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## Foreword by David Buxton, BDA Chief Executive

Welcome to our new strategy which is entitled: “Transforming Deaf People’s Lives”. The aim of this is to help us to take stock of what is happening for Deaf people and our language - BSL. While many European countries look to the UK with envy at our opportunities and services for Deaf people and specifically linked to BSL, we know that there are gaps here.

That was the first task of this paper – to try and identify the gaps. So we looked at what is happening and, let’s be honest, there is much to be proud of.

The UK is still in many ways a haven for Deaf people, with far less institutionalised discrimination against Deaf people than in many other countries. But that does not mean that we can sit back and do nothing. Human rights are fragile – difficult to achieve and easily lost.

So once we knew what is happening, we then needed to start identifying the gaps. And unsurprisingly, there are quite a few. Obviously the BDA cannot fill all the gaps, and nor should we. That is exactly why we have chosen to make this into a public document.

We know that at this time of austerity, it is going to be difficult to develop much, but with ingenuity and shared resources through a BSL Alliance there is no reason why we cannot create opportunities.

We very much hope that this document is a kind of blueprint for developing BSL linked services and projects. And our view is that whatever is created, developed or adapted, Deaf people must be involved simply because BSL is our first or preferred language.

By including Deaf people at every stage and at every level, we can indeed “transform Deaf people’s lives”.

## Acknowledgements

The BDA would like to thank those people who have given generously of their time and have contributed to this paper with their ideas and comments. The BDA is heartened by this goodwill and hopes that we can all build on this to ensure that this paper is a first step towards achieving true equality for all Deaf people.

## Introduction to this Paper

This paper is aimed at people who are either Deaf themselves, or are working as a professional in the field of deafness and therefore will be knowledgeable about many issues within that field. For that reason, we have deliberately kept explanations to the minimum.

It should also be taken as a starting point. It does not aim to be a definitive work but and the aim has been to make this strategy paper as short as possible. The reason for brevity is so that it can be read by many people – the more the better.

The sections on ‘required developments’ have also been kept short as this is open for further discussion. We have also avoided going into any detail on how these developments may be achieved – this is something that the BDA considers the BSL Alliance to be the vehicle for.

## Introduction to the BDA and Deaf People

The British Deaf Association (BDA) has primarily represented British Sign Language (BSL) users. We have always believed that BSL has a key role in the education of deaf children. The BDA believes that without BSL,

- The lives of deaf children and Deaf<sup>1</sup> adults would be substantially poorer as they would not be able to pick up information about events, information and issues affecting them.
- Deaf people would not have access to the wider non-Deaf community through interpreters or hearing friends who can use BSL
- Deaf people would not be able to receive support and solace from other Deaf people without the 'glue' of a mutual language.

In short, 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 BDA recognises that being Deaf can have severe consequences for individuals. The lack of capacity to perfectly hear sounds hinders learning. English is a difficult language to learn – even for those who can hear. Many non-deaf (hearing) people are illiterate (20% of the population). Deaf people cannot use listening and speech to negotiate modern life as hearing people without literacy skills may be able to. There is, therefore, a clear need for deaf children to develop a satisfactory first language and a second language. Being in command of one's own thoughts and reasoning abilities will enable Deaf people to negotiate life successfully. The BDA strongly believes that this first language generally needs to be BSL and English the second. This will give Deaf people confidence, information and the skills to make choices about their lives.

For most people, the place where there is the most learning and the most emotional support is the family. Successful children are those that have

- a clear sense of their own roots,
- a stable family life
- a strong awareness of self.

"I'm the only Deaf person in the family and it was difficult to share anything so I fell out with the family and lost touch as I grew up. It is very hard."

**BDA Member**

For many Deaf people, that has not been the case. Many hearing families do not learn BSL resulting in poor communication between themselves and their parents, which has hindered bonding and consequently the learning and emotional support that every child requires to become a successful adult. These families find that speech, listening and lip-reading are insufficient for meaningful daily communication between parent and child. It is no accident that deaf children of hearing parents experience mental health problems to a greater degree than deaf children of Deaf parents<sup>2</sup>.

Being Deaf does mean that negotiating social situations have to be carried out differently. One cannot simply replicate behaviour from other people in the same way as hearing people can. The BDA believes that enabling deaf children to be bilingual and bicultural enhances their lives and improves their relationships with their own hearing families.

<sup>1</sup>We use the capital 'D' to denote adults who have BSL as their first or preferred language and have Deaf culture. Because many Deaf people do not use BSL while at school, we use the lowercase 'd' for children.

<sup>2</sup>Deaf children have an increased prevalence of mental health problems (45–50% v. an average of about 25% for the general population; Hindley et al, 1994; Hindley, 2000) Dr Margaret du Feu: "Deaf children, particularly those from hearing families, may be exposed to an excess of the risk factors that can affect all children and lead to adjustment disorders in adolescence." Developing mental health services for deaf children and young people in Northern Ireland A report by The National Deaf Children's Society for the Mental Health and Deafness Regional Forum

This is why one of the campaign cornerstones of the BDA is for deaf children to have the right to a bilingual and bicultural education. The aim is to support deaf children in developing their own psychological integration. Deaf children should have the benefit of knowing about their own culture and language. Being monolingual and not having access to the possibility of learning about Deaf culture denies deaf children the opportunity to make their own decisions of whether they want to learn about BSL or socialise with other Deaf people.

Being Deaf in the modern world is not easy. Deaf people know that they face obstacles in every sphere of their lives. Many manage these with humour and forbearance but too many other Deaf people live angry and bitter lives. Frustrated at the shortcomings of the wider community and with their own linguistic failings, it can be difficult to find peace within. That is one of the costs of inadequate provision and educational failings. It need not be.

The BDA is therefore embarking on a campaign for improved legal recognition for BSL either through a specific Act or through legal provisions. This may not be easily achieved as legislative mechanisms vary in the four countries of the UK. There is currently some legislation that can offer some protection of Deaf individuals with proper implementation and policing but without clear reference to Deaf people and BSL ensuring that Deaf people are properly protected is complex and difficult. Therefore the overriding aim must be the legitimisation of BSL, and providing some legal protection for BSL which would ensure that BSL is widely accessible in all areas of life.

## Current National Situation

We recognise that there is much effort by a variety of organisations attempting to ameliorate the effects of deafness. There are medical interventions and educational provision for deaf children. We welcome initiatives such as I-Sign that aim to address the issues at a much earlier stage within families when the deaf child is very young. In addition, there is a great deal of exciting work going on in research settings. For Deaf adults there are services. We applaud the efforts from all those involved in the field of deafness and recognise that people are motivated by altruistic motives and wish to improve Deaf people's opportunities.

Nevertheless, we do not feel that the situation has substantially changed from the inception of the BDA in 1890. We do recognise that much has been achieved particularly with technology, attitudes, research findings, improved access particularly with interpreters, legislation and not least, the re-integration of Deaf adults into educational provision.

However a consequence of the continuing failure to communicate well in family life and education is that there are still many Deaf people who are unable to read and write at a high level to be able to successfully complete everyday tasks independently such as form-filling or casual interactions with other hearing people. The current Government statistics on deaf children's attainments do not suggest that this is likely to substantially change<sup>3</sup>.

There is also the added challenge of Deaf refugees and Deaf people from immigrant groups who have come to Britain in search of safety or improved economic status. Many have not had adequate access to education in their own countries. Many do not have skills in BSL or even in their own sign language. We need to successfully integrate them into our Deaf community and offer them the same opportunities that are available to other Deaf people.

<sup>3</sup>Governmental figures show that at primary level the percentage of deaf children achieving Key Stage 2 English is 52% as opposed to around 93% for the general school population. The gap between deaf children achieving 5 or more GCSEs and other children is 30%.

The numbers of sign language interpreters have vastly increased over the last few years but there is still a need for improved provision. We therefore welcome new initiatives such as the recently developed course at Heriot-Watt to add to the more established pathways towards full qualification.

The improved choice and variety enables many Deaf people to manage their lives more easily. This could be attending a full-time continuing education course, working in a hearing environment or being a patient in a local hospital.

“My husband had a stroke at the weekend – we waited at the hospital for 12 hours and then the doctor saw him as she was putting her coat on to go home after her shift at 10pm. No interpreter came. The TV advert about F.A.S.T. does not apply to us Deaf people. Had he been seen within the hour, he may not have been blinded. It was very frightening for both of us.”

**BDA member**

There are still difficulties however, both in the numbers and quality of interpreters. For instance:

- Many organisations book people who lack the appropriate interpreting skills
- Deaf people are often forced to wait for treatment in hospitals because there is no interpreter readily available
- Organisations simply refusing to meet their legal obligations citing lack of funding as a reason.

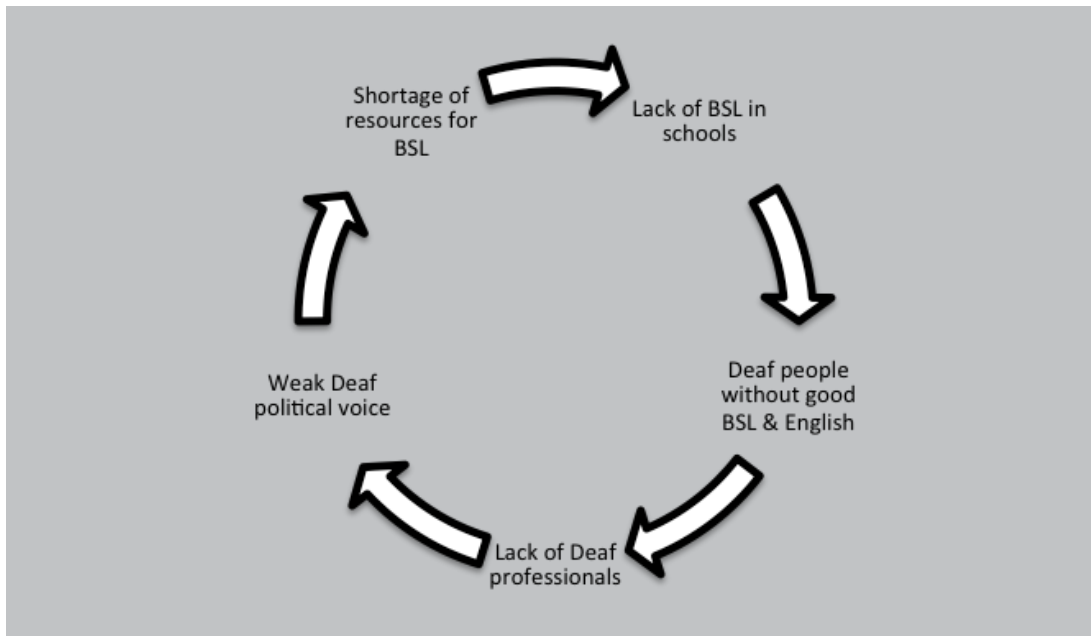
Interpreters themselves are often too aware that their skills sometimes fail the Deaf client that they are working with. There is an issue concerning much of the present teaching of BSL. Many interpreters have had to work hard to get to their level of skills. It is fair to say that there is scope for improvement in good quality teaching for people wishing to learn BSL. Allied to that is a lack of teaching resources and funding for continuing education for BSL tutors.

Despite the advances made in the last thirty years, there are still too many Deaf people reliant on services, who do not have the same opportunities as their hearing friends and relatives, and who lack the information to make appropriate choices in their lives. Lack of good access to mainstream services invariably impacts on the opportunity to enter into the employment market and to create sustainability within the Deaf community.

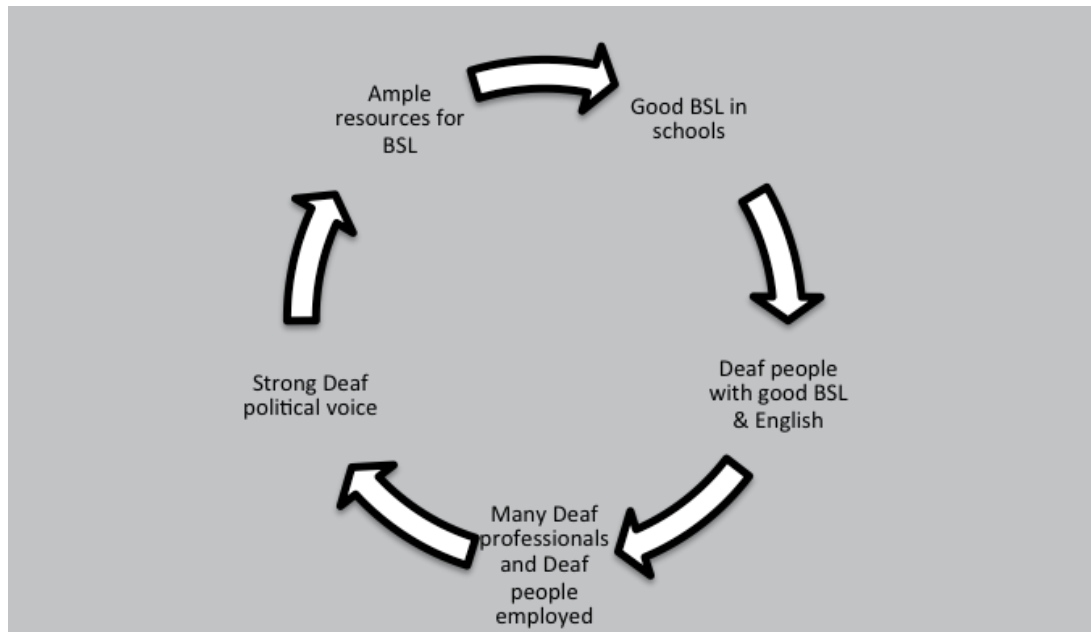
The economic and psychological impact of a perpetual underclass in the Deaf community cannot be underestimated. It effectively diminishes the ability of the Deaf community to support itself as a platform for Deaf people to integrate with the wider community; it creates a dependency on services provided by hearing people leading to reduced confidence and lack of self-belief.

This cycle of dependency prevents Deaf people from contributing to the overall economy and is a drain on resources that the country can ill-afford. The BDA strongly believes that there is a cycle of linguistic deprivation which is closely allied to the present provision and management of BSL. We want to re-frame this cycle and in doing so, improve economic opportunities for Deaf people which will lead to other benefits such as their sense of well-being.

## Current Cycle of Dependency



Our aim is to create a cycle akin to this:



## Scope of this Strategy Paper

This paper therefore aims to explore how we can break the cycle of linguistic deprivation that exists amongst Deaf people. It is an attempt at creating a blueprint for the next ten years. This cannot be tackled by the BDA alone; it will require a collaborative effort by organisations, schools, government departments and universities. We do not discount the advances made by technological improvements; not least with cochlear implants and hearing aids. They have an important role in assisting Deaf people to maximise their hearing, and in offering Deaf people choices in using different communication strategies. The BDA supports the right of individuals to choose their own communication mode in different situations; for example, many Deaf cochlear implant users use BSL to communicate with their Deaf friends and also use hearing to communicate with hearing people.

However, technological advances cannot alone ensure linguistic competence. We need to ensure there are advances and substantial improvements so that Deaf people can compete on an equal basis. We want everyone – parents, friends, relatives, work colleagues and professional workers to be involved in some way. We welcome other organisations taking the lead on specific areas of work leading to partnerships with collaborative working. We will also seek partnerships between ourselves and other organisations. As the leading Deaf people's organisation and instigators of the BSL strategy, we intend to act as overall monitors of this strategy and seek to try and ensure that there is progress in all areas.

This paper covers a number of areas where we feel that significant difference can be made. Hence our seven themes:

- Campaigns
- Curricula (Teaching BSL)
- Accreditation & Assessment (of BSL)
- Training of Deaf BSL teachers
- Access (via BSL)
- Research
- Deaf Culture

Each section covering a particular theme will set out briefly the current situation and then highlight the developments required. Of necessity these will be short and to the point. It is not our intention to elucidate at length as we see this to be a collective effort and there will be many different routes to the end product.

This paper focuses more on the teaching, accreditation and coursework requirements as Deaf people should be leading the development of BSL and these are the areas in which Deaf people can benefit most and make the biggest impact.

## The Role of the BSL Alliance

Our intention is to establish an Alliance of interested parties for BSL. We know that there are many issues that the members of the BSL Alliance will want to address. The expectation is that by bringing together all the interested parties we will:

- Create a single voice lobbying for BSL with Government agencies
- Improve the potential for partnerships within the Alliance for developments
- Enhance the flow of information within the Alliance
- Establish a monitoring role for initiatives and responses to changing circumstances
- Ensure that resources are used more effectively

The BSL Symposium in March 2012 will be a starting point for the BSL Alliance to comment on this BSL Strategy paper and also to consider what developments should be worked on as a matter of priority. These decisions should be shared by all involved and appropriate work-plans developed to achieve those objectives.

## Campaigns for BSL

### The Current Situation

The BDA is only too aware that despite having one of the most robust and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in the world, much discriminatory practice still occurs. This is due to a lack of implementation and enforcement. We are also aware that the Equality Act does not mention sign language. The only (albeit non-legislative) authority that does explicitly comment on sign language is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Although a Convention is one of the most powerful legally binding treaty mechanisms available to the UN, it does not accord individuals' directly actionable rights. This has to be achieved by legislation in the UK implementing the CRPD. We should seek this as a goal.

The Scottish Roadmap<sup>4</sup> is a very welcome exploration of how we might improve access not only for BSL users but also for all deaf people<sup>5</sup>. In section 4.0 'Linguistic Access and the Scottish Government' five strategic objectives set out by Ministers of the Scottish Government were identified. The National Outcomes relating to Equality were also identified. The document then goes on to examine how these can be matched up with what was needed to ensure deaf people could achieve full linguistic access.

The BDA is part of the Working Group and we are particularly impressed with the Working Group's insistence on meeting yearly to assess progress. We would want the same determination for this BSL Strategy.

However we are also uncomfortably aware that there is a paucity of knowledge and expertise around how legislation works and how it can be enforced, particularly around the issue of language. The Scottish Government's deliberations on the proposed BSL Bill also highlights the fact that legislatively speaking we may have to consider developing very different strategies in the

<sup>4</sup>The British Sign Language & Linguistic Access Working Group 2008: THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD A Roadmap To British Sign Language & Linguistic Access In Scotland

<sup>5</sup>The document includes those with hearing loss and who do not use BSL, including Deafblind people.



four countries of the United Kingdom in order to promote BSL in each. For instance, the BSL Bill in Scotland is proceeding on the basis of equality, an area in which it can directly legislate for.

This is most certainly true of education where very different arrangements are in place concerning children and educational provision which also affects deaf children. If we are to promote the importance of bilingual and bicultural education for deaf children, we will need to understand thoroughly the legislative framework in order to campaign for changes that will favour ease of implementation of changes.

We have resurrected the BSL Charter because we feel that campaigns should be conducted at both the local level and the national level. Local authorities can do much to support the rights of Deaf BSL users to use their language to obtain information and gain access to services. Our Community Development Team is already working with local Deaf forums and groups to campaign for improved access to local services. Where we do not have the resources, we would like to see other Deaf organisations use our BSL Charter to improve their local access.

### **Developments Required**

- The BDA would like the BSL Alliance to consider how best each country in the United Kingdom can match the Scottish Roadmap and to explore ways of developing this.
- Exploration on how best we can develop expertise in achieving legal provision that protects and promotes BSL with a view to achieving enforceable rights. This would also apply to achieving the right of deaf children to a bilingual and bicultural education.
- The BDA would also like to explore the possibility of working through the BSL Alliance to ensure that all local authorities adopt the BSL Charter either fully or partially.

To achieve the above we would need research concerning good practice in other countries and evidence that demonstrates cost savings as a result of reduction in levels of social exclusion.

## Syllabi<sup>6</sup> (Teaching BSL)

### The Current Situation

The demand for BSL courses by hearing people continues to be high – an estimate by DCAL<sup>7</sup> was that around 15,000 people were learning BSL in any one year. Many adult colleges offer courses in BSL, often in more than one level of skill starting at Level 1 and progressing to Level 3. Many are linked to an accredited qualification – either from Signature, Institute of BSL, Agored or ABC. The number of courses is not matched by available syllabi as the case is with other popular languages. For example, if a teacher of French wanted to look for a syllabus or a progressive language learning scheme to match that of their learners, they simply just need to go to a reputable bookshop or Google online and there will be a variety of learning resources. This is not the case with BSL. Many BSL teachers therefore operate at a severe disadvantage. Creating a syllabus often requires three skills: written English proficiency, teaching methodology and an in-depth knowledge of BSL including linguistics. As we know, many Deaf people do not have the written English skills to organise the teaching work plan. Nor do they have the necessary in-depth knowledge of BSL and being able to use the knowledge of linguistics to enhance their teaching. Some do have an understanding of teaching methodology but they are in the minority. Many others do not know how to teach BSL as a second language.

The BDA, along with the BSL Academy has produced a language based syllabus starting at the basic level and progressing to the highest level. This has been published and is available after training for BSL teachers so that they can teach it appropriately. It is backed with resources such as books for both the teacher and the learner and DVDs are used to support the teaching.

Many other syllabi for hearing BSL learners are produced in-house and some produce learners who achieve high levels of skill, but we also need to acknowledge that there are still many BSL teachers who do not have adequate schemes of work based on linguistic principles.

However, there are other learners - particularly Deaf people. Some have received education through communicating orally (speech, lipreading and listening) but after leaving school want to link up with the Deaf community and create their own social network of Deaf friends but lack the skills of BSL. Courses for hearing people are often unsuitable as many Deaf people learn faster than other learners.

Some Deaf people have additional disadvantages such as being new to the country but having received little or no education in their original country. They desperately need to be able to communicate and make friends in the UK.

“I went to a Deaf school in East Europe, but when I first came here to the UK I really struggled with learning BSL. Then I found a Level 1 course which was mixed; Deaf, Oral Deaf, and hearing. That helped me a lot and now I’m looking forward to doing Level 2!”

**BDA Member**

<sup>6</sup>For the purposes of this paper, we use the word ‘syllabus’ to describe a full programme (or scheme) of work for one topic e.g. BSL which also includes teacher and learner notes. Our definition of a curriculum is a portfolio of courses e.g. English, French, Maths.

<sup>7</sup>Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre, University College London

Some Deaf people also have learning disabilities. There is a system called Makaton which has derivatives from BSL; this serves to improve the speech patterns of people with learning disabilities (PWLD) and who are not necessarily Deaf. It has been notably successful with many, however there are also many people with learning disabilities who do not develop satisfactory communication skills and would benefit from improved access to a wider range of BSL. A syllabus that addresses the needs of this specialised group would be welcome.

The BDA welcomes the tool-kit that the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) developed for deaf children and their families for learning BSL signs and would like to see further developments. For instance, there is still a need for a syllabus for teaching BSL to deaf children from a very early age to teenage years that has clearly identified benchmarks for the development of age appropriate language at each stage. Linked to that is the need for a clear assessment of language development. This is being done in some schools. However this is not carried out widely and unlike hearing children who use English as their mother tongue and still learn English at school, deaf children who may have BSL as their first language do not learn it at school or are assessed in any way.

“If a BSL syllabus was developed for deaf children, particularly those new to the country, it would improve consistency throughout schools that teach deaf children and give guidelines to those teaching it to support deaf children new to the country.”

**Teacher working in a school for deaf children**

The BDA believes in bilingual and bicultural education for deaf children. That requires teaching deaf children English in addition to BSL. For some, the easiest and most fruitful way of developing English skills is to achieve mastery of BSL and then use BSL to learn about English. While some schools have specific action research projects such as the teaching of English through focused reading programmes, there is currently no systematic scheme of work or indeed teaching materials for achieving a successful development of both BSL and English in place.

There are other groups that would benefit from specific syllabi. These are interpreters, Communication Support Workers, hearing professionals working in schools or in social service settings and frontline staff who meet Deaf people on a regular basis.

**Developments Required**

The BDA would like the BSL Alliance to work on developing different syllabi for different groups. For example we require syllabi for

- Deaf children at different ages
- Young deaf people with different requirements
- Professionals working with Deaf people of all ages who have different issues such as being a refugee

## Accreditation & Assessment (of BSL)

### The Current Situation

There are four main awarding organisations for accreditation for BSL:

- Signature
- Institute of BSL (IBSL)
- Agored
- ABC

These awarding organisations are recognised by OFQUAL and all provide qualification specifications leading to accreditation. The awarding organisations have to ensure that their qualification specifications match the guidelines provided by National Occupational Standards (NOS) and National Language Standards (NLS).

Teaching centres are required to register with awarding organisations to ensure that their students can obtain qualifications. Most tend to be colleges that provide adult evening classes. There are also businesses that have become centres. Some Deaf organisations provide their own courses, either to train their own staff or for income generation purposes. Some centres providing courses leading to recognised qualifications will receive some funding to support the provision of the courses.

Of the awarding bodies, Signature is by far, the largest and the most recognised and could be said to have a virtual monopoly on awards for BSL with around 600 – 700 centres registered with Signature. They have an impressive portfolio leading to full qualifications for a range of communication professionals.

IBSL is the relatively new entrant into the awarding organisations field. It is Deaf-led and also is developing its portfolio of qualifications around BSL. IBSL is currently small but it is expected that the organisation will grow steadily as it offers a slightly different assessment process to Signature's.

Agored is a Welsh based awarding organisation and has few registrations from centres out of Wales. It offers a portfolio of qualifications in BSL as does ABC which has a number of centres registered throughout the UK.

The National Open College Network (NOCN) is a kind of hub to which various Open Colleges link. It is understood that there are only two centres that use this network – both in the south of England.

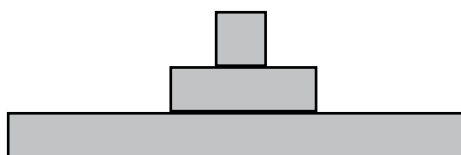
Awarding organisations are required to continually improve assessment reliability. Many assessments are now conducted by teachers with internal and external verifiers - particularly the NVQ systems of assessment. These are portfolio based and are universally used in different subject areas so there is an onus on teachers to manage the paperwork. This creates difficulties for some BSL teachers who may not have sufficient understanding of the paperwork. Some centres have successfully achieved the required standards while others do not seem to have done so. This is an area of concern and more development is required to ensure that BSL teachers are not left unsupported.

Signature has carried out a number of training courses for BSL teachers to assist them in learning about assessment principles and how to manage assessment processes. IBSL have also

delivered courses in managing assessments. The needs of BSL teachers are covered in the next section.

The present situation is that despite the portfolio of assessments in BSL offered by all the awarding organisations, the numbers of people taking these assessments are unevenly distributed. The majority are at level 1, and then there is a sharp reduction at level 2 and an even sharper reduction at levels 3 and 6. So rather than a kind of triangle whereby there is a steady reduction of candidates at all levels as might be expected, we have a podium as shown by this figure.

This suggests that there is scope for growth in terms of increasing the numbers of assessments at Level 2 and upwards. Growth however has to go hand in hand with increased number of trained BSL teachers and increased provision of a variety of syllabi.



## Assessments

Not all courses will lead to a qualification. In the previous section, it was noted that people with learning disabilities may require a teaching package that improves their linguistic capabilities in BSL. This would enable people with learning disabilities to improve their understanding of the world and how it operates. However, the assessment would need to centre on not just their signing skills in terms of linguistic development but also their speech (if they were hearing). Such assessments would not necessarily lead to a qualification. The issue here is how can we develop such assessments and who could develop these.

At present there is no accreditation linked to learning of BSL in schools whether special or mainstream. There is a need for teaching of age appropriate BSL that fosters linguistic development along with assessment of key skills at defined ages for Deaf children. Current English assessment standards cover all ages. There is no national equivalent for BSL; there has been some research carried out and there is some assessment work being undertaken in certain schools but this needs to be standardised throughout the UK.

### Developments Required

These mirror closely what is required for syllabi development. For instance, there is a need for the BSL Alliance to consider how to ensure that:

- Assessments in BSL for deaf children from pre-school up to GCSE level are utilised more widely.
- Assessments – as opposed to accreditation – are created for other types of BSL learning.
- There are assessments and accreditations for those who are carrying out the training and also the teaching of BSL.
- There is improved support for BSL teachers both from the agencies that they work for and from other BSL teachers. This should also include re-assessments with greater opportunities for training to ensure that professional development is maintained.

For people who are not directly connected in the training and teaching of BSL, but are providing a service, there is also scope for development in terms of added opportunities in portfolios offered by awarding organisations; these should include assessments of those working in schools with deaf pupils.

## Training of BSL Teachers

### The Current Situation – Deaf teachers

Currently there are two main avenues of obtaining teaching qualifications. One is to go to a local evening institute where one can obtain a teaching qualification for adult settings. The upside of this is that this is local but for many Deaf people the downside is that there is a need for interpretation and consequently, many Deaf people struggle to keep up. Not having good English also often hampers many Deaf people who fail to comprehend concepts or comments during the course. Most course materials are in English which disadvantages those who struggle with written English.

An option for Deaf people is to go to either UCLan or the City Lit where there are some courses for generic teaching qualifications. Specialist teaching qualifications on linguistics or the teaching of BSL appear to be limited to the City Lit and DCAL.

There are no current courses for teaching the BDA's Syllabus which is based on the principles of language teaching. There are also no current courses for BSL teachers to become teachers or mentors to other BSL teachers. There are no courses for Deaf people about the principles of language teaching, particularly BSL as a second language nor are there any courses on teaching BSL as a first language for teaching deaf children.

IBSL and Signature, the two main awarding organisations, offer training for BSL teachers which tends to cover the need for assessment and is mainly focused on established teachers. However recent research discussed at a DCAL seminar indicates that there is an urgent need for more training opportunities for would-be teachers. The statistics indicate that the age profile of BSL teachers is heavily concentrated in the age range of 35 to 64 with the highest number in the age range of 55 to 64. The percentage of BSL teachers between the ages of 18 and 24 is 1.5. The implications of this are clear. There will not be enough BSL teachers to teach the number of students wanting to learn BSL. More seriously, there will be fewer very skilled BSL teachers able to take on the responsibility of teaching other teachers about the skills of language teaching and classroom management. There will also be the added pressure of finding new BSL teachers when a GCSE for BSL is established. The concern for many Deaf people will be that these new teachers will not necessarily have the requisite skills and that they will be hearing people with little or no understanding of what it means to be Deaf.

It is therefore essential that we recruit more Deaf BSL teachers, particularly as many will have BSL as their first or preferred language. This is likely to have a major impact for those who are currently unemployed and have the required motivation and willingness to learn. We need to ensure that they will be capable of delivering the appropriate skills, culture and knowledge that their learners require.

An issue that affects training of BSL teaching is funding. Many BSL teachers are part-time and often their primary workplace does not see training in this area to be of relevance. That means that many BSL teachers need to take time out of their annual leave entitlement and also to pay for courses. Travel costs are also a factor for many. These considerations often lead to BSL teachers weighing up the potential return on investment and this is often viewed to be meagre, especially if family life is to be sacrificed for something that promises so little. Such considerations also are likely to affect the attitude towards Continuing Professional Development of which the take-up is alarmingly low.

This creates a situation whereby there is a shortage of available BSL teachers and what availability there is tends to be centred on evening classes. This precludes the opportunity of

developing daytime BSL classes or daytime BSL intensive teaching for specialist groups such as parents. This in turn reduces the opportunities for a career path to be developed and will have a major impact in the ability to meet the demand for GCSE when this becomes available. This is borne out by UCLan's research findings: 'Research Informed Teaching' (2008) and in 'No time? No support? No idea? : The future of BSL teaching' report (2010).

Partly because training is sparse and badly funded, it follows that many BSL teachers are not continuing with their professional development or indeed even undertaking any training in the first place. It is therefore no surprise that many Deaf BSL teachers are lacking in the skills required for skilled teaching in the classroom. One comment made during the fact finding required for the development of this Strategy was that while hearing BSL teachers lacked signing skills, Deaf BSL teachers lacked teaching skills.

### **The Current Situation – hearing teachers**

The BDA notes that hearing teachers of BSL are likely to stay and even increase in numbers as BSL qualifications portfolios increase in availability. This is a controversial issue as this is seen as depriving Deaf people of jobs they can do. However, the BDA believes that the key issue is to ensure that if there are hearing BSL teachers working then they must meet the standards of appropriate skills in linguistics, signing, classroom management, Deaf culture and assessment. One way of ensuring that standards are met is to have a kind of kite-mark or registration of BSL teachers possibly in conjunction with a nationally recognised mainstream agency such as the Institute of Learning which regulates teachers in further education in England.

The BDA also believes that because Deaf people have the necessary skills in signing and are indeed the custodians of BSL, then Deaf people must manage the teaching of BSL at a strategic level. Deaf people must be involved in setting the standards of teaching skills, teaching and assessing new BSL teachers, working on creating syllabi, and assessing learners. When (or if) there are sufficient numbers of appropriately skilled BSL teachers, we can then develop materials that are linguistically based and suitable for the teaching of BSL to an agreed level of performance. Many people are currently producing materials, particularly on the Internet, and there is no current assessment of whether these materials are actually fit for purpose or not. For the uninitiated learner, we should be able to offer some guidance as to the suitability of the material to ensure that learners feel satisfied that they have purchased the appropriate material. This will require some kind of visual indication that the material has been assessed and considered as meeting the required standard.

### **Developments Required**

In the previous section it was noted that there was a need for improved assessments and accreditation for BSL trainers and also teachers but that will require substantial investment. This should be sought as a matter of urgency to ensure that supply does not dry up or become so poor that confidence in BSL learning is damaged and the market collapses.

A key element in this will be to develop the following:

- Holistic packages for different levels of training which will require much concerted joint work between agencies in the BSL Alliance.
- A full course composed of modules leading to a diploma / degree level for the teaching of BSL
- Courses that are designed for people working within schools
- Schemes for continuing professional development training that include mentoring, and registration along with more rigorous scrutiny of materials

## Access (via BSL)

### Sign Language Interpreters: The Current Situation

As stated earlier, many Deaf people's lives have been vastly enhanced by the provision of sign language interpreters. This has arguably been one of the success stories of the past three decades – and Deaf people have responded by using social services much less as they are no longer restricted to a handful of social services staff to provide communication access.

Despite this much improved access to all aspects of life, there are still issues that are not currently being addressed. Some are affected by events that are also affecting the wider community; an example of this is the austerity drive by the Coalition Government. Other issues are a result of the lack of planned development. This is not a criticism of those who provide such services; the training and provision of interpreters has developed in a piecemeal fashion, governed mainly by available resources and desire on the part of Deaf customers and interpreters themselves.

A major external factor that is affecting the provision of interpreters is the Government's austerity drive. Government departments now seek savings by establishing centralised contracts which are then open to tender. Spoken language agencies are now competing for contracts. The impact is that fees and contractual conditions now offered to interpreters do not match interpreters' expectations.

In addition to this, external agencies that have specialised in spoken languages often operate different standards to that of sign language interpreting. That means that Deaf people are likely to be faced with someone who has not qualified. Unqualified people also are not insured. This places not only the Deaf person but also the unqualified practitioner at risk. This applies especially to health matters where incorrect explanation of treatment or inadequate rendering of what the Deaf person has described could have potentially serious consequences.

An added difficulty regarding the use of spoken language agencies is that there is no current monitoring of contractual obligations on the parties involved. Many organisations that commission interpreting services are generally ignorant of what standards should apply and their rights to redress. These agencies do not appear to demonstrate much understanding of BSL interpreting standards themselves and do not appear to be accountable to Deaf people for whom the service is mainly directed. The NRCPD is currently working with agencies to agree on protocols and standards. This is to be welcomed.

"I was facilitating a group of Deaf people and I asked them if they knew how to complain if they were dissatisfied with the interpreter. None of them had any idea of how to. When I asked them about the NRCPD – one said: "Isn't that something to do with the Yellow Badge?" In my view, we do need to raise awareness of this issue."

**BDA Member of Staff**

There are agencies that do specialise in BSL interpreting but they do not appear to be obtaining the centralised contracts – probably because they insist on higher (and therefore more expensive) standards and operating methodology.

The ad hoc development has led to a number of anomalies in the system. One is the lack of clarity in how to complain and how to sue. There is anecdotal evidence that Deaf people are dissatisfied with many things but the dissatisfaction does not go further than individual grumbling. On the rare occasions that Deaf people group together to argue for improvements, they have



won<sup>8</sup>. Another is the lack of knowledge about what the National Register of Communication Professionals with Deaf People (NRCPD) stands for and how they operate. They are able to suspend or strike off a communication professional indefinitely but this is not known widely, and so once again Deaf people are denied an opportunity to influence what they receive from interpreters.

The Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) and Visual Language Professionals (VLP) offer a different service to that of the NRCPD as both are membership organisations aimed at supporting their members by providing certain services such as insurance cover.

It must not be supposed that interpreters themselves or their representative bodies are supine about these issues; they are not. There is some effort to enlighten Deaf people as to their rights and evidence is currently being collected by ASLI members (the Practitioners group) around access to Health provision but this is not universal. We understand that ASLI members volunteer their time and so it very much depends on those members who have the desire and availability. VLP members are also undertaking some work on assessing how matters might be improved contractually.

Training is also an issue – there are two main pathways towards full accreditation: through a post-graduate university course and NVQ. The recent announcement by Heriot-Watt concerning a new course for training of interpreters is welcome as this adds to the options available.

Regardless of either pathway that students undertake, the end product is often variable in the delivery of skills. It appears that much depends on the early training that has been received and there may be need for a more rigorous post-qualifying assessment and monitoring to ensure that skill levels are more consistent when qualified interpreters are working in the field.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a prerequisite for being on the register of NRCPD and is a requirement of membership of ASLI, but not of VLP. Both membership organisations however are committed to developing a wider range of training to ensure that interpreters can continue with their CPD programmes. There is scope here for more varied training.

One issue that has generally been overlooked is that good BSL interpreting requires not only skilled BSL, but also a high level of English. The current qualifications focus only on BSL which means that there are a number of interpreters who would not be able to provide a service to Deaf professionals working in high level jobs because their own English is inadequate.

Interpreting from English to BSL is a skill that many interpreters appear to be able to succeed at. However, conversely being able to interpret from BSL to English – commonly known as ‘voice-over’ – is a very different skill and one that some interpreters do not appear to achieve a high level in. Interpreters themselves are very much aware of this and in Yorkshire there is the Yorkshire Interpreters Network that explores local issues including the issue of BSL to English. There is definitely a need for specific training and perhaps a separate assessment process.

A major issue that requires much consideration and examination is the role of interpreters. There are, for instance, many Deaf people who would benefit from some gentle nudging to ask the right questions or some friendly advice from the interpreter. This is often considered to be an advocacy role. Equally there are many Deaf people who do not require this and would take umbrage at any attempt by the interpreter to bestow a few kindly tips of advice. There is a need for a debate on how interpreters should view their role.

<sup>8</sup>Deaf people in Bristol campaigned against the two Hospital Trusts in the Bristol area using internal staff to act as interpreters. The Trusts now have a list of approved interpreters and now call upon these when required.

There is also a need for debate on how interpreters interact with the Deaf community. Many foreign language interpreters are from the community itself while sign language interpreters are not necessarily from the Deaf community itself. A key issue is whether or not evidence of sustained interaction should be a pre-requisite for qualification purposes. This may be especially important when many interpreters are working mainly with Deaf people who use Signs Supporting English and not BSL. Sustained interactions with the Deaf community may assist in maintaining the interpreter's skill in BSL at different levels.

These issues impact on many Deaf people's ability to choose and to manage their own lives and should be given high importance.

### **Developments Required**

The BDA feels that much can be achieved within the BSL Alliance on the following:

- Development of training packages and guidelines for agencies and those who contract interpreters
- Training and services for Deaf people as customers and providers of training or advice
- Exploration of additional training for interpreters either through CPD or add-on packages
- Reviews of interpreters roles with regard to advocacy and interacting with the Deaf community

## Communication Support Workers<sup>9</sup>

### The Current Situation

The vast majority of Communication Support Workers (CSWs) work in education. This is borne out by the National Occupation Standards (NOS) for CSWs which sets the requirements for the CSW qualification. The CSW code of practice can be found on the NATED website. CSWs provide invaluable support to Deaf students at every age. In addition to the educational skills outlined in the NOS and the CSW qualification, they can offer a range of additional skills such as note-taking, lip-speaking and interpreting, for which many are qualified to do. When this role is carried out according to the NOS, deaf pupils and students are empowered and are able to manage their education with minimal difficulties.

Some CSWs work with Deaf people in employment. Likewise in employment, when the role is clearly defined and carried out to the satisfaction of the Deaf employer, then a CSW has an essential role, and many of the skills gained from the qualification and experience in education are transferrable to a workplace setting.

However there is criticism of CSWs working in employment. Issues range from poor BSL skills to the apparent willingness of some to accept interpreting assignments without appropriate qualifications or registration with the NRCPD. Some of these concerns are valid but others are somewhat unfair. They are unfair because the BDA believes that Deaf people are entitled to choose their own communication mode and with whom. Some Deaf people prefer other skills that CSWs can offer such as modification of English, lip-speaking or note-taking.

There are many CSWs who do have Professional Indemnity Insurance and interpreting qualifications – however one concern is that there are some CSWs who will accept interpreting assignments without Professional Indemnity Insurance, and without the necessary standards required to carry out the interpreting assignment. This leaves Deaf people without any means of complaining or achieving redress.

The BDA believes that the path to improvement lies not in excessive regulation and attempts to deter CSWs but rather to support training opportunities and encouragement of a CSW register with the NRCPD. That would ensure safeguards for Deaf people and also widen the opportunities for CSWs to improve their skills. It also ensures that those careless about Deaf people's rights are subject to sanctions if necessary.

In 2011, the Consortium for Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE)<sup>10</sup> conducted a UK-wide survey on educational staffing and service provision for deaf children in the 2010/11 financial year. The report states that there are at least 34,927 deaf children in England, but only 9% use sign language to some extent to communicate. For CSWs therefore, the requirement to interpret can be minimal. However, there are a good number of deaf pupils who do require a high level of BSL. For them, education should not be governed by the skills levels of CSWs. There is therefore a need for more training in BSL, training in interpreting skills and more campaigning for employers of CSWs to be aware of the need of matching CSWs with the right set of skills appropriately with deaf students.

<sup>9</sup>CSWs work with deaf people with any level of deafness, some of whom may have additional learning, physical or emotional support requirements.

<sup>10</sup>CRIDE Report 2011 <http://www.batod.org.uk/index.php?id=/publications/survey/CRIDE2011.pdf>

The new qualification for CSWs is currently being taught at only three centres nationwide although eight are approved centres. The situation is therefore far from satisfactory particularly as there are deaf children who require CSWs with high level skills in order to obtain the best possible education.

### **Developments Required**

As seen earlier in this section, the BDA notes that there are considerable gaps in training provision for CSWs with three main areas requiring attention and we feel that the following areas merit high focus:

- CSWs working in schools and further education
- CSWs working in employment
- Employers of CSWs

## Video Interpreting Services (VIS)

### The Current Situation

There are two types of Video Interpreting Services. One is Video Relay Services (VRS) which occurs when the Deaf person and the hearing person are in separate locations connect using a telephone call and use an interpreter in another location. This service is usually paid for by the telecoms company. Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) takes place when the Deaf person visits an establishment and meets a hearing person and they use an interpreter using an online video link to communicate with each other –no telephone call is involved. This is paid for by service providers – such as councils.

The background to this is that it is unlikely that in the current economic climate local authorities will employ full-time staff with high level BSL skills to provide services. This is most marked with local authority social services where from a position of assuming that every Deaf person who registered was automatically a client; almost all local authorities have now set criteria and if Deaf people do not fit that criteria, then they do not receive a service. This especially disadvantages Deaf people who are mono-lingual and struggle to understand official letters and forms because the criteria for receiving a service is dependent on the assessment of mobility and physical ability. In some areas, this has been ameliorated by the outsourcing of services to charitable organisations. However, even when some charitable organisations offer a communication support service, this can be restricted leading to Deaf people dissatisfied with the service faced with a lack of alternative access.

Health services have long been difficult to access for Deaf people as one has to register with a GP in the catchment area. This precludes Deaf people from finding and using primary care services that have good communication support regardless of distance. Many primary care and hospital trusts now offer an interpreting service but this is generally unavailable at short notice and as a result, Deaf people see little point in attending. Either the condition improves by the time the interpreter is available or it worsens to the extent that more rigorous treatment is required.

Many other services also rely on telephone access. TextRelay is a service between minicom and voice phones. This however requires a good level of English and understanding of how to manage call centres with a number to press at each stage. For monolingual Deaf people, this is not a viable option.

“I find using a minicom requires a lot of concentration as my English isn’t that great and text relay services are even harder to manage. When I had an emergency with my child and I was panicking – I was shaking so much – I just couldn’t type what I wanted to say. I now realise I need VRS for my child’s safety.”

**BDA Member**

Video Interpreting services and translation services via the internet may be able to provide an alternative service for many Deaf people. The advantages are considerable; travelling is reduced – particularly for interpreters. Emergencies can be handled using instant access via a video interpreter, albeit on a flat screen that can pixellate from time to time because of an unstable bandwidth. Providing the equipment is available and with computers now a feature in every office, there should be no reason why a Deaf person cannot visit an organisation and access via a video remote interpreting service that is instantly available. The disadvantages are start-up costs and usage costs per minute, although the latter can be an advantage compared to the cost of booking an interpreter for half a day or a full day.

There are a number of reasons why this has not been utilised more widely. Costs are often an issue as billing is difficult to budget for as one cannot anticipate the demand for a service. Even when a Deaf person shows up with the necessary equipment, staff often do not have the authority to use a video interpreting service through their own IT system.

Another reason is that there has been a lack of awareness around this and many Deaf people have never used this kind of service. Yet another is the tariff arrangement whereby companies providing VRS services would be responsible for add-on costs. This is different from voice calls as the customer pays the add-on costs.

There are two main companies providing this service: SignVideo and SignOnScreen. There are also other smaller companies that provide variations of this service.

For interpreters to work with VIS, they need to have a wide range of skills including a wide knowledge of dialect vocabulary. They also need to be able to manage unplanned work and the technology, particularly when it fails to work satisfactorily. There is training to prepare interpreters.

### **Developments Required**

The BDA considers this to be an area of potential growth that could liberate many Deaf people without the need for expensive interpretation costs. We feel that with the BSL Alliance and in particular TAG and DAART, we can achieve the following:

- Changes to the tariff regulations to open up access for Deaf people
- Improved take-up of current services
- Marketing to alert service providers (local authorities)
- Monitoring to check that providers meet agreed standards
- VRS training to be offered as a module for interpreters
- Accreditation for online translation services (language modification)

## Research

### The Current Situation

Research on BSL can be undertaken in a variety of ways. For example, researchers can describe BSL by working with a small number of native signer consultants and also analysing video recordings. The work carried out by Sutton-Spence and Woll (The Linguistics of BSL) is research of this type. Another approach is to collect a large amount of signing from a large number of signers (native and non-native), of varying ages and backgrounds, and from different regions in order to analyse variation and change in BSL. The BSL Corpus Project is an example of this kind of research. It involved 5 different universities, together with a Deaf advisory committee, working together. The results can be seen on [www.bsllcorpusproject.org](http://www.bsllcorpusproject.org).

Generally it is agreed that there are two types of research; one being to address and improve a particular practice. An example of this would be looking at how to assess the competency of deaf children's BSL. The other would be considered as being more theoretical. Findings from such research often provide evidence that support theories and assists in influencing and improving practice. For instance, the 'Linguistics of BSL' book improved many BSL teachers' understanding of linguistics and in turn impacted on how they taught BSL in classrooms.

There are a number of well-established centres in the UK where BSL and BSL-related research takes place. The main centres are DCAL<sup>11</sup>, Leeds, Bristol, UCLAN<sup>12</sup>, Manchester and Heriot-Watt in Edinburgh.

Each research centre<sup>13</sup> has a number of projects with the emphasis at each differing slightly. DCAL for example is considered to be strong on linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, deaf children's language development, and sign language and the brain.

BSL studies at Heriot-Watt take place in the Centre for Translation and Interpreting Studies in Scotland (CTISS), this being the main research unit within the department of Language and Intercultural Studies.

The Centre for Deaf Studies in Bristol currently has projects on genetic research in relation to the Deaf community, making telephones accessible for Deaf people, and metaphor in creative BSL.

The University of Manchester focuses primarily on social science research including where it overlaps with health research. Two examples being a study of residential care services for older BSL users and information about genetics in BSL.

The research at Leeds University focuses on the use of sign language in the education of deaf children and ways in which this supports language and literacy development.

UCLAN has the iSLanDS Centre which is a unique hub for the study of sign languages and deaf communities with much of the work focusing on developing countries. All the universities have well-established international connections.

<sup>11</sup>Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre, University College London

<sup>12</sup>University of Central Lancashire

<sup>13</sup>See Appendix 1 for more information about research work being carried out from respective websites.

There is therefore much exciting work taking place in the UK but what appears to be lacking is sustained linkage and dialogue between universities and other organisations that could be termed as 'end-users'. The universities themselves have an informal and ad hoc kind of network. There have also been a number of projects in partnership with external agencies carrying out 'knowledge exchange' work. However there is a need for the BSL Alliance to develop these links and develop a more sustainable network of universities and organisations. This would benefit both organisations and practitioners – including BSL teachers – as learning and using research appropriately would improve practice.

There is also a need for a kind of central point whereby anyone who is unaware of what work is being carried out in the universities can contact and gain the necessary information. This again is a role that the BSL Alliance could carry out.

### **Developments Required**

There are clearly several areas where research could contribute much to our understanding of BSL and how it works, thus enabling practitioners to use the knowledge in a practical way. We would like to see progress on the following areas:

- Increased funding for research on BSL
- Continued and central support for dialogue between university research centres.
- Central point for information about BSL research
- Improved linkage between organisations and universities
- Development of partnerships between research centres and external agencies to jointly own create and share projects
- Research to be used as supporting evidence for campaigns on legal rights linked to BSL



## Deaf Culture

### The Current Situation

There has been research on British Deaf culture. The defining body of work is Paddy Ladd's book "Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood" which has been followed up in two different ways. One has been the inception of MSC courses in the University of Bristol Centre for Deaf Studies in Deafhood Studies.

The second has led to a group of Deaf people in Fremont, California celebrating the fact of being Deaf. There are now courses for Deaf people who wish to embark on a life journey to discover their own sense of self. As the website<sup>14</sup> puts it: "Deafhood is described as a journey that each Deaf person undertakes to discover their true identity and purpose here on the Earth as a Deaf person. This journey is for anybody who is what George Veditz calls "first and foremost, people of the eye".

Many people at some stage in their lives embark on a kind of life journey whether this is conducted through a religion based course, a personal odyssey using the numerous self-help books available or attending spiritual retreats. The lack of access to these resources means that many Deaf people find this journey denied to them. There is also very little general understanding of what it means to be a Deaf person. The BDA believes that courses on Deafhood for Deaf people should be made available for any Deaf person wishing to make their own life journey as a Deaf person.

Other bodies of work are by Steven Emery on "Citizenship and the Deaf Community" and by Mike Gulliver and Sarah Batterbury on "Justice vs. Validity - : debating the social geographies of DEAF/Sign Language Peoples' emancipation". These two works touch upon Deaf people's life experiences in relation to the community they live in.

Rachel Sutton-Spence is also carrying out a number of projects; one concerning BSL poetry, another on back-channelling,<sup>15</sup> and on sign names.

These projects contribute to our knowledge of Deaf culture and the lives of Deaf people. However it is agreed that more research needs to be carried out in areas of Deaf culture and how this is affected by modern living. What we do know also needs to be better explained as there is little knowledge about aspects of Deaf culture that could contribute considerably to the teaching of BSL.

Assessments of BSL teachers that included Deaf culture would lead to higher standards of teaching and BSL teachers would also be able to incorporate and explain Deaf culture in their classes much in the same way as other language courses do. This would lead to improved BSL learning as students would look more "Deaf" with a greater insight of how Deaf individuals communicate.

<sup>14</sup><http://www.deafhoodfoundation.org>

<sup>15</sup>This describes how the person who isn't signing signals their comprehension or participation in the conversation

The teaching of Deaf culture could also lead to improved interpreting as interpreters would be able to understand the cultural attributes that the Deaf person is using. It is no coincidence that among the best interpreters are those who have lived or are living with a Deaf person or are CoDAs<sup>16</sup>. They have assimilated aspects of Deaf culture and use this when working.

Awareness about Deaf culture could also lead to incorporation of Deaf culture into Deaf studies modules in schools and expand deaf children's understanding of culture in general. More importantly, it is likely to reduce the alienation and feelings of rejection experienced by so many ex-mainstreamers when they attempt to join Deaf groups.

Deaf Equality programmes in employment and at school would include cultural aspects which would enable participants on courses to understand the differences between Deaf and hearing people and how these can be enjoyed in the same way as many people appreciate cultural differences between races.

Recognising aspects of Deaf culture would also lead to improved performances in Deaf drama, poetry and other artistic endeavours thereby enriching BSL as a language. BSL as a language would then be more multi-faceted with greater depths of intensity in common with spoken languages.

### **Developments Required**

The BDA believes that without widespread understanding of what Deaf culture is, we can never promote and safeguard BSL properly. We therefore need:

- Additional research
- Funding

From that we can incorporate Deaf culture in training courses, in Deafhood courses for Deaf people, in Deaf Equality courses for hearing people with consequent accreditation and benefits.

<sup>16</sup>Children of Deaf Adults.

## BSL Strategy Targets

As stated in the introduction, the BDA aims to establish a BSL Alliance. The overriding purpose is to ensure that we continue to see developments involving Deaf people and BSL so that Deaf people do not continue to be marginalised in a society that is developed, rich and has ample resources to include all sections of the community.

The BDA expects that as a result of the BSL Alliance we will see some of the developments outlined achieved within three years, while others naturally will take longer. The BDA is also aware that some developments that deemed necessary now will become redundant as a result of changes – in funding for example – and new and more pressing initiatives will be required. In this way the BDA sees the BSL Strategy paper as a starting point for a dynamic process over the next ten years.

## Conclusion

It is clear that much has been achieved in many areas and in all of the three sectors: public, private and charity. However, if we are to ensure that Deaf people do not remain marginalised and disenfranchised there is still much that needs to be developed for BSL to flourish. The time for benevolent paternalism is over. The economic climate ensures that. We also need to resist the concept that medical technology alone will provide full answers as this threatens to transfer monolingualism from BSL to English only for those who are successful and leave those who are not without adequate language.

New ideas and ways of working with and for Deaf people need to continue. Initiatives such as developing Deaf translators are to be welcomed and built upon. That is the task facing all of us who care and work with Deaf people that sign BSL as their first or preferred language. Can we do this? The BDA believes that we must.

## Appendix 1

1. DCAL: <http://www.dcal.ucl.ac.uk/Research/themes/themes.html>
2. Heriot-Watt <http://www.sml.hw.ac.uk/research/ctiss/academic-research.htm>
3. Bristol: <http://www.bris.ac.uk/deaf/english/research/active/>
4. Manchester: <http://www.nursing.manchester.ac.uk/research/researchgroups/socialcareandpopulationhealth/sord/researchfocus>
5. Leeds: <http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk/people/staff.php?staff=61>
6. UCLAN: [http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/journalism\\_media\\_communication/islands/islands.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/schools/journalism_media_communication/islands/islands.php)

## 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