



# A BDA Survey on Deaf Organisations and Funding

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## **Acknowledgements**

The BDA wishes to thank all those organisations that responded.

We also wish to thank:

- Thomas Lichy for initiating and managing the survey
- Melissa Mostyn-Thomas for writing this report.

# 1. About the BDA

## The British Deaf Association (BDA)

We are a Deaf-led membership organisation. We campaign for the rights of Deaf people to access all areas of society through British Sign Language (BSL) and for the rights of deaf children to have a bilingual<sup>1</sup> and bicultural education.

We aim to empower Deaf BSL users through a variety of programmes:

- Personal and community advocacy support including training Deaf people to become advocates;
- Youth activities including training Deaf people to become youth workers;
- BSL teaching including training Deaf people to become BSL tutors.

Our members and users tend to define themselves as culturally Deaf with a first or preferred language of BSL, accordingly we will use the capital 'D' to refer to Deaf adults. Because many children grow up without access to other Deaf people, we will use the lowercase 'd' to refer to deaf children.

We are aware that our members and users share many similar experiences to those who have lost their useful hearing in later life, whether this be a gradual process (hard of hearing people) or a sudden process (deafened people). While some people with hearing loss subscribe to our values and indeed are members, we cannot claim to speak for them. This document therefore should not be taken as a response from the whole population of Deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people.

### Definitions used in this document:

**SLI** – a sign language interpreter, someone who has achieved the highest level of training in BSL and has acquired the appropriate qualification in BSL interpreting skills<sup>2</sup>.

**British Sign Language (BSL)** – a language which differs from English in its use of grammatical features such as signing space, placement, agreement verbs, facial expressions and movement variations. It also has a different sign structure from that of English which means that it is not possible to have an exact 'word for sign' translation.

**Deaf** – In this particular document, we use 'deaf' to cover the wide range of people with varying degrees of hearing loss, who communicate through a variety of methods of their choice.

<sup>1</sup>Bilingual education in this context is taken to mean teaching by the use of British Sign Language and English (or one of the indigenous languages e.g. Welsh or Gaelic). Bicultural education involves learning about Deaf identity and culture as well as hearing culture.

<sup>2</sup>Further information may be obtained from Signature (formerly CACDP) – [www.signature.org.uk](http://www.signature.org.uk)

## 2. About the survey

This survey was done as a response to anecdotal suggestions that deaf organisations and deaf services were suffering particularly severely from funding cuts, and that the decisions on some of these cuts did not meet legal requirements.

The following extract from a recent BDN article (March 2012) by Thomas Lichy clarifies what these legal requirements might be:

### **'Guidelines for councils when deciding to make cuts'**

*Councils and other public bodies must act fairly and lawfully when making any decisions, including decisions to cut funding to services or organisations. Local councils risk acting unlawfully if they:*

- *Do not **consult** when they should (see below)*
- *Fail to take into account **relevant** considerations*
- *Take into account **irrelevant** considerations*
- *Breach their **equality duties** (see below)*
- *Act **unreasonably** when cutting services*
- *Do not have a **fair process** (for example not telling organisations what criteria they were applying, or treating groups differently and inconsistently)*

### **Should councils consult with the deaf community?**

*There is no general law that says Councils have to consult Deaf people on all issues. However, in certain circumstances...the law says Deaf people should be consulted because a specific statute requires it (for example over the provision of Deaf health services), or because Deaf people have been consulted in the past over the same issue, and it would be too unfair to take their services away without consulting them.*

*Once a Council decides to consult Deaf people over proposals, it must do so fairly. This includes giving Deaf people enough information, and enough time, so that they can respond in a meaningful way; this will vary depending on the circumstances.*

*The results of any consultation must be conscientiously taken into account by the decision-maker; this does not mean that they have to do what Deaf people say, but they cannot ignore their comments or refuse to consider them.*

### **Public sector equality duty**

*Councils and other public bodies must:*

- *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
- *Advance equality of opportunity between deaf and hearing people*
- *Foster good relations between deaf and hearing*

*The Equality Act 2010 states that advancing equality involves:*

- *Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by deaf people*
- *Taking steps to meet the needs of deaf people where these are different from the needs of other people*
- *Promoting understanding between deaf and hearing people, e.g. by encouraging deaf to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.'*

Thomas Lichy, British Deaf News March 2012

## 3. Executive Summary

### Introduction

Across the UK, there are many organisations that either focus on deaf people, or have services orientated towards deaf people as part of their overall portfolio of services. These organisations have played a vital role in assisting and supporting deaf people with projects and services that have enabled thousands of deaf people across the UK to have more choice, control, and independence in their lives.

### Method

The British Deaf Association (BDA) – the UK's largest deaf-led membership charity - carried out a survey of leading deaf organisations and services across the UK to form a clearer picture of how they are being affected by funding cuts, the implications for deaf service users, and whether any required consultations had actually been done. The survey was done via Survey Monkey, an online self-directed survey mechanism, and was targeted at CEOs and CFOs.

### Key findings

- 38 respondents (60%) experienced funding cuts in 2011-12, but for 2012-13 only 19 respondents out of 63 (30%) expect cuts. Out of the 38 who had funding cuts, the largest proportion (20%) had between 20-40% of their overall funding cut
- The biggest reductions in income came from local authority or other public sector funding cuts both last and this financial year (38% and 39% respectively)
- Out of the 55 respondents who lost income, 29% had to reduce staffing and service provision levels as a result of the cuts
- 59% of respondents were not able to assert what impact the cuts had on their service users in 2011-12. 44% of those who lost income did not state what impact the cuts had on their organisations. Both of these findings indicate a strong focus among respondents on keeping a low profile in a tough economic climate – possibly at the expense of their service users
- Out of the 43 who answered, 6 (14%) said their funding was cut without any communication, and 16 (37%) said a consultation was done but ignored
- Out of the 27 respondents who had their funding cut by a local council or other public sector authority, 15 (56%) said there was no assessment
- Roughly 30 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the situation was getting significantly worse for deaf people
- 34% were interested in forming an Alliance or similar with the BDA and campaigning for further legalisation. Recommendations based on these key findings will be made in the conclusion.

## 4. Survey Objectives

### ***To assess funding of deaf-orientated organisations and services***

There are many deaf organisations and services across the UK. Numbers vary depending on how a 'deaf organisation' or a 'deaf service' is defined. This survey concerns itself with organisations and services that:

- Support and promote the deaf community;
- Seek to sustain the richness and diversity of deaf people;
- Promote the rights, equality and inclusion of deaf people within the wider community;
- Provide a wide range of essential projects and services.

Around 300 such organisations were contacted directly for this survey. Between them, these organisations empower and enable many tens of thousands of deaf people across the UK to have more choice, control and independence in their lives. These organisations have:

- Played a key role in the progress towards equality for deaf people in the past few decades;
- Supported the creation of legislation that benefited all deaf people across the UK;
- Promoted the recognition of British Sign Language (BSL) and done the spadework to enable deaf people to use their only fully accessible language more and more often to access vital services and information;
- Supported deaf people from childhood through education, into their first jobs, and beyond;
- Empowered deaf people who are dealing with crises – medical emergencies, access to mental health, the justice system, the police, access to legal advice, housing services, and so on.

There is anecdotal evidence that these deaf-orientated organisations and services are suffering heavy funding cuts, leading to disruption in the support ecosystem that sustains the UK's deaf people. This research aims to gather both qualitative and quantitative evidence on what these cuts are; how many deaf people they impact; and how the organisations and services are responding.

### ***To assess if any legally required consultation had been made before deciding to cut funding***

Government and local councils are under much pressure to make swift decisions on cuts, and to hastily implement them, due to (i) the economic climate, and (ii) the decision to frontload the cuts i.e. reduce the maximum amount offered in grants as soon as possible instead of tapering the reductions over several years.

In these conditions, shortcuts may have been taken. The law - specifically the Public Sector Equality Duty, as laid out in section 149 of the 2010 Equality Act - says that deaf and disabled people must be consulted before cuts are made.

For more detail, see: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

Deaf service users and smaller deaf-led or deaf-staffed organisations often find it almost impossible to access legal advice:

*'For the deaf person seeking advice, there are additional barriers as when they come across a little oasis of advice, there is no guarantee that they can access the advice on hand.'*



*Unfortunately, the advice system of CABs, law societies, union sources and private firms of solicitors are often still inaccessible to profoundly deaf people in spite of the DDA having been on the statute books since 1995. Lack of knowledge of palantype transcription services, BSL interpreters, induction loops etc, all of which are inclusive methods of communication, coupled with low levels of understanding of DDA reasonable adjustment duties contribute to the exclusion of deaf people from the oasis in the desert.*

*deaf people ... often slip through the net – they are left in not so much an advice desert, but on a whole planet of sand.'*

*Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)*

*“Responding to discrimination: the geography and geometry of advice provision in England, Scotland and Wales” (July 2009)*

*“[Deaf people] often felt like they were in a battle to be understood by their legal adviser”*

*“Deaf [...] people suffer no cognitive impairment as a result of their hearing loss but they are often made to feel dependent and ignorant by their own legal team because of insensitivity and lack of preparation”.*

*“[T]here are certainly cases where the participants felt this, particularly where deaf people may be penalised or pressured by their lack of understanding of the legal process; and also where deaf people may be given incorrect treatment due to caricaturing of their supposed needs”.*

*“Legal Choices – Silent Process: Engaging legal services when you do not hear”  
Research commissioned by The Legal Services Consumer Panel (March 2012).*

This research aims to assess if the appropriate work to meet the legal requirements had been done by public sector funding bodies, before deciding on their cuts to deaf and disabled organisations.

## 5. Methods

### **Participants**

Data gathering was done via use of SurveyMonkey, an online self-directed survey mechanism. A bespoke e-survey was created, to be completed online by participants, to gather quantitative data from the widest possible range of deaf-orientated organisations and services across the UK.

The e-survey consisted of a range of questions on the following themes:

- The type of organisation they were (i.e. areas of service provision and areas in which they operated);
- Funding outcomes for the year 2011-12, including any cuts, and their implications for the organisation;
- Consultation – whether the affected organisation was consulted of the cuts and how it was carried out;
- Disability/equality duty – whether an assessment was carried out (if the cut was made by a public sector authority);
- Anticipated funding outcomes for 2012-13, including any expected cuts and how these would impact on the organisation.

Online requests to fill out the survey were sent out nationally to over 300 deaf organisations and deaf services. The requests were addressed directly to the organisations' CEOs and CFOs, accompanied by an email from the BDA's CEO encouraging them to reply. The deaf or hearing public were not targeted.

### **Notes on encouraging participation:**

*The BDA does not provide services to deaf people. It only represents deaf people, campaigns for deaf rights, and runs projects to empower the deaf community. Hence there is little overlap or conflict of interest with other deaf-orientated organisations, the majority of which focus on service provision for deaf people and do not seek to campaign on behalf of, or represent deaf people.*

Survey participants were offered the opportunity to respond anonymously. To verify data, the organisational name, and the respondent's name and email address, were requested, but this step could be skipped if anonymity was desired.

The BDA's CEO also sent out a request for other organisations to respond, and spread the news through informal deaf sector CEO networks.

## 6. Findings

63 organisations responded. 20 of them operate in England, 3 in London only and 2 in Scotland. Northern Ireland and Wales were not represented. The survey asked them to define their service provision in the following areas:

- Deaf clubs / social groups (e.g. sports groups, lunch clubs, pub nights etc.)
- BSL interpreting or other communication support
- Training for hearing people (e.g. BSL courses, deaf awareness / equality training)
- Equipment / technical support for deaf people
- Specialist support for deaf people (e.g. advocacy, employment, benefits, ethnic)
- Council or Local Authority services for deaf people
- Social care for deaf people
- Deaf youth / deaf children services or activities
- Other (please specify)

Many respondents were very broad in their service provision, with 30 (48%) of them offering three services or more. 36 organised deaf clubs/social groups, 23 of which also offered training to hearing people. Another 11 also offered the latter, but not the former. 26 provided deaf youth/children services or activities.

### Funding outcomes

#### Financial year 2011-2012

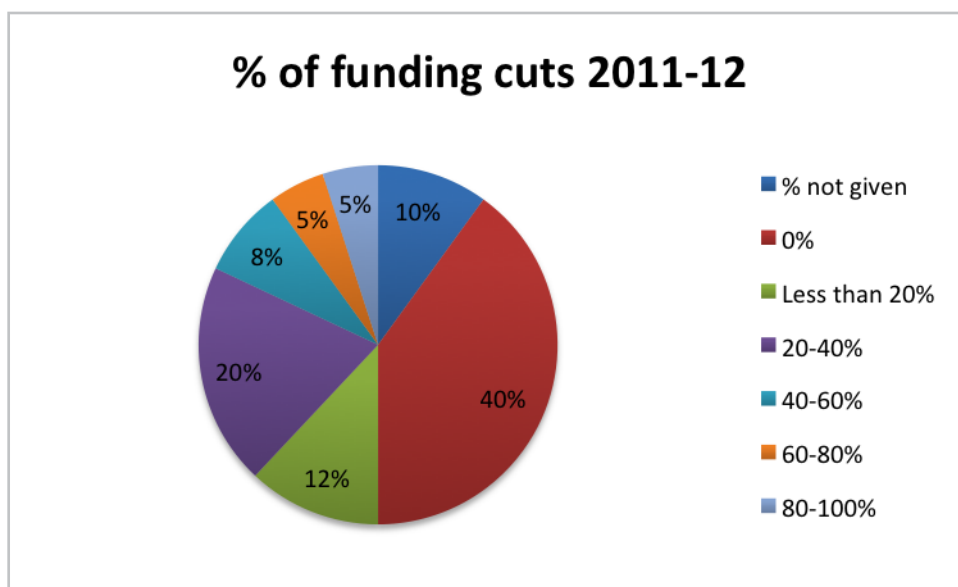
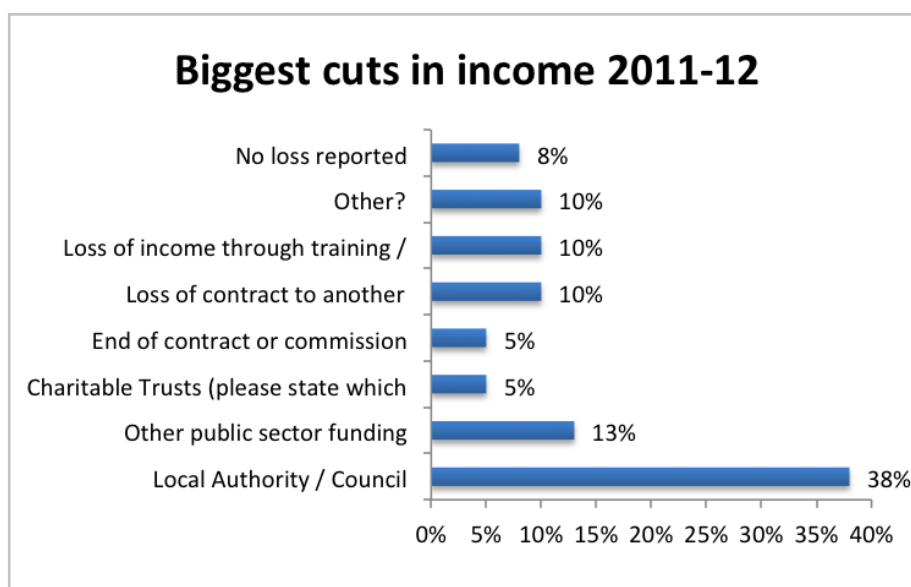


Figure 1

38 respondents (60%) experienced funding cuts in the last financial year 2011-12. 25 respondents (40%) had not. Out of these, 7 had their funding threatened, but were able to avoid cuts. (Avoidance strategies are covered in the next section.)

32 respondents gave further detail on the amount of funding cut: 7 (12%) said less than 20%, 12 (20%) said between 20-40%, 5 (8%) said between 40-60%, and 3 (5%) each said between 60-80% and between 80-100% respectively. 6 (10%) of the respondents did not specify how much funding had been cut.

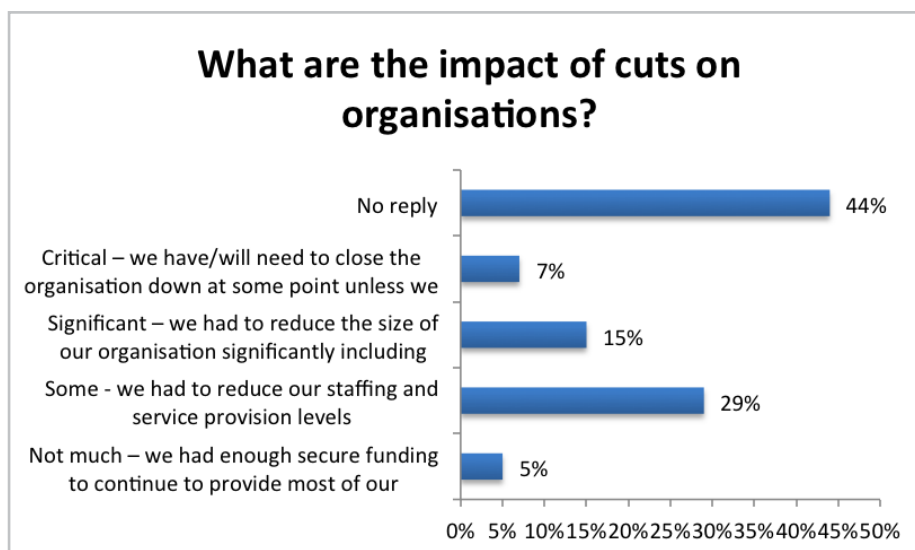


**Figure 2**

Although not every organisation had their funding cut, many still lost income by other means – which suggests a combination of both increased competition and increased efforts to save money in a difficult economic climate.

Out of the 55 who lost income, 5 (10%) each said theirs were due to either a loss of contract to another organisation, the loss of income through training/consultancy/trading, or the loss of some other source of income. 3 (5%) each lost the most income from either a charitable trust or the end of a commission/contract. 5 (8%) did not report any loss of income.

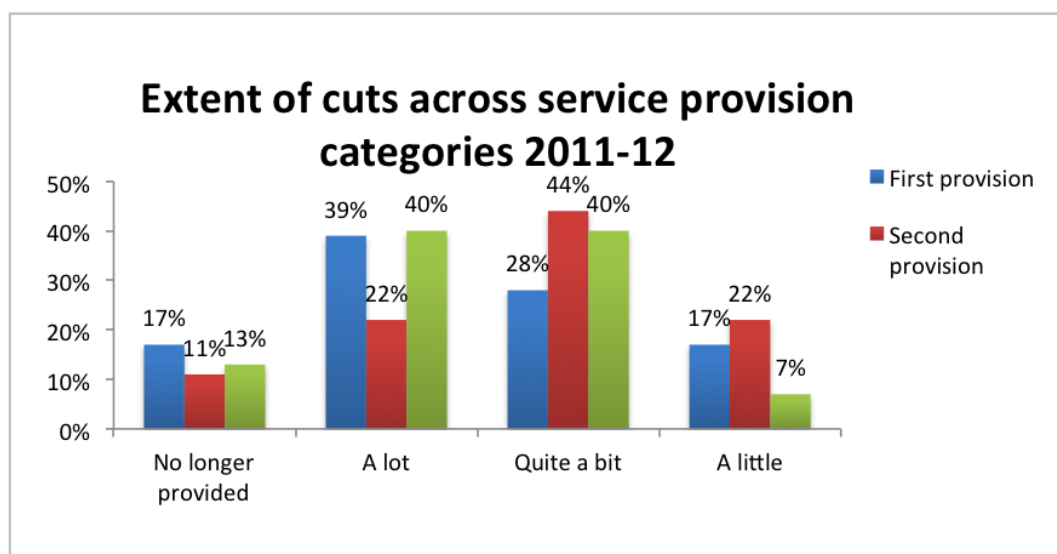
24 (44%) of the 55 respondents that had lost income did not specify what impact this had on them. 3 (5%) said it didn't have much impact, while 16 (29%) had to reduce staffing and service provision levels. 8 (15%) went further, reducing the size of their organisation including redundancies and closing key services. Another 4 (7%) said the impact was critical and the organisation would have to fold at some point unless they secured a significant amount of funding.



**Figure 3**

Respondents were asked to name up to three services or areas affected by the reduction in income. These varied widely - from special-needs groups to BSL interpretation and social services, making it impossible to establish a trend - but two of the services most likely to suffer were the provision of equipment and youth/children services.

Just 13 respondents (21%) named three services affected by cuts – with 3 (5%) naming two, and 2 (4%) describing just one affected area of provision. With that in mind, it would be more constructive to treat each of the three service provision categories as 100% and then compare percentages of funding cut for each.



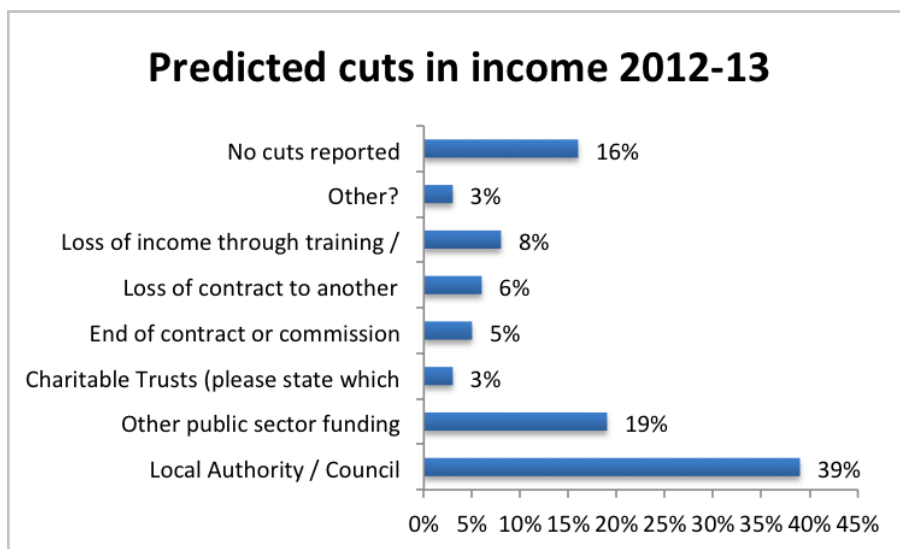
**Figure 4**

Out of those who answered the question, 17% no longer provided their first services, and 39% cut first service provision by 'a lot'. 44% of their second named services were reduced 'quite a bit', as was 40% of third service provision. Another 40% of third service provision was cut 'a lot'.

It was not possible to assess fully the impact of these cuts on the respondents' service users. It appears that respondents were themselves unclear and only 41% responded. Of those that did respond, 19% estimated the number of service users affected by the cuts to be from 30 service users to a possible number of 5000 service users. This clearly indicates the difficulty of measuring the impact of the cuts.

## Financial year 2012-13

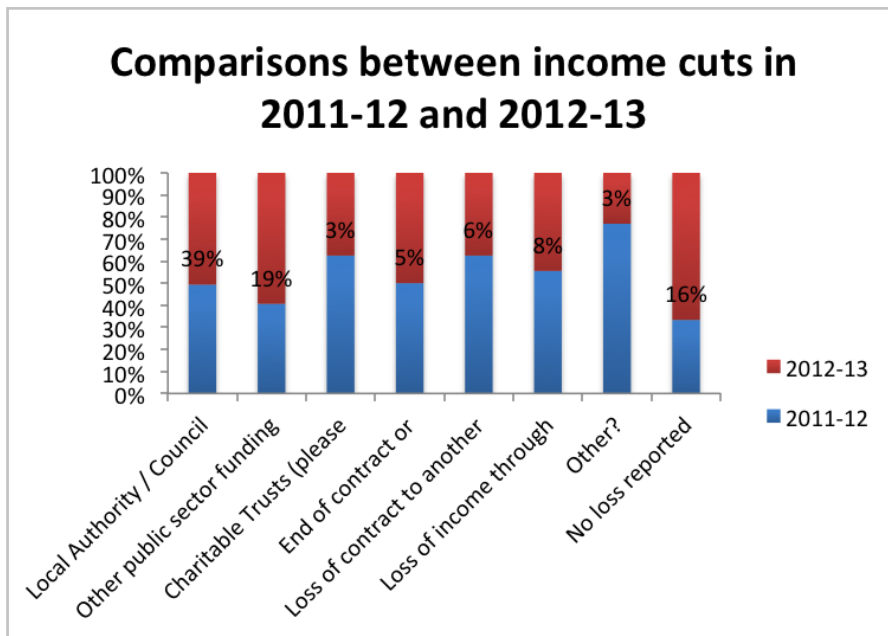
19 respondents (39% of the 49 who answered this question) expect funding cuts, and another 17 (35%) think they are possible. One organisation said they were not expecting a cut next year because all their funding had already been cut.



**Figure 5**

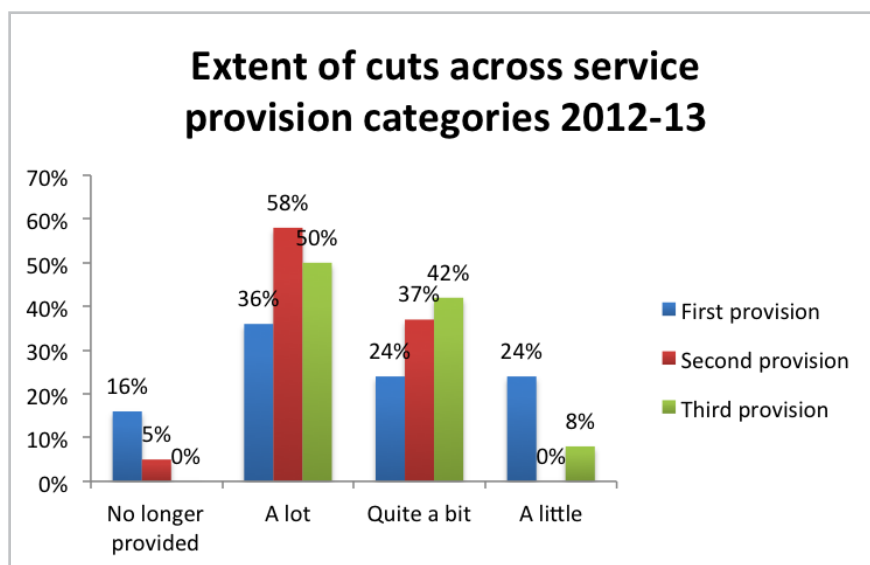
Figure 5 (above) shows a similar number (39%) to last year's 38% in Figure 2 that expect cuts from local authorities/councils in 2012-13. 19% expect other public sector funding to be cut, while 3% relate to charitable trusts.

These figures must be placed in context, however, given that fewer anticipated cuts were stated for 2012-13 than there were for 2011-12. The following chart shows how they compare.



**Figure 6**

In this context, we can see clearly that the majority of the projected income reductions for 2012-13 are not as large as they were in 2011-12. The percentage of those who reported no loss of income for 2012-13 is also larger than that in 2011-12. The only exceptions are the cuts from local authorities/councils and those for other public sector funding – these indicate that there will be an equivalent amount of cuts for the following year.



**Figure 7**

For 2012-13 10 respondents (16%) named three services that would be affected – 3 fewer people than in 2011-12 – but that does not necessarily make next year’s cuts less severe. It may be that at the time of filling out the survey, the respondents were not aware of any other cuts being planned for 2012-13.

58% of the respondents had to cut their second service provision 'a lot.' The next highest proportion (50%) also made substantial cuts to their third service provision.

## **Strategies used to avoid cuts**

Replies varied from organisation to organisation depending on the type of services they provided, but those who were able to, put in place a range of strategies to avoid cuts for 2011-12. The following quotes are indicative of attitudes:

*"They gave us an extension, due to a tendering process coming into force."*

*"We had a 3 year fixed term contract which we refused to budge on, avoiding a 10% reduction in grants."*

*"We received significant cuts on the year before; now for the moment, our funding remains intact."*

*"We organised a summer playscheme and was able to apply for funding."*

A few organisations were either new – in which case the cuts didn't apply to them – or private businesses who relied on sales rather than public sector funding.

For 2012-13 one respondent said they would just work hard to get funding from other sources. Another considered setting up an Interim Working Group co-operating with their council and a legal advisor.

## **Further detail**

### **Communications or consultations**

Out of the 43 who answered, 6 respondents (14%) said their funding was cut without any communication, 16 (37%) said a consultation was done but ignored, and 10 (23%) were able to modify the cuts through communication.

Only 3 respondents said their deaf community was consulted, and 23 said there was no consultation with the deaf community. Out of that 23, 18 felt there should have been a consultation.

### **Public Sector Disability / Equality Duty Assessment**

A total of 27 had their funding cut by a council or other public sector authority. Out of these 15 (56%) said there was no assessment, 5 (19%) said it was done wrongly, and only 3 (11%) said they were happy with the assessment.

### **Looking ahead**

Out of 34 respondents who answered this question, roughly 30 (roughly 88%) agreed or strongly agreed that the situation was getting significantly worse for deaf people.

18 (56%) prioritised finding help with a more strategic approach to long-term core funding and development of deaf and deaf-led organisations.

The rest were evenly split between wanting support for campaigning or support for developing deaf sector partnerships / consortia.

22 respondents (34%) were interested in co-operating in an Alliance or similar, and supporting the BDA on legislation / case law / BSL Charter.



## 7. Conclusion

It appears that 2011-12 was a difficult year for many respondents, with 20% getting up to 40% of their funding cut. Certainly, those in receipt of public sector funding found themselves 38% worse off than those who were not, and expected a similar cut in 2012-13.

Although reductions in staffing and service provision were inevitable for nearly a third of the respondents who lost income, most of those attempted to protect their service users (59%) from feeling the impact.

It is concerning that in some areas funding was cut by the local authority without consultation. In addition to this, the fact that 16 respondents stated that a consultation was carried out but ignored indicates that local authorities either do not fully understand the issues affecting deaf people or their priorities do not include deaf people. The 56% who say there was no assessment by their public sector authority add extra impetus to the need for collaborative work.

Nearly half of those who responded to the survey agree or strongly agree that the situation is getting significantly worse for deaf people. There are questions arising over the legality of the cuts and it is likely that this is the reason over a third of all respondents showed interest in co-operating in an Alliance or a similar cooperative effort.

# The British Deaf Association - BDA

## Vision

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

1. **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,
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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.

## Current Activities

The BDA operates in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England delivering:

- Community Development work
- Community Advocacy support
- Youth, Children and Families programmes
- BSL services
- Policy and Campaigns work
- Membership support through Area Deaf Associations/Special Interest Groups
- Information provision using British Deaf News and its bi-lingual website
- Fundraising and PR

## **Contacting the British Deaf Association**

### **British Deaf Association London Office**

18 Leather Lane, London, EC1N 7SU.

Telephone: 0207 405 0090

Email: [admin@bda.org.uk](mailto:admin@bda.org.uk)

Website: [www.bda.org.uk](http://www.bda.org.uk)

### **British Deaf Association England**

Brockholes Brow, Preston, Lancashire PR2 5AL

SMS: 07814386488

Rycote Centre, Parker Street, Derby, DE1 3HF.

Telephone: 01772 259725 Fax: 01772 561610

### **British Deaf Association Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland Unit 5C Weavers Court Linfield Road, Belfast BT12 5GH

Textphone: 02890 437486 Telephone: 02890 437480 Fax: 02890 437487

### **British Deaf Association Wales**

British Sign Language Cultural Centre, 47 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0AD.

Textphone: 0845 1302853 Telephone: 0845 1302851 Fax: 0845 1302852

### **British Deaf Association Scotland**

1st Floor, Central Chambers, Suite 58, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6LD.

Telephone: 0141 248 5554 Fax: 0141 248 5565

Room 13, Volunteering Matters, The Gateway, 1a Millburn Road, Inverness IV2 3PX.

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