

British Sign Language Interpreting Preferred Supplier contract with *Deafinite Interpreters*



The Disability Discrimination Act places a duty on organisations to make reasonable adjustments to the needs of people with disabilities and, in the case on Deaf people who use sign language, provide interpreting support.

Through the [Devon Charter for BSL](#) we are raising awareness of Deaf issues and working to improve communication between hearing and Deaf communities.



Across Devon and Cornwall there has been a shortage of qualified interpreters for Deaf people to access. This has led to people with very limited sign language skills or sometimes relatives being used to communicate with service users across all public services. This is not acceptable to Deaf people or the service providers who cannot guarantee that the Deaf person is receiving all the information accurately and this can cause problems, for example consenting to medical treatment.

In response, a group was established with membership from public sector providers – Devon County Council, Exeter City Council, Primary Care Trust, Exeter and Torbay Health Trusts along with Living Options Devon and the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) to understand the problem and agree how this may be resolved.

Following a piece of research conducted by David Jackson from Bristol University there was strong evidence that our concerns about difficulties with access and Deaf people not understanding all aspects of interactions with service providers was justified. We also had strong representation that Deaf people wanted a local agency to meet their interpreting needs.



Local Interpreters responded to this and established an agency in October 2007. A local agency is important because we hope that this will attract more interpreters to this area and allow the resources available to be used in the most efficient way.

Accurate information about the level of use of BSL interpreters was difficult to provide.

It was agreed that a one year pilot contract would be agreed with the new agency to help identify volumes and associated costs and give service providers robust information to plan for this service in future.

It has been agreed with the agency that when sign language interpretation is required they will be asked to provide suitable interpreters. Previously service providers were paying a wide range of individuals to fulfil this function. The service requiring interpreting need to contact Deafinite Interpreting agency as soon as the need for an interpreter is identified this could include job interviews, training courses meetings or events where Deaf sign language users will be present.

The service has to fund the booking and is responsible for processing payments promptly. There is a 2 hour minimum booking at £35 per hour plus travel.

For further information or to feedback your experiences of using this service please contact Alison Steggals -

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