

Appendix 2

Research into other Local Authorities Signing up to the BDA Charter

Leicester City Council (direct contact)

Leicester City Council (LCC) have recently signed up to 3 of the BSL Charter pledges:

- Ensure access for deaf people to information and services
- Support deaf children and families
- Consult with our local deaf community on a regular basis.

These reflect the work that they were already doing and therefore did not require them to implement any new commitments until they were ready to do so. There are no plans to add to them at present.

They don't currently have an action plan – but have been involved in progressing the charter as detailed below:

- There has been a rift in the Deaf Community arising from the closure and relocation of Action Deafness premises around 5 years ago that a large portion of the community disagreed with. The British Deaf Association Access & Inclusion Officer for the Midlands has been tasked with developing a splinter group, Leicester Deaf Forum, so that they could over time be able to represent the interests of this part of the community. The Forum members receive community development training from BDA and meet on a monthly basis.
- LCC have had a number of meetings with BDA prior to signing up to the charter, to clarify what was required and what the council would be comfortable committing to.
- LCC Assistant City Mayor for Communities and Equalities has actively supported the signing up to the charter and attended the signing event. She has also appeared at a subsequent information event for the deaf community the council and a range of health partners presented for the Deaf community.
- The Director of Delivery, Comms and Political Governance was also directly engaged in all activities but didn't 'drive them' per se. The council has acknowledged that this is an important piece of work with the Deaf community that we need to do. LCC had a joint charter signing event with the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- LCC report that signing up to the Charter has made a difference – by giving a reason to have an ongoing dialogue with the Deaf community that had not been there before. Adult Social Care officers have attended several Deaf Forum meetings and been part of a working group composed of several Forum members, health officers and the LCC Lead Equalities Officer who have put together an information event on accessing their services. This has morphed into a BSL Charter working group which will work on implementation of the NHS accessible information standard for the Deaf community. Draft terms of reference have been drawn up for the BSL Charter working group calling for 3 meetings a year. What is not currently clear is the level of engagement with the actual Deaf community. It is likely that there will be another planned information event. A collective approach definitely makes it easier to maintain a momentum.
- Aside from financial contribution for BSL interpreters at meetings and at the signing event, LCC haven't incurred any costs arising from their work with the Deaf Forum. None are foreseen in the near future.
- It has been good working with partners on a focused piece of work – LCC have learned a lot from them and this collective activity has been more productive.
- Working with our local Deaf community has been a frustrating experience. They refer back to

the past when they had a dedicated Deaf social worker for a regular surgery where they brought their problems to be solved (particularly the Over 50's). This way of working has ended and LCC have tried on numerous occasions to explain the structural changes to ASC provision to a new single point of access and person centred approach to problem solving along with various needs thresholds. We keep up our discussion with the community facilitated by HealthWatch, but are currently no closer to a solution than at the very beginning.

- LCC have found that other Deaf communities can be very different – Derby is quite proactive and works closely with council and health services and also has quite a progressive school for the Deaf which is not so wedded to BSL.
- Action Deafness procures BSL Interpreters for LCC on request, but at times because of local unavailability, they come from other cities incurring travel costs. This makes the provision very expensive and there can be a delay in meeting requests. The Deaf community are unhappy with these arrangements because they want to use BSL interpreters they know and trust instead of making do with who we can get. LCC hope to be able to commission another local group of interpreters affiliated to the Forum shortly. Leicester Police are using a video link service and growing an in-house network of police officers who are able to communicate in BSL – this arose from a murder within the Deaf community several years ago where they weren't able to communicate with victims and the perpetrator.

Derbyshire: (direct contact)

- Before signing up to the charter, they set up a Deaf Charter Working Group and worked with regional officer from British Deaf Association (BDA). They have extended the charter to also cover hearing people as well as Deaf people and BSL users.
- They relied heavily on staff already working with Deaf and hard of hearing people especially in Children's and Adult Care services to help get information out there and to find out what people wanted. Some staff are Deaf or hard of hearing so they help in stopping the council making errors and failing to understand any issues.
- They signed up for 2 main reasons:
 - It was a good way of helping to audit and meet any gaps in service and other provision for Deaf and hard of hearing communities, service users and employees.
 - It offered a real chance of working more closely with local Deaf and hard of hearing people and groups and clubs to involve them much more in shaping services, information and employment practice – to get it right and to build their confidence
- In identifying the work for their pledges they looked at what they already do and where there were gaps. They sought the views and opinions of Deaf and hard of hearing people in identifying what they wanted to see the council do and they specifically kept it manageable so as not to unduly raise expectations
- Before signing the charter they got their senior managers and members to agree it was a good way forward and to provide their commitment to doing the work involved.
- Annually they organise an event to tell those interested about how they are doing and they talk to BDA about their work as they have to audit what the council have claimed to have done.
- Their website page 'Hearing Impaired People' signposts to making a referral for an assessment, details of the BDA Charter, voice over and subtitled videos including a fact sheet and guide to carers services, and signposting to related documents and other local organisations to provide help support and advice.

Devon : (direct contact)

- Developed their own charter in 2005 – they are planning an audit so check they are compliant across all areas with the new Charter (which is very similar).
- They had regular meetings with representative agencies and an annual conference with the wider community (2008 conference report available with recommendations)

- No specific political buy in - driven by the Corporate Equality Officer who is partially deaf
- No system to measure outcomes was set up - although the charter paved the way for a new language agency to be set up
- They have a public leaflet explaining the Devon Charter for BSL

Harrow: (direct contact)

- Before signing the charter they had regular meetings with Harrow United Deaf Club (a representative group) to work through a range of issues including BSL information being added to the website
- There was political buy in from the Portfolio Holder for Equalities who supported the Council signing up to the Charter. The PH sits on the Council's Corporate Equalities Group, which made the decision to sign up.
- The initiative was championed by a senior officer who is the Chair of the Directorate Equalities Task who proposed the Council sign up to it at the Corporate Equalities Group.
- They don't measure the difference signing up to the charter has made at the moment but have included it as an action in their Corporate Equalities Action Plan – however the direct engagement with the community and the addition of BSL information on the website was definitely a good outcome.
- The BSL videos cost £2,114.

Bristol: (website information)

- Signed charter in 2003 organised and driven by the Equalities & Community Cohesion Team and monitored annually by the Executive Member.
- At the time of last BSL update report (2009/10)¹ there was a dedicated Deaf Awareness Officer and they were planning to -
 - review their corporate style guide to include specific guidelines to encourage visual signage and identify icons which would be recognisable by Deaf people. The corporate access working group will make decisions on improvements and these will be graded for short term and those requiring finance will be timetabled for medium term
 - negotiate a new ICT platform to enable video streaming
 - create SMS texting for services via single SMS number
 - set up a BSL Users Forum to effectively consult – they have tried monthly meetings but found people prefer an annual event
- They have a policy not to use family members or friends for interpreting in all languages and only use qualified professionals - they have an in-house BSL interpreter who works 3 days a week
- They carried out research with the Deaf BSL community to get an understanding of how to meet needs and identify gaps in service delivery. This helped towards the development of a booklet on services for Deaf people.
- They have 5 ISDN videophones – widely used webs based videophone software for use in PCs. They have replaced their textphones with Textbox – a single text phone number which brings up the textphone call into the council's email system to ensure connection. Staff are trained on using Typetalk Relay Services. They have an ICT protocol for Disabled staff who get priority for ICT repairs/installations.
- They have video conferencing facilities in main council buildings and portable loop systems for hire
- Deaf people can call Bristol using Sign Video web access, an online interpreting service, from their own home – free of charge. This connects them to a BSL interpreter through a webcam instantly.
- At the time (2009/10) they ran BSL courses to teach staff – this has been delivered by

¹ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/people-communities/british-sign-language-bsl-equality>

University of Bristol. They also give parents financial support to learn BSL and funded the Deaf Family Centre to provide BSL skills to parents of Deaf children and young people. They also work with their Children & Young People's Service to ensure BSL training is part of the Parent Strategy.

- They use plaques at customer services counters to tell Deaf customers there is a member of staff who signs.