



THROW AWAY THE KEY?

How Britain's prisons don't
rehabilitate Deaf people

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Ministry of
JUSTICE



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I Background and Aims

In 2013, NOMS declared an interest in improving facilities and services for deaf prisoners as well as gaining better access to information about them. In 2014, Mencap (Learning Disability charity) and BDA (British Deaf Association) approached Reg Cobb to produce a report on deaf prisoners, building on his experience in 2012 of working with deaf prisoners in and around London.

It is important to stress that deaf and hard of hearing prisoners accept that they "... are in prison for a punishment, but not to be punished"¹, thus, making their sentence equal to their hearing peers; who have no problem accessing the various services within the prison. This report will provide information about existing conditions as well as recommendations to improve the prison facilities and services for deaf inhabitants, with practical and cost effective solutions.

In this report we will use the following words and their meanings are listed here; deaf (all in lower case) – This includes those within who are hard of hearing, or have a mild, moderate, severe or, occasionally, profound deafness.

Deaf (with a capital D) – This denotes deaf people who take pride in their deafness as a form of identity and identify as being part of that minority culture. They usually use British Sign Language (BSL) as their preferred method of communication and think in BSL, not English. They do not consider themselves disabled.

Hard of hearing – This term is used mainly by people who have some form of hearing loss, but blend well with society. They may miss out on various information in the public domain due to not being able to hear it with ease.

BSL – British Sign Language is a language that is most often used by people who are Deaf, particularly those in the severe and profound deafness categories. It's a visual language and rather literal and concrete in its expression. In this way, it differs from the English language. There is no written form of BSL and written English would be very much a second language to this group. In BSL, adverbs and adjectives are utilised in a visual form (in BSL, it is called 'modification' or 'BSL expression') and as a result of using this language and poor deaf-specialist education (nationally), this group is not able to express itself in English language anything like as well as their hearing peers. For example, explaining the concept of 'self-defence' to a Deaf BSL user without discussing the specifics of the case would be extremely difficult as things are visually 'phrased' in BSL.

In terms of learning BSL, As a rule of thumb, it takes a year per level, i.e. Level 4 can be achieved in 4 years.

¹ – A quote from Mr Hall, governor of Warrington prison in a speech at a deaf school in 1983.

Literacy – It is reported that deaf people do not succeed well in school, with deaf students achieving less than half the national average in GCSE² between A*-C (37% for deaf children compared to 69% national average) and perform much lower than average in literacy.

Isolation – In a report from 2000, entitled “Double Sentence” reference is made to the isolation and solitary confinement’ of those deaf prisoners who are sentenced to the same amount of years as their hearing peers. Isolation in this case is due to lack of communication, lack of access to services due to language barriers and lack of social interaction with peers/tutors/staff, which can, and often, leads to depression.

Textphone – This is a device to enable deaf people to communicate via a telephone and has a QWERTY keyboard, which enables the users to type out their messages, which are then sent over a telephone line. All textphones operate on analogue lines and don’t work on digital lines. Today, we have software and apps to allow deaf people to make telephone calls using QWERTY keys over computer-based devices, which allow much more access.

In the UK, we have only been able to identify approximately 400 prisoners (409³) who have disclosed that they have a hearing loss or form of deafness, but we suspect the figures to be inaccurate. In 2014, NOMS disclosed that from a group of 1,000 deaf prisoners, about 92% of them are hard of hearing. In 2000, we identified 56 deaf prisoners from 56 prisons⁴, but there’s no official statistic that identifies specific categories of deafness amongst prisoners.

In the USA, there are tens of thousands of deaf prisoners, but researchers could only locate around 500⁵. In Louisiana, although there are 2,000 deaf prisoners, the survey group HEARD⁶ could only actually locate two deaf prisoners.

A reason for this under-estimation is that many prison officers are not deaf aware and would not be able to identify a disability category of deafness to their deaf prisoners. In order to combat this, we must ensure that the prison officers are more deaf-aware and that the recording system (Core record form, pNOMIS, cNOMIS, PER etc.) is user-friendly so that records can be entered, and used, effectively. This would then mean that, once identified, deaf prisoners would be able to be provided with appropriately adapted and accessible services and facilities, in line with their hearing peers.

2 – National Deaf Children Society report in 2013 – http://www.ndcs.org.uk/about_us/campaign_with_us/england/campaign_news/gcsefigures2012.html

3 – Howard League of Penal Reform, Deaf prisoners fact file (The figure was collected in August 2009)

4 – A Double Sentence, Deaf Prisoners in the UK. Heather Gerrard, British Deaf Association

5 – HEARD – Face file on deaf prisoners

6 – HEARD (Helping Educate the Advance of Rights of the Deaf)

During induction, deaf prisoners are usually unaware of all the facilities on offer. In 2010, a deaf prisoner in southeast London stated that he had only understood “C26” during the whole of his induction and did not know the prison regime, the times to be locked into their cells, the times to eat etc. nor that there were any educational facilities. Deaf prisoners should be provided with communication support such as BSL Interpreters, lip-speakers etc., particularly during induction process.

Some deaf prisoners will have had full access to interpreters during court trials and therefore knew exactly what was going on and could feel fully involved. It is, however, most likely that these same prisoners will then not have any access to what is being said/instructed when they are inducted into a prison. Even if they did have some access to information during the induction, they would not have the opportunity to ask further questions the following day, as most other prisoners would, who would be able to go up to a prison officer and ask a further question about the gym or scheduling questions for example. We must ensure continuity of support following their ‘accessible’ induction and ensure this is upheld, when needed, for the duration of the sentence.

A hard of hearing prisoner, currently serving a life sentence is in the process of winning a battle against three prisons under the Disability Discrimination Act (Equality Act 2010) and is expecting to be awarded £10,000 due to failing to act upon his request for reasonable adjustments. If only a quarter of deaf prisoners were claiming discrimination, then the figure would stand at approximately £2 million. We must ensure a system is set-up to support prison staff to deal with these cases.

In some prisons, officers have been trained to use BSL. In 2009, 16 of the 30 disability liaison officers⁷ trained to use BSL, but the question is, at what level? Deaf prisoners can only converse with the assurance that they are being understood, and are receiving reciprocal information if the officer has at least level 4 or 6 in BSL. This level of language would mean that the officer was fairly fluent, but this begs the question, how often would the officer be able to use their BSL skills? At one prison, a prison officer had been trained to level 3 in BSL but had only used his BSL 6 times in the last 15 years. In one prison, a deaf lady who works in the information management team and who is fluent in BSL has only communicated with a number of deaf prisoners on very few occasions.

2.1: ISOLATION

It has been noted in a report in 2000 that deaf prisoners face isolation or a “Double Sentence” and in some cases court judges have given more lenient sentences to deaf people knowing that their stay in prison would be marked by this isolation. The isolation experienced by deaf prisoners as a “prison within a prison”⁸. Isolation can lead to a lack of social interactions and mental stimulation. However, we must bear in mind the affect that a reduced sentence may have on the victims.

Isolation can be even more problematic for a deaf prisoner without a TV (with subtitles) and some prisoners end up in solitary confinement after a fight or a dispute and are then doubly excluded. For example a prisoner I met got into a fight with other prisoners because they mocked his deafness and as a result the deaf prisoner had his Incentive and Earned Privilege reduced and was stripped of having a TV in his room.

One prisoner with low literacy skills explained that even though he had a TV, he could not understand the comments on the subtitles on the TV programmes as they were in standard or high-level English, and therefore did not have equal access, as did his hearing peers. He preferred to watch action movies/TV programmes that were less ‘wordy’.

We recommend that prison officers are aware of the comparison of privileges for deaf prisoners and their peers with better literacy skills.

In one prison, there were seven Deaf prisoners and even then they felt small in numbers; feeling intimidated by both hearing prison officers and hearing prisoners. They stated that they felt that other hearing people did not like the idea of deaf prisoners being together and, as a result, stopped their monthly get-together. Additionally, they felt that they did not get many visitors, compared to their hearing peers.

We recommend that prison officers encourage better information sharing between deaf prisoners and prison staff which could be achieved by using local communication and moral support from local deaf organisations.

Losing the ability to socialise and communicate, which is a key factor for most Deaf BSL users, is a very debilitating experience. One prisoner asked me to return and always looks forward to seeing me again purely because he isn’t able to communicate very well with anyone at the prison for the duration of his sentence. The same happened in the prison with seven deaf prisoners as they all asked me to return as they enjoyed our conversations in BSL, which gave them some reprieve.

There may be three prisons in the USA where there is a wing for deaf prisoners so they are together and are able to communicate with one another. This information was picked up on the grapevine, however, and HEARD could not identify any wing in the USA for deaf prisoners.

We recommend prisons to receive communication and moral support from local deaf people and/or organisations. Those people should have a minimum of level 4 in BSL to ensure that conversations are not superficial.

2.2: RULES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Some prisons have literature with policies and procedures that appear to be very complicated. Most prisoners with low literacy skills would not be able to understand the contents/information, however, many prisoners would be able to communicate with a member of staff regularly to ask for clarifications and updates so as to be well informed of the policies and procedures that affect them. For many hard of hearing or deaf prisoners, they may not be able read the information at all, and also not be afforded an opportunity to properly discuss the policies and procedures with someone who could communicate properly with them, and therefore fall behind in terms of knowledge of that information as well as things that govern their lives at the prison.

Some Deaf BSL users will have a very much lower literacy skills than the hearing public, and they will fall even further behind with the knowledge of policies and procedures. In one prison, a prisoner, after 3 months in that prison, still did not know that he was entitled to education nor to any of the other services available. In addition, he was left frustrated trying to access a system to arrange for his family to visit him in prison, using a registration system. Due to the inability to communicate with prison staff, he was left waiting for at least a month to understand how to log on and invite his family to visit him.

In one prison, a deaf prisoner didn't know how to set-up and use the subtitles on his TV and informed staff of this, in the best way he could, five times. He was left frustrated for months and when I informed the Equality Officer, he told me it was the first time he had been aware of this, and he was able to rectify the problem. During those months of being frustrated, however, the deaf prisoner had thought about smashing the TV and using the glass to cut himself.

We recommend that literature on prison services, facilities and regime should be in an easy-read format and also video based format (DVD or on-line video)

In the USA, some prisons only allow prisoners to have one hearing aid, which is restricting a prisoner's ability to hear. The same happened in London where prison staff couldn't fully appreciate the request made by a hard of hearing prisoner to have some parts of his cochlear-implant delivered to him, as it was left behind at his home during the stakeout and arrest. Therefore, he remained not being able to hear at all and was utterly isolated and dejected as a result.

We recommend an advocacy support worker in various parts of the UK that are trained to understand the prison system and work with both staff and deaf prisoners. They need to ensure that deaf prisoners are given full access to all relevant information, such as policies and procedures.

2.3: COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE OUTSIDE

Some prisons have a textphone⁹, which is not used effectively. It is often the case the staff don't understand the equipment and do not equate it to a regular sound-based telephone to which hearing prisoners have regular access. As a result, many deaf prisoners are not allocated their set time to use the phone, again adding to their isolation and lack of involvement. In some prisons, we tested the textphone and found that all lines in the prison were now digital and as there is no textphone available on the market that can work with digital lines, this meant that deaf patients had no access to phone calls to contact the outside world. However, one prisoner was able to make a textphone call and it is assumed that on this occasion the equipment was working on an analogue line.

In one prison, a prisoner asked for a textphone to make a call to his family on Christmas day, but had to wait 3 days to get a textphone to make that call. It is not yet known how that prisoner would be able to make a textphone call at other times.

We recommend that all prisons have at least one analogue line to work with a textphone.

In USA, seven prisons have videophone facilities, which are especially useful for deaf prisoners, and we could adopt a similar principle. As BSL or lip-reading are visually based it is essential that the face and upper part of the body of the person which whom the prisoner is communicating, is visible on a screen. I understood from one prisoner that he was able to make a video call from Albany prison on the Isle of Wight. It is not yet known if we can set up a video call facility in all prisons and this work needs to be followed up.

We recommend setting up video-conferencing facility for deaf prisoners to call their family/friends.

⁹ – Textphone is a device that allows deaf people to communicate by typing messages back and forth in real-time and can only be use on analogue phone lines. Link for more information: <http://www.connevans.info/image/connevans/40tu1150.pdf>

2.4: EQUALITY OFFICERS' ROLE

All the Equality Officers that I have met have highlighted that they are not fully aware of the needs of deaf and hard of hearing prisoners. In most prisons I have visited, Equality Officers have asked me how they might improve things for these prisoners. Some examples were;

- asking me for advice on equipment for hard of hearing prisoners and how to use a loop system that would be compatible with a prisoner's hearing aid;
- asking me for advice on how to work the textphone so that deaf prisoners would be able to make phone calls; and
- asking me how to make a room acoustically friendly, reducing the impact of noise in a lounge for elderly and deafened prisoners.

In one prison, an Equality Officer asked around to see who was deaf or hard of hearing and if they could sign (use British Sign Language) or not. This indicated a lack of knowledge around deafness and therefore implied that he had not been able to fully support the prisoners. An improvement in the recording of information about these prisoners could perhaps have given a better starting point for them to gain access to prison facilities and interactions.

We recommend that we educate Equality Officers and staff at management levels to fully understand the needs of deaf and hard of hearing prisoners and subsequently improve the system to support those deaf prisoners.

2.5: COMMUNICATING IN BSL (BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE)

Some prison staff had had BSL training but it varied greatly from prison to prison. In one prison, a number of staff and some prisoners attended BSL course level 1 (the most basic level of the language). In another prison a member of staff (Reception, which is an important part of the process) had level 3 in BSL but in the 15 years she had been in post, she has only used it for 6 hours in total.

There is a question as to the value or cost of prison staff learning BSL and with it being funded by NOMS. Level 1 in BSL will only allow them to have a rudimentary conversation, as this stage mainly consists of nouns and not grammar/language structure. It may be more beneficial for someone who can already hold a conversation meaningfully with the Deaf prisoners. In some prisons, deaf prisoners did value a member of staff being able to communicate. There was frustration, though, at the conversation only being able to be undertaken at a very basic level.

We understand the cost of employing someone to converse in BSL with these Deaf BSL users/prisoners, so we suggest a balance between volunteers to converse socially and perhaps deaf advocacy support workers to converse about issues in and around the prison environment, working alongside prison staff.

We recommend that it would be more effective to be able to have both volunteers and advocacy support workers to support those deaf prisoners around the UK.

2.6: FACILITIES IN PRISON

None of the deaf prisoners I have met have had access to counselling services even though most of these prisoners expressed a wish to commit suicide. One deaf prisoner explained that he understood that there was a high suicide rate both at the start of the sentence and the end due to anxiety with regard to re-joining society.

Due to the fact that the UK deaf community is very small, and everyone knows each other, the apprehension of being re-introduced to society is of particular note. The prisoner I spoke to felt that he could not join his own community when released due to the stigma and likewise couldn't hide in the much larger hearing community because of the communication barrier. He went on to say that he might as well hang himself. The other six deaf prisoners present all agreed with him. It is vital that deaf prisoners have access to counselling services staffed by people who can communicate comfortably and fluently in BSL.

We recommend regular support for those deaf prisoners, using deaf support workers and/or using deaf counsellors.

Education is another barrier. All prisoners I met did not have any communication support for any of the courses they were on. In one prison, a hard of hearing prisoner was used as communication support for another deaf prisoner and does not get paid for this. All education providers hold ALS (Additional Learning Support) funds and for some reason, they are not paying for communication support for those deaf prisoners. I have not yet received any justification for this.

In one prison, a deaf prisoner did have communication support on a sex-offenders' rehabilitation course with other deaf prisoners. However, none was provided for a literacy course he wished to attend.

We recommend that educational providers are aware of the support provision needed for deaf prisoners and use ALS funding to provide appropriate communication support.

The Prison Medical centre is a place some deaf prisoners need to go and one prisoner explained the great difficulties communicating and felt he did not get the standard of service that his hearing peers would receive due to poor communication. None of the deaf prisoners I met had communication support provided in the medical centre and this begs a question as to how doctors or nurses fully understand the symptoms and subsequently provide appropriate treatment for deaf prisoners.

We recommend that health centres have access to funding to pay for communication support for health appointments.

2.7: INDUCTION PROCESS

It is crucial to determine the support needs of a prisoner for the induction process and allow staff to cater for reasonable adjustments for the whole duration of the prisoner's sentence. This can only be achieved with the right support for prison staff. It is vital to establish good communication access to gain information; so deaf prisoners are getting the same treatment as their hearing peers, and not experiencing a 'double sentence'.

Communication is really important when a prisoner arrives at a prison. In one prison, as I mentioned earlier in this report, a prisoner only understood "C26" which was his cell room number and that was it. I have investigated at length to determine how we can work with each existing section of the process to improve communication.

In many prisons, I was introduced to someone who could sign, or use BSL, but found that the level of BSL used was far too low to fluently converse with deaf prisoners. In one prison, they introduced me to a person who worked in the information management team and I was assured that they could sign to the 'highest level'. I spoke to this person and discovered that in fact she only signed a little – She had just passed level 2 (2 years of 2 hours a week evening study), which is still rather basic. In order to be competent to hold a fluent and competent conversation with Deaf prisoners a staff member should have at least level 3, preferably level 4. Level 6 (5 year study) is the highest qualifying language level in BSL before a person then moves on to learn how to interpret between BSL and English (this is highly specialised and it is not suggested that this level is necessary for staff)

We recommend using deaf advocacy support workers to support deaf prisoners throughout the induction, making sure they understand information shared. That deaf advocacy support worker can organise communication support if/as necessary.

2.8: INFORMATION FROM COURT

Prisoners told me that they had been sent down to a holding cell after being sentenced and waited for a long period of time with no communication with anyone. At the end of a long wait, they were finally told to leave to go to a prison, without any knowledge where they were going or any other information. No one spoke to them in order to obtain their personal information which should have been logged onto the PER (Prisoner's Escort Record) or Core Record Form.

Most deaf prisoners said that they did not have an interpreter or any other communication support during the induction process. It is vital at an early stage that basic information is recorded and induction made accessible to enable consistency in the support offered prior to entering prison environment.

We recommend that paperwork be put in place that will prompt staff to note that there is a need for communication support and that staff at holding cells/remand prisons/transfer dept. also note the necessity of communication support before the deaf prisoner is transferred.

2.9: PER + CORE RECORD FORM

A prisoner will arrive with several forms, the two main ones being the PER form and Core Record form. With PER, on the first page it stated;

“Communication or language difficulties”

None of the forms that I saw had anything written in that box in connection with the deaf prisoner’s communication difficulties whereas it should be highlighted in this section that the person is deaf or hard of hearing. With basic training, all reception staff should be able to make reasonable adjustments with regard to this.

The Core Record form is a more comprehensive form and it is difficult for a prison officer to indicate or identify the prisoner’s communication needs on it. It is therefore recommended that the officers are made aware of this and know what to write, and where. One prison officer suggested that they could write something in the “Distinctive marks” box of that form, although this could be difficult in terms of consistency in record keeping, as it would be difficult for staff to know what or where to write. Another prison officer suggested perhaps adding a comment with regard to the prisoners’ deafness on the “state of health” sections on the rear of the form.

We recommend that staff is aware of what to write and how that information is communicated to another prison.

2.10: FIRST NIGHT INDUCTION

On the first night and first day in reception, it is a difficult and anxious time for new prisoners, and particularly for deaf prisoners arriving without any communication support. Without access to support, it would be more difficult for those prisoners to open up and communicate with the staff. Some of the prisoners I spoke to said that they didn’t feel comfortable in answering a question on, for example, self-harm, when they suspected they would not be understood. Inevitably, people will be more open to people with whom they feel good empathy and understanding. Deaf prisoners felt that they would be more open to discussing things with a member of staff that tried to understand that person’s deafness.

We recommend a DVD/video to help prisoners understand the underlining message of the questions that will be asked during the first night induction and every member of prison staff I have met has welcomed the idea.

2.11: INDUCTION TRAINING RECORD

On one of the forms, there is a section that enquires whether the person has completed the induction training, but there are no questions asked to clarify if the person has actually understood the contents of the training. One parolee said that he didn't understand anything from the training that allowed him to be released on parole.

It is vital for a prisoner to fully understand the content of what is expected of him/her, if prisoners are expected to achieve specific things. Some of the courses may be provided by OLASS (Offenders Learning And Student Services) and they will have an ALS budget to cover the cost of interpreting. If the course is provided by CIC (Community Interest Companies), they are expected to make reasonable adjustments to communicate clearly with the prisoners and subsequently have a duty of care to the general public.

We recommend that deaf advocacy support workers and/or communication support staff should work with the deaf prisoner to ensure that information provided is clearly communicated to those prisoners.

2.12: LISTENER

For some time, we have searched the country for a prison that has more than one deaf prisoner using BSL (British Sign Language). In one prison, there were two deaf BSL users who arrived at the same time. A listener who is hearing cannot be a "listener", as he or she would not fluently communicate with the deaf prisoner.

We finally discovered seven deaf prisoners in one prison with one prisoner who oversaw all other seven deaf prisoners. However, there was a problem in that not all deaf prisoners were in the same wing. One deaf prisoner had not seen the other six deaf prisoners for about a year.

We recommend that there is a deaf advocacy support worker to work with deaf prisoners as a 'listener' and support due to their deafness.

2.13: TICKING THE BOX

There are forms in all prisons asking if the prisoner has a disability or not. However, there is no clear understanding what action is required to make reasonable adjustment. Most Equality Officers do not know what to do to support deaf prisoners. In some forms, there is a section asking if the prisoner is "Hearing impaired" Once again, the Equality Officers do not know what action is required for a particular person with a specific level of deafness. In one prison, a member of staff stated that the two deaf prisoners are happy and always put their thumbs up. When meeting those two prisoners, they explained to me that they were very unhappy and that as communication is so limited, they couldn't explain to the prison staff that they were, nor why they were unhappy.

On most forms, there is a section asking for the prisoner's language and most will assume English or foreign language, but would not think of BSL (British Sign Language, a recognised, official language in the UK). Most BSL users will have poor literacy skills and would submissively answer yes to English being the nearest language to them. They would not be offered an opportunity to state BSL as their main language. If staff knew of the person's main language being BSL, support could be offered with clear communication strategies.

We recommend that forms should ask whether the person uses English or BSL and prison staff to receive support from deaf advocacy support workers.

2.14: INFORMATION PACK & SAFETY OF PRISONERS

Most information packs are confusing and in one prison they had a very complicated and lengthy information pack! There was also form on Finance, Benefits & Debt, which would be very important to deaf prisoners and yet, it was complicated. It was shown to a BSL user and the person commented that it was too complicated and would not know what to do.

We understand the importance of the prisoners' safety and that includes keeping themselves safe from self-harm. We understand the process includes asking if there are any concerns around safety. However, since communication is very often limited, to the deaf prisoners would not feel encouraged to disclose any concerns around safety.

The Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan is another important aspect of prisoners' safety and once again limited communication could result in putting prisoners at risk from harm if they do not understand the information.

We recommend having an advocacy support worker to work with deaf prisoners with low literacy skills to ensure they understand the information. Equality officers and some prison officers welcomed this idea.

STANDARD ONE: Improve data of deaf and hard of hearing prisoners**Rationale/Evidence**

We are not able to accurately record number of deaf prisoners and therefore are not able to estimate the support needs on a national level.

Objectives/Activity

- Develop questionnaire that is manageable – After acknowledging deafness, ask if the prisoner use BSL;
- Input information from PER and/or Core Record Form to determine prisoners deafness and whether he/she uses BSL or English. Information should be inputted into NOMIS and NHS's System One; and
- Adapt NOMIS and System One to highlight that a deaf prisoner will need a BSL interpreter and/or help from an advocacy worker.

Cost

NOMS Staff time to amend record.

Outcome

Being able to print out statistics on the number of deaf prisoners and whether he/she uses BSL, thus understand the amount of support needs.

STANDARD TWO: Improve communication with deaf (BSL) prisoners**Rationale/Evidence**

Deaf (BSL) prisoners are not able to have a social interaction with other prisoners or staff.

Objectives/Activity

Sub-contract to an organisation/person who can manage volunteers that have a minimum of BSL level 3.

Cost

Facilitate volunteers around UK – Sub-contract to deaf charities with access to resources.

Outcome

Better mental state for those deaf and hard of hearing prisoners.
Better feedback from deaf prisoners.

STANDARD THREE: Making video calls

Rationale/Evidence

Some deaf prisoners are not able to make any phone calls at all, as textphones do not work with current digital lines.

Objectives/Activity

Work with ICT team to develop a pilot video call facility.

Cost

Unknown, as work was uncompleted.

Outcome

Access to making video/telephone calls – Thus equal access.

STANDARD FOUR: Production of deaf awareness DVD

Rationale/Evidence

There is lack of deaf awareness amongst equality officers, staff at management levels and prison officers.

Objectives/Activity

- Write up a script of the basic deaf awareness as well as specialist Deaf Awareness information that would be specific to prison settings
- Sub-contract the making of a DVD to a production company
- NOMS to distribute DVD to all prisons.

Cost

Production cost.

Outcome

Better communication and relationship between deaf prisoners and staff.

STANDARD FIVE: Basic awareness of deafness and BSL to prison officers

Rationale/Evidence

There is a lack of awareness that BSL is a proper language and communication tool for some deaf prisoners (It is officially recognised language in the UK).

Objectives/Activity

Produce posters.

Cost

Printing cost.

Outcome

Better recording by prison officers.

STANDARD SIX: Production of DVD for deaf prisoners

Rationale/Evidence

There is lack of confidence amongst deaf prisoners to disclose important information such as safety risks.

Objectives/Activity

- Write up script that is associated to standard prison's induction
- Produce DVD
- NOMS to distribute DVD to all prisons.

Cost

DVD production.

Outcome

Better disclosure from deaf prisoners.

STANDARD SEVEN: Improve communication in classes or meetings

Rationale/Evidence

There is lack of communication to and from deaf prisoners at CIC courses or induction process.

Objectives/Activity

- Identify funding for interpreting provision (For example, OLASS has ALS funding to pay for interpreting provisions)
- Set aside cost for interpreters
- Inform prisons of the funding.

Cost

Interpreting cost – £35 an hour on average.

Outcome

Better rehabilitation process.

Howard League for Penal Reform – Not Hearing Us report

https://d19ylpo4aovc7m.cloudfront.net/fileadmin/howard_league/user/pdf/Publications/Not_hearing_us.pdf

Howard League for Penal Reform – Deaf prisoners Fact File

https://d19ylpo4aovc7m.cloudfront.net/fileadmin/howard_league/user/pdf/Deaf_Prisoner_Factfile.pdf

HEARD (Helping Educate the Advance the Rights of the Deaf) Deaf In Prison Campaign Fact Sheet

<http://behearddc.org/images/pdf/deafinprison%20fact%20sheet%20.pdf>

A Double Sentence, Deaf Prisoners in the UK

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HMP Bristol

HMP Dovegate

HMP Drake Hall

HMP Featherstone

HMP Manchester

HMP Rislely

HMP Stafford

HMP Whatton

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6

What is British Sign Language (BSL)

British Sign Language (BSL) is the first or preferred language of many Deaf people in the UK. It is a language of space and movement using the hands, body, face and head.

BSL is the sign language of the Deaf community in the UK (in Northern Ireland, Irish Sign Language (ISL) is also used). BSL is a real, full and living language that is part of a rich cultural heritage. It is one of the UK's indigenous languages; other includes English, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Cornish. Many hearing people also use BSL; it has more users than other indigenous languages such as Welsh or Gaelic.

It is a language that has evolved in the UK's Deaf community over hundreds of years. There is considerable research evidence that shows Deaf children who are exposed to BSL early can develop linguistically at the same rate and to the same linguistics levels as hearing children with spoken language. This kind of early access to language ensures the ability for learning throughout life, leading to improved life opportunities.

BSL is not just a language; it is also a gateway to learning, a path towards a sense of Deaf identity, and the means whereby Deaf people survive and flourish in a hearing world.

The British Deaf Association – BDA

Vision

Our vision is Deaf people fully participating and contributing as equal and valued citizens in wider society.

Mission

Our Mission is to ensure a world in which the language, culture, community, diversity and heritage of Deaf people in the UK is respected and fully protected, ensuring that Deaf people can participate and contribute as equal and valued citizens in the wider society. This will be achieved through: Improving the quality of life by empowering Deaf individuals and groups; Enhancing freedom, equality and diversity; Protecting and promoting BSL.

Values

The BDA is a Deaf people's organisation representing a diverse, vibrant and ever-changing community of Deaf people. Our activities, promotions, and partnerships with other organisations aim to empower our community towards full participation and contribution as equal and valued citizens in the wider society. We also aim to act as guardians of BSL.

Protecting our Deaf culture and Identity – we value Deaf peoples' sense of Deaf culture and identity derived from belonging to a cultural and linguistic group, sharing similar beliefs and experiences with a sense of belonging.

Asserting our linguistic rights – we value the use of BSL as a human right. As such, BSL must be preserved, protected and promoted because we also value the right of Deaf people to use their first or preferred language.

Fostering our community – we value Deaf people with diverse perspectives, experiences and abilities. We are committed to equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination with a special focus on those affecting Deaf people and their language.

Achieving equality in legal, civil and human rights – we value universal human rights such as the right to receive education and access to information in sign language, and freedom from political restrictions on our opportunities to become full citizens.

Developing our alliance – we value those who support us and are our allies because they share our vision and mission, and support our BSL community.

BDA stands for **D**eaf **E**quality, **A**ccess and **F**reedom of choice

To contact the British Deaf Association please look at our website: www.bda.org.uk
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