

BDA Northern Ireland Manager

Candidate Brief

January 2026



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Overview

We promote the advancement of human rights and equality for Deaf people by collaborating with our members and stakeholders to influence governments to ensure we can access services in our own language: British Sign Language (BSL) or Irish Sign Language (ISL), the first or preferred language of c.87,000 Deaf people in the UK.

The BDA was instrumental in securing the BSL Act in April 2022. BSL is now legally recognised as a protected UK minority language. This was seismic, and we hope it can lead to Deaf people, marginalised for so long, participate and contribute as equal and valued citizens in wider society.

We are proud that all our Board of Trustees and 88% of our staff are Deaf and our working language is BSL/ISL. We are proud to invest in BSL/ISL training for hearing staff and our onboarding programme includes a range of workshops delivered by our experienced staff. As an organisation, we know on a personal level how much work is needed to deliver equity for Deaf people.

We are a membership organisation, advocating for our sign language rights across the UK: we are embedded in the Deaf communities of all four UK nations and have a diverse, fully representative team.

Trusted by the Deaf communities of all four nations, we have shown through our campaign successes that we have the respect of the UK's governments. Everything the BDA does goes towards ensuring that the language, culture, community, diversity and heritage of Deaf people in the UK is respected and fully protected.

About the British Deaf Association (BDA)

Founded in 1890, the British Deaf Association (BDA) is the UK's only official national representative organisation of BSL and ISL. The BDA has been an Ordinary Member of the [World Federation of the Deaf](#) (a United Nations consultative organisation) since 1957 and a member of the [European Union of the Deaf](#) (a participatory member of the Council of

Europe) since its foundation in 1985. Our BDA Youth section are members of the [World Federation of the Deaf Youth Section](#) and [European Union of the Deaf Youth](#), representing young Deaf people in the UK.

As a Deaf-led membership charity, led and represented by Deaf people for Deaf people, we campaign and advocate for equal rights to fully participate and contribute to society as equal and valued citizens.

The passing of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and the BSL Act 2022, was the absolute pinnacle of our work and why we exist. We are entering an exciting new chapter in our history, with the launch of our 2022-2032 strategic vision setting out the BDA's aspirations for Deaf people in the UK for the next decade and beyond, following the historic legal recognition of our language. You can read more about our strategic vision here: <https://bda.org.uk/strategic-vision/>.

Our work

Our work is centred around 4 key programmes:

1. Community & Advocacy

We work with our members and the Deaf community to empower them to have their views heard and listened to. We bring Deaf people together to take action around their concerns and overcome social injustice.

As Deaf community organisers, we provide training and workshops with members of the Deaf community to build their collective power and to seek representation on decision-making boards and platforms. This community involvement is crucial: we are utilising our voice as a strong leader in the UK to tell decision-makers that there is no longer anything about us, without us.

2. Training & Consultancy

We conduct Human Rights and Capacity Building training with our members and the Deaf community. Additionally, we provide BSL Awareness training to provide participants with a greater understanding of BSL as a language and an insight into Deaf culture.

Additionally, we formed an independent BSL Alliance, a coalition of Deaf organisations across the UK to strengthen BSL in Britain.

The BDA produces policy papers, statements, and guidelines so that members have up to date tools to inform the BSL Alliance and our stakeholders of Deaf people's rights and how to achieve them.

3. Human Rights & Equality

As the representative body, the BDA works to ensure Deaf people across the UK are equipped with the knowledge, tools and strategies to advocate for, achieve and defend their rights including:

- Gaining recognition and respect for BSL/ISL and Deaf culture
- Achieving their rights across all areas of life, including equal opportunity and accessibility

Through the Sign Language Charter, we connect the Deaf community with public services giving them the confidence to share concerns about issues that affect them, and to ensure that Deaf people have access to clear and full information to make informed decisions when dealing with service providers.

By promoting human rights and access to BSL/ISL, the BDA is improving the lives of thousands of Deaf people who face inequality every day. We collaborate with Deaf leaders and policymakers to implement human rights mechanisms such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and BSL Act 2022 as well as other legislations. We also take direct action by providing Equality & Rights training and representing Deaf people's interests in the UK.

4. Sign Language & Culture

We work with our members and partners to shape our world into a more equitable place through the following campaigns and events to promote our language:

- **Sign Language Campaigns**

As the national representative organisation of BSL and ISL in the UK, we exist to protect and preserve our language through activism, lobbying and campaigning for our human rights. An example of our work includes leading the BSL Act Now! campaign which went on to win several awards. During Sign Language Week 2024, we launched a new campaign called BSL in Our Hands which is calling on the government to fund free access to BSL and ISL for every family of deaf children.

- **BSL Conferences**

Takes place annually, the BDA's BSL Conference is an official event of the BDA, designed to bring together public services and the Deaf community who seek to partake in national exchange of information and furtherance of the BDA's campaigns.

- **AGM Weekends**

The annual BDA AGM brings together members to further the objects of the BDA, elect candidates to our Board of Trustees and have a say on key organisational decisions. The weekend usually includes a Friday night gathering at the local Deaf club, a prestigious Gala Dinner on Saturday evening and concludes with a local BSL walking tour on the Sunday.

- **Sign Language Week**

Sign Language Week is BDA's flagship awareness week celebrated every year in March to commemorate the first time BSL was acknowledged as a language in its own right by the UK Government on 18 March 2003. The aim is to celebrate and educate the British public about BSL and to encourage more people to start learning our language.

- **International Week of Deaf People**

International Week of the Deaf is an initiative of the WFD and was first launched in 1958 in Rome, Italy. It is celebrated annually by the global Deaf Community on the last week of September each year to commemorate the same month the first World Congress of the WFD was held.

“The BDA is the Deaf community.” – Roundtable participant, 2022



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JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: BDA Northern Ireland Manager

Salary: £37,000 – £55,000 per annum (Band C), based on experience, skills, and relevant qualifications.

Hours: 35 hours per week

Reports to: Head of Community

Manages: Northern Ireland Community Team

Location: Hybrid – part-home and part-office based at the BDA's Belfast office, with occasional UK-wide travel.

Contract: Permanent, full-time (35 hours per week). Some evening and weekend work may be required.

Holidays: 25 days a year plus 10 bank holidays

Pension: The BDA operates a contributory pension scheme and will auto-enrol you in line with its obligations.

About Us

We are a membership charity that exists to champion British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) celebrate Deaf culture and identity, and fight for the language rights of Deaf signers.

We believe BSL is more than a language - it's a community, a culture, and a source of pride and identity. From campaigning for rights to creating spaces where Deaf identity and culture are celebrated, everything we do is about championing the rights of the Deaf signing community, securing the future of BSL/ISL as a recognised, thriving language, and celebrating Deaf history and culture.

About the Role

As part of the BDA Leadership Team, you will lead Community and Advocacy services in Northern Ireland. You will shape future services, support ongoing projects, and drive initiatives that advance BSL/ISL rights. You will play a key role in delivering the BDA's Human Rights & Equality and Community & Advocacy strategies.

What You'll Do?

Key Responsibilities

Lead regional projects and services

- Provide strategic and operational leadership for all BDA community, advocacy, and human rights activity in Northern Ireland.
- Oversee the design, delivery, and evaluation of Deaf-led, rights-based regional projects and services that reflect community need.
- Ensure services meet agreed quality standards, safeguarding requirements, contractual obligations, and internal governance processes.
- Line-manage and support the Northern Ireland Community Team, fostering a collaborative, inclusive, and high-performing working culture.

Strategic planning, budgeting, and reporting

- Develop and implement annual regional delivery plans aligned with the BDA's UK-wide strategy and programme priorities.
- Prepare, manage, and monitor regional budgets, ensuring effective use of resources and value for money.
- Produce clear, timely reports for senior leadership team, funders, and trustees, demonstrating impact, outcomes, and learning.
- Contribute to funding proposals, tenders, and business cases to sustain and grow services in Northern Ireland.

Advocacy, safeguarding, and community engagement

- Collaborate with the Policy team to lead advocacy and lobbying in Northern Ireland, influencing public bodies, elected representatives, and key decision-makers on BSL/ISL rights.
- Act as a designated safeguarding officer within the region, ensuring robust policies, training, and reporting mechanisms are embedded across all activity.
- Build strong, trusted relationships with Deaf communities, Deaf clubs, members, and grassroots groups, ensuring lived experience shapes BDA priorities and campaigns.
- Support Deaf people to develop skills, confidence, and leadership to advocate for their rights locally and nationally.

Partnerships, representation, and external engagement

- Develop and maintain effective partnerships with Government, statutory bodies, Deaf organisations, voluntary and community groups, funders, and allies.
- Represent the BDA at regional, national, and cross-border meetings, forums, consultations, and public events.
- Act as a visible and credible spokesperson for the BDA in Northern Ireland, strengthening the organisation's profile and influence.
- Ensure collaboration is values-led, respectful of Deaf leadership, and aligned with the BDA's role as the national representative organisation.

Promoting BSL/ISL awareness and empowering Deaf communities

- Champion the status of BSL and ISL as living languages, central to Deaf culture, identity, and human rights.
- Lead and support awareness-raising activity, campaigns, and training that improve understanding of Deaf culture and linguistic rights.
- Empower Deaf people and communities to shape policy, services, and public narratives affecting their lives.
- Contribute to national initiatives such as Sign Language Week, International Week of Deaf People, and major BDA campaigns, ensuring strong Northern Ireland visibility and participation.

Funding development and sustainability

- Support the development of grant applications, and tender submissions to secure funding for BDA activity in Northern Ireland.
- Identify and develop relationships with trusts, foundations, statutory funders, and commissioners to support long-term sustainability.
- Work with the Head of Community and central teams to develop compelling funding proposals, budgets, and impact frameworks grounded in Deaf-led evidence and outcomes.
- Oversee delivery against funded agreements, ensuring compliance with funder requirements, accurate monitoring, and timely reporting.

About You

Are you passionate about making a real difference for the Deaf community in Northern Ireland? We'd love to hear from you if you meet the following person specification:

- A strong understanding of community, local or national politics and how they impact Deaf people and BSL/ISL.
- Knowledge of Deaf issues, Deaf culture, and diverse communication methods.
- Experience in advocacy, lobbying, and campaigning to drive positive change.
- The ability to develop compelling business cases, create strategies for new projects, and manage budgets effectively.

- Excellent organisational skills – able to plan, prioritise, and lead teams to deliver results under pressure.
- Experience managing staff and volunteers, with a collaborative and supportive approach.
- A positive, solutions-focused mindset and the confidence to work independently and as part of a team.
- Strong IT, communication, and presentation skills.
- Flexibility to travel across the UK, attend events, and occasionally work evenings or weekends.
- A clean driving licence.

It's a bonus if you also have:

A proven track record in securing funding and developing tenders.

- Level 3 Sign Language qualification or native BSL/ISL skills.
- Experience using CRM systems.



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Why Join Us?

- **Make an Impact:** Be part of a mission-driven team championing BSL/ISL and Deaf culture, creating real change in communities.
- **Lead Change:** Shape community and advocacy services in Northern Ireland and drive major campaigns.
- **Collaborate & Thrive:** Join a supportive, inclusive organisation where your ideas are valued.

How to Apply

- Send your CV (including two referees) and a supporting statement, outlining how you meet the person specification (max two sides of A4 or a BSL video up to 10 minutes).
- Closing date: 16th February 2026 at 12:00pm
Interviews: The week commencing 2nd March
- Email your application and diversity monitoring form to recruitment@bda.org.uk (include your name in the subject line).
- For an informal discussion, contact Jaz Mann, Head of Community, at jaz.mann@bda.org.uk to arrange a BSL video call or email conversation.
- We strongly encourage applications from Deaf people.

All documents should be emailed to recruitment@bda.org.uk. Please include your name in the subject field.

Acceptance

I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understood the above job description for my position.

I understand that the job description not an exhaustive list of duties and that I will be expected to perform different tasks as necessitated by the organisation. I also understand that the job description is subject to change at the discretion of my employer at any time.

Signed:			
		Date:	



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The BDA's Vision and Mission

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 Great Britain and Northern Ireland 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 and ISL.

Our Values

The BDA is the only national 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 aim to act as guardians of BSL and ISL.

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 and ISL as a human right. As such, BSL and ISL 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.

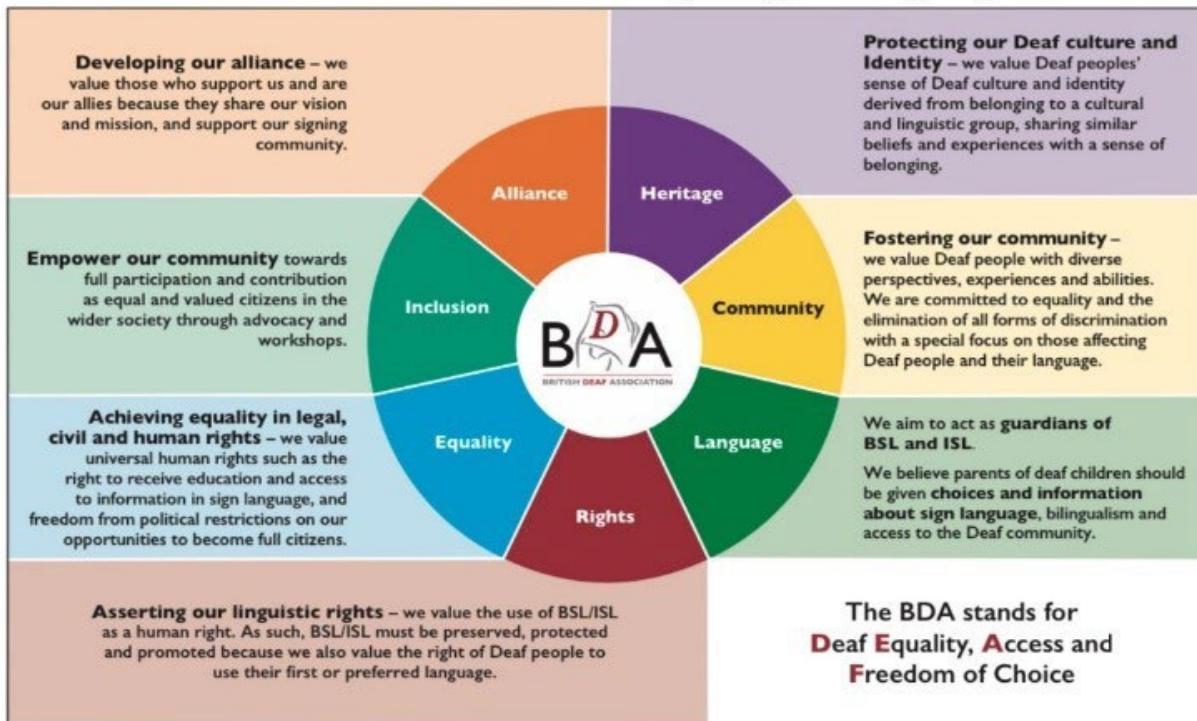
4. Achieving equality in legal, civil and human rights

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.

Our Social Values through Sign Language



What we stand for

Deaf Equality

This means that Deaf people are able to access information, services and support in their preferred language, to have the same opportunities to achieve the same life outcomes as anyone else. Legal recognition of both BSL in the Great Britain and Northern Ireland and ISL in Northern Ireland are key step in raising recognition, awareness and respect, and achieving equality of access and opportunity for Deaf people.

Access

Every Deaf person must have access to services from Government level down to their local council in their preferred language.

Freedom of Choice

Every Deaf person should be able to use BSL and/or ISL without sanction and without obstacles.

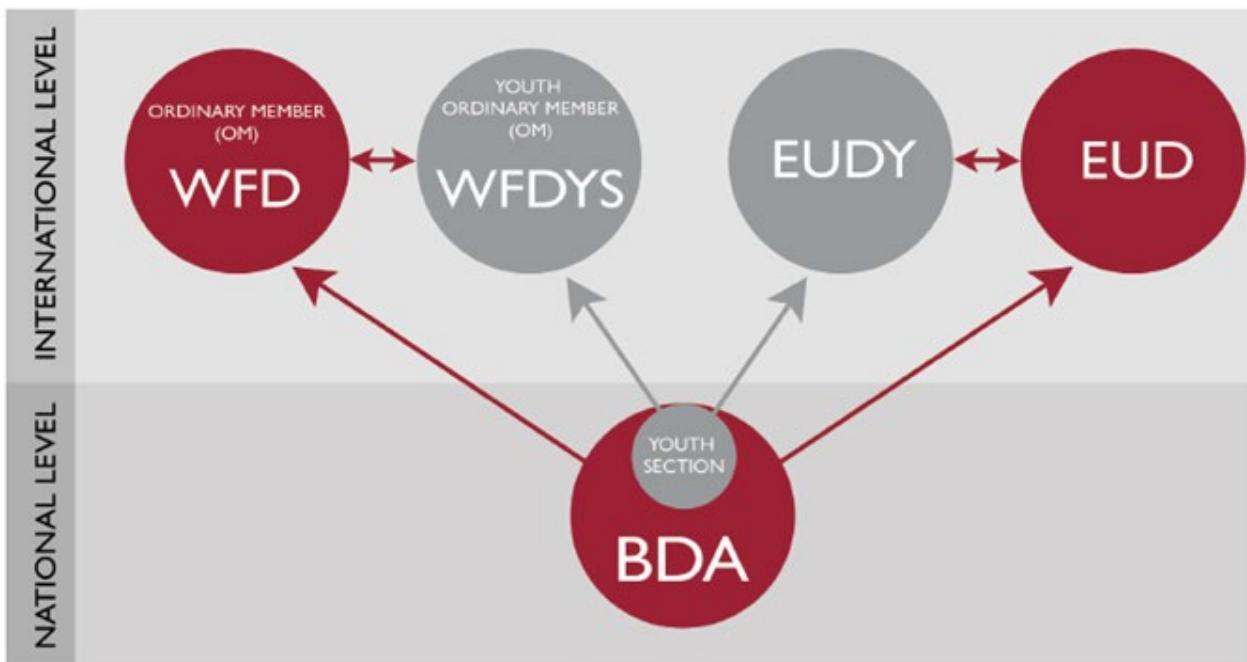
We believe that every Deaf

- person has the right to communicate in their preferred language
- child has the right to bi-lingual education

Human Rights

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death. They apply regardless of where you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life. They can never be taken away, although they can sometimes be restricted – for example if a person breaks the law, or in the interests of national security.

These basic rights are based on shared values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence. These values are defined and protected by law. In Britain our human rights are protected by the [Human Rights Act 1998](#).



The BDA has been an Ordinary Member of the World Federation of the Deaf ([WFD](#)) since September 1957, and a Full (and founding) Member of the European Union of the Deaf ([EUD](#)) since 1985.

WFD is an International Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with ECOSOC (Economic & Social Council), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), ILO (International Labour Organisation), WHO (World Health Organisation) and the Council of Europe (CoE). It also has a consultative status in the United Nations (UN) and is a founding member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA).

EUD is a supranational organisation representing Deaf people at European level and is one of the few NGOs representing associations from all of the 27 EU Member States, in addition to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. EUD aims to establish and maintain EU level dialogue with its relative institutions and officials, in consultation and co-operation with its member national associations of the Deaf (NADs). EUD is a full member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) and is a Regional Co-operating Member of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) to tackle issues of global importance. It also has participatory status with the Council of Europe (CoE).

The BDA remains a permanent member of EUD; the UK's withdrawal from the EU has had no impact on BDA's membership of the EUD, which is not limited to member states of the European Union.

BDA Youth is a committee of the BDA which represents young Deaf people across the UK is a member of the World Federation of the Deaf Youth Section ([WFDYS](#)), and European Union of the Deaf Youth ([EUDY](#)).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006 and ratified in June 2023 by 186 UN Member States, is the latest international human rights convention emanating from the UN. It is also one of the most ratified conventions in the UN legal system.

The motto of the CRPD, “**Nothing About Us Without Us**”, places persons with disabilities, including Deaf people, and their representative organisations - national associations of Deaf people - at the forefront of the decision-making processes related to them.

CRPD Article 4.3 requires national governments to actively consult and collaborate with national representative associations of Deaf people regarding any legislation, programme or policies related to Deaf people and national sign languages. The BDA is the official National Representative Organisation of the UK representing the Deaf and BSL/ISL community, and holds this status at WFD, WFDYS, EUD and EUDY.

Read more about the WFD's Guidelines for Achieving Sign Language Rights here:
<https://wfdeaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Guidelines-for-Achieving-Sign-Language-Rights.pdf>

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