertainer Charles Hamilton, at 12.45pm



Sign Vision 3 Programme

9.15am Arrival, registration, coffee, and time to visit the information stands. Information stands on 'Environmentally Friendly' Living, BSL Charter and Free Bus Passes.

10.00am Welcome and Keynote Speech by Paul Valentine, Royal Academy of Deaf Education and member of the Devon BSL Charter Group.

10.45am, 12.00 and 2.15pm

Workshops (attend up to 3):

1. Environmental Awareness - find out about recycling, composting, light, energy, heat and water saving, allotments and more!
2. Information Communication Technology - discover the internet, try out broadband, use 'web-cams' and Sign over a video-link. Lively, interactive and fun.
3. Healthy Living - Five-a-day and other health campaigns. What is your awareness? An opportunity to feedback on information.
4. Access to Services – Public services and '999' emergency calls.
5. Young People - education and access to Youth and Leisure Services.
6. Adult Learning - BSL skills of staff working with Deaf people, access to BSL courses and access to 'Evening Classes'.
7. Interpreting Services – latest developments with the set up of a new Sign Language Interpreting Agency in the area, outcomes of David Jackson's research and ASLI.

1.00pm Lunch and entertainment from students at the Royal Academy of Deaf Education (signed poetry) and video 'Over the Bridge', produced by students at the college.

3.20pm Closing remarks with Councillor Brenda Taylor, Chairman and Member Champion for Equality, Devon County Council, Jo Hooper, Chair of the Devon BSL Charter Group and Corporate Equality Officer, Devon County Council and Paul Valentine.



Part 8 - Acknowledgements



Thank you to colleagues at Bristol City Council.

For their support organising Sign Vision and developing the Devon BSL Charter:

Devon County Council: Angela Welch, Jo Hooper, Alison Steggals, Alison Wells, Mark Lane, John Amosford.

Living Options Devon: Linus Whitton, Justine Smyth, Gilson Sly, Ruth Rockey, Paul Valentine (now at the Royal Academy for Deaf Education).

ASLI: Carly Renaud and Clare Seal.

Exeter City Council: Melinda Pogue-Jackson and Carrie-Anne Bainbridge.

Devon Fire and Rescue: Debbie Williams, Andy Oaker, Barbara North.

Connexions: Elaine Thomas.

Teignbridge District Council: Jill Read.

Devon Primary Care Trust: Lynne Bradshaw.

All the BSL/English Interpreters who have attended the event and planning meetings.

All the stewards at the Royal Academy for Deaf Education who have helped out on the day.

Clare Taylor, Devon County Council, for filming the events.

Thank you to everybody else who has supported Sign Vision and the Charter and everyone from Devon's Deaf community who has given their time to attend the events.



Part 9 - Further Information



Devon BSL Charter	www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter
Living Options Devon (Deaf Project)	www.livingoptions.org
British Deaf Association (Sign Community)	www.bda.org.uk
CACDP (for information about BSL courses)	www.cacdp.org.uk
Association of Sign Language Interpreters	www.asli.org.uk
RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf and hard of hearing people)	www.rnid.org.uk
Forest Books	www.forestbooks.com
Sign Post (ITV)	www.signpostbsl.com
National Deaf Children's Society	www.ndcs.org.uk
Bristol University Centre for Deaf Studies	www.bristol.ac.uk/deaf
Bristol BSL Forum	www.bslforum.blogspot.com
See Hear	www.bbc.co.uk/seehear



www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter



