

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, 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.

**For more information
plus a full version of
the charter**

www.devon.gov.uk/bslcharter

(BSL version available)

**Developed by the
Devon BSL Charter Group**

Devon Charter for British Sign Language

The Devon Charter for BSL 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.

