



Working with Deaf clients guide

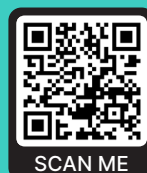
You are a critical element of every interaction with your Deaf clients and employees. Sorenson's glad to share tips for care and precision in working with the Deaf sign language community.

When most people see or hear the word 'deaf', they immediately think of this in a medical/health context: an impairment, a disability, a missing sense, and/or a deprivation.

One in six people in the UK has hearing loss. They generally identify themselves as hard-of-hearing, deafened, or Deaf. They generally are English users and are comfortable communicating through spoken or written language, and many do not know any sign language. Those individuals may use other assistive communication devices such as telephone amplifiers, text phones, email and/or Text Relay services. They may want you to activate the induction loop (if it is installed) when they visit your premises as they hear more clearly through this with their hearing aids.

Deaf BSL users belong to a distinct language group with its own form of communication. You may be surprised to discover many don't identify themselves as disabled and often see themselves more as belonging to a language minority with their own cultural differences from that of their peers in the UK. They don't see their "lack" of hearing as a barrier in their lives apart from that of communication; the sign language community faces a hurdle if the service they wish to use is not available in BSL. It is just like how you would feel in a foreign country where the majority does not speak English and services are not available in English.

It is worth noting that it is deeply insulting to many BSL users for you to call them "hearing-impaired" or "a person with a hearing disability." Many disability trainers and consultants make this mistake—out of misunderstanding, through their own ideals, or for the sake of convenience—and include Deaf people in the generic disability movement.



Unfortunately, this often leads to well-meaning organisations using inappropriate terms and classifications within their communications and therefore running the risk of alienating those they wish to include. It devalues that company's efforts and investments.

By introducing the community as Deaf BSL users, you become an ambassador of British Sign Language, one of the indigenous languages in the UK among Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Cornish. You will gain their trust by showing respect for their language and understanding where they are coming from.

By offering Deaf BSL users access to Sorenson services, you are amplifying opportunities for them in everyday life: a huge step in advancing equity in a system that—up until now—has denied sign language users the self-determination to even call the emergency authorities. It is important that the language or terminology you use does not demean the BSL user.

We know that there is still much to do in terms of spreading awareness of this linguistic and cultural minority. For this reason, below is a list of terminology to help you say the right thing when working with Deaf clients or employees.

Terms to avoid

hearing impaired people

people with hearing loss

people with a hearing disability

people with hearing difficulties

deaf and dumb

deaf-mute

signer

support

help

rely on sign language

Recommended language

Deaf or Hard of Hearing people who use British Sign Language (BSL)

Deaf or Hard of Hearing British Sign Language (BSL) users

Deaf or Hard of Hearing people whose preferred language is British Sign Language (BSL)

Deaf/deaf

Registered British Sign Language interpreter
BSL interpreter

translate from BSL to English

relay from BSL to English

opportunity/choice to use BSL

