

## **Appendix 3a**

### **British Sign Language Charter Report British Deaf Association and Blackpool Council Consultation**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the British Sign Language (BSL) Charter is to promote better access to public services for Deaf communities and to help public agencies meet their legislative duties under the Equality Act 2010.

As well as the Equality Act, the UK Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2009. It is therefore important that local authorities, public services and agencies follow the principles of the UNCRPD. One way these principles can be met is by adopting the British Sign Language Charter.

The British Deaf Association, in partnership with Deaf organisations and local authority officers, has written the British Sign Language Charter and toolkit to achieve equal access to services for Deaf people and their communities.

It contains **five pledges**:

- 1. Ensure access for Deaf people to information and services**
- 2. Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language**
- 3. Support Deaf children and families**
- 4. Ensure staff working with Deaf people can communicate effectively in British Sign Language**
- 5. Consult with our local Deaf community on a regular basis**

Deaf people want to have equal access to services and access to British Sign Language/English Interpreters whenever they are needed. The Deaf community is a linguistic community with a rich history, identity, language and culture. The Council believes equal opportunities can be achieved by working with the Deaf community, rather than taking decisions and designing services on their behalf.

The Charter aims to help local and public authorities to:

- Remove direct and indirect discrimination against Deaf people
- Empower local Deaf communities
- Resolve conflicts between service providers and Deaf people
- Increase awareness of Deaf issues and British Sign Language issues
- Provide better educational opportunities for Deaf children

The Charter highlights good practice and will build Blackpool Council's capacity to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build good relations with the Deaf community.

The Council recognises that each local authority will have different priorities for the areas they serve as will the local Deaf community in terms of their needs. It is therefore expected Blackpool Council will have to consider the number of pledges it wishes to sign up to. This may be one pledge or all five. To enable this to be decided, consultations and feedback with the community and local authority were set up in order to identify specific needs and establish which pledges may be appropriate for the Council to sign up to.

Three consultations were set up in different venues across Blackpool. Attendees for these consultations included members of the Deaf community, family and friends of the Deaf community and those that work with/ for the Deaf community.

Alongside these consultations an internal survey was devised (jointly created by British Deaf Association and Blackpool Council's Equality and Diversity Officer) and distributed to various departments across the Council.

Results of the three consultations and the British Sign Language survey will be discussed in this report. From these results key issues will be identified and recommendations made.

The issues raised, both in the Deaf community consultations and Council survey, have been grouped by theme and summarised below. A more detailed record of these issues is included in the appendix to this report, with specified or suggested actions.

## **A. 1. EDUCATION**

A number of parents of Deaf children and Deaf people were present and a high number of issues relating to Education were raised based on their own experiences.

- There was a clear consensus that more opportunities for Deaf children and young people to meet Deaf peers and/or role models are needed to ensure development of language and identity.
- It was agreed that more activities with inbuilt support programmes are particularly needed for older Deaf children and teenagers. It is felt such activities would not only support Deaf youngsters but also develop their social wellbeing, empowering Deaf youths so that they are independent when going onto higher/ further education and employment.

### **Family Support**

- It was identified that families felt that not enough support is made available to them. Examples of this included the lack of access and funding for British Sign Language courses for parents and family members wishing to learn sign language.
- Parents also expressed concerns about the difficulties in obtaining information and support for their children's education needs and rights. There was feedback that not enough holistic information is given (information still favours the oral and

monolingual approach) and they are left feeling isolated and exhausted from having to fight for their children's needs.

### **Teachers of the Deaf (ToD)**

- There were a few issues relating to Teachers of the Deaf which highlighted some inconsistencies across Blackpool. Deaf people had very little contact with Teachers of the Deaf leading them to generally believe that they had no signing skills. There were concerns that there were not enough Teachers of the Deaf, and just one is relied upon to visit a large number of schools which limits time and focused support.

### **BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE**

- Deaf parents of hearing and/or Deaf children raised concerns about access issues. Interpreters are not always provided at school events and they felt this limited their access and involvement in their child's educational and social development.
- Many Deaf attendees knew of Sign Hi, Say Hi, a local volunteer organisation which runs activities for families, including level one British Sign Language courses. Whilst this group is praised and appreciated by many there are concerns about a lack of support and funding which is putting a strain on the group's resources. Many would like to see the Council supporting this group and other volunteer groups like this to help develop more choice and resources for Deaf children, young people and their families.
- One attendee added that Blackpool Council are currently funding an 'Introduction to British Sign Language' course for adult community learning, and asked if the Council would consider extending this to deliver accredited British Sign Language level 1, 2 and 3 courses.

All the above points highlight concerns that there is not enough support, either within education or socially, for Deaf children, young people and their families to develop a strong bi-lingual and bi-cultural identity. The issues raised relate to Pledge Three of the British Sign Language Charter. The Council may wish to adopt this pledge in order to address some of the concerns raised. However this is only taking into account the views of the Deaf community.<sup>1</sup> Views and information from the Council need to be considered also.

## **2. COMMUNICATIONS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

### **Interpreter Provision**

A number of issues were raised in relation to interpreter provision. Many examples were given, mainly in the public health setting, of no interpreters being booked or instances where unregistered and unqualified interpreters were provided resulting in communication breakdown.

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<sup>1</sup> See Case Study 1 at end of document.

- A number of Deaf people mentioned qualified interpreters being booked through Progress House but that some occasions have involved longer waiting times which meant delaying appointments.
- There are one or two people working within the Deaf community that do have some level of signing skills and these people are relied on when qualified interpreters should be used.
- Some members of the Deaf community also admitted that they have had to rely on their hearing children or family members to interpret for them because no interpreters have been provided.
- It was identified that there are few qualified interpreters based in the Blackpool area.
- Some Deaf people wanted improved access to theatres and museums, with more interpreted performances and tours.
- It was felt that not all Deaf people thought they could fully access or participate in democratic events. Many feel they do not have full access to information about elections and the voting process. One person was particularly keen to attend Council meetings and be provided with an opportunity to become a councillor but was unable to access this without an interpreter. Town hall/ planning meetings and general consultations need to be made accessible for Deaf people.

Problems with interpreter provision appears to be a recurring issue with the general consensus being that a greater awareness amongst Council staff and partner organisations (NHS, etc.) is needed for booking of appropriate registered and qualified interpreters. It is felt the Council should have a communications policy that all staff adhere to. Such a policy should include how to book interpreters, with guidelines about what is and what is not acceptable.

### **Technology**

Issues in relation to technology were raised. It was felt the Council could be utilising modern technology more efficiently to provide greater access and more choice of access.

- There is currently no option to look at British Sign Language videos on the Council's website for information.
- When contacting the Council about services under the council, Deaf people would like the option to text (SMS), email or use Video Relay Services (VRS).
- Minicomms are rarely used now.

### **Written Information**

- As well as improving web based information, it was mentioned that written information for the public also needs to be considered in terms of access. Plain English and visual information is preferred – one Deaf person highlighted the recycling leaflets/ flyers as a good example of Plain English.
- Opportunities for those without computer access or no knowledge of how to use computers (older Deaf people) should be developed.

Concerns were raised about Blackpool's Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB). Access to information about benefits and any changes that may impact Deaf people is poor. Although

Blackpool Citizens' Advice Bureau website does have a British Sign Language video information clip, this has not been presented by a fluent British Sign Language user which makes the video difficult to understand. Even though Citizens' Advice Bureau is not a Council service, the Council may still be able to use its influence to improve access.

### 3. HEALTH

A number of Deaf people raised concerns about poor access to Health services, including GPs, Ear, Nose and Throat departments and general hospital services. It is felt there is a lack of awareness about Deafness and interpreter provision. Although some are provided with interpreters, Deaf people still feel they have to remind health professionals of their responsibilities to book qualified interpreters. Frontline staff need greater awareness and should have basic sign language skills.

### 4. TRANSPORT

- A lot of positive feedback was given with regard to the concessionary bus passes; however a few mentioned difficulties with communicating with bus drivers and some have faced poor attitudes from drivers. Members of the Deaf community would like to see more awareness amongst drivers and visual displays showing which stops are coming up on the bus route.
- A few Deaf people are blue badge holders too and they highlighted that they had not been provided with accessible information about new changes to the blue badge scheme.
- Concerns were raised about older Deaf people who are vulnerable to isolation and unable to use public transport independently.

### 5. TRAINING

Many Deaf attendees shared the opinion that Council staff need more Deaf awareness and basic British Sign Language knowledge to ensure greater understanding and, when necessary that their communication needs should be appropriately identified and met.

### 6. GENERAL

It was mentioned that the poor attendance at these consultations (out of an estimated target of 300, only 30 attended) should be noted as an issue in itself. Despite being well publicised and made accessible it was felt **some Deaf people did not attend because of their lack of confidence in the Council and their lack of faith that change would happen.**

From a general research perspective, a face-to-face participation rate of 10% is considered a good response. This is also backed up by the amount and quality of information recorded at the sessions.

It is felt that the Deaf community in Blackpool is segmented with no consistency of service provision and support. Consultation attendees said they would like to see good practice being shared across all services of the council and partner organisations for greater access and consistency, particularly if the British Sign Language Charter is adopted.

## **B.1 BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE SURVEY FOR SENIORS MANAGERS OF THE COUNCIL DEPARTMENTS**

From a joint meeting with the British Deaf Association and the Equality and Sensory Service officers, it was decided alongside the consultations with the Deaf community that an internal survey should be devised and distributed to senior managers of all departments across the local authority.

A list of 38 possible questions was drawn up by the British Deaf Association. These questions were devised with the aim of providing a bigger picture of what services they already provide or ones they have considered. All of the questions fell under one of the following five areas, which have some correlation to the 5 pledges of the Charter:

- Policies and Training
- Information and Access
- British Sign Language Teaching
- Deaf children and families
- Deaf People (general needs).

Some questions were considered too specialised to form part of a general questionnaire and were either adapted or removed. About 14 of the original questions were included. The final survey included a total of 32 questions (some questions plus names and email addresses)

Although it was not possible to include all questions, these will be considered at a later date when the Council adopts the charter. Additional questions with more detail can then be directed to the appropriate respondents.

## **2. RESULTS FROM BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE SURVEY**

The first two questions of the survey gathered data about the respondents. There were 25 respondents to the survey. These respondents were managers of services/ teams across 7 different departments.

Two departments were not represented in the survey responses. These were Public Health and Governance and Regulatory Services.

The department respondents represented the following services:

### **Adult Services**

- Mental Health and Learning disabilities
- Direct Payments
- Home Care
- Client Finances Team
- Systems Development Team
- Customer Relations Team
- Contacts – blackpool4me.com
- EE

### **Resources**

- Post Team Customer First
- Risk Services
- Accountancy
- Discretionary Awards Team
- Income and Recovery
- Social Care Benefits Team
- Transactional Services

## Places

- Neighbourhood Services – Residential
- Neighbourhood Services Town Centre and Promenade
- Business Support Team

## Children Services

- Special Education Needs and Disabilities
- Youth Offending Team

## Deputy Chief Executive's Department

- Corporate Development, Engagement and Communication

## Commercial and Environmental Services

- Waste Services

It should be noted that some services are better equipped to answer some of the questions due to the nature of their work. E.g. Responses from Adult and Children's services were more relevant as they will have more direct contact with the Deaf community than the Finance team. However seeing all responses gives an idea of the level of general awareness across the whole Council, which is still valuable.

### Q3. HOW FREQUENTLY DOES YOUR SERVICE/TEAM INTERACT WITH THE PUBLIC?

To determine the relationship between the council and the British Sign Language users at a local level the survey asked how frequently a service/team interacts with the public through different methods of communication.

The survey showed a high percentage of departments frequently interacting with the public as part of their services. Methods of interaction varied across departments.

More popular methods included:

- **Face to Face - 68.2% (15 out of the 22 teams/services) use Face to Face frequently or regularly.**  
Whilst British Sign Language interpreters can ensure smooth communication in face to face interaction at this point it is not known if this is always provided for British Sign Language users.
- **Telephone - 86.4% (19 out of the 22 teams) use the telephone frequently.**  
Telephone communication may be suitable for hard of hearing clients but not for British Sign Language users, unless minicomms are made available. There is a decline in minicom use within the Deaf community, particularly from the younger generation who prefer the use of mobiles and other modern technology.
- **Email- 63.6% (14 out of the 22 teams) use Email frequently**  
Email is a good alternative to face to face and telephone communication, however it does rely on persons having a fairly good command of English. For many British Sign Language users, English is a second language and there is a probability that information is misunderstood.

The more popular methods are those that rely on adequate English skills; however these should not be discounted as methods of communication as many Deaf and Hard of hearing will want to have the choice of face to face, email or other forms of communication.

Less popular methods included:

- **SMS - 18.2% (4 out of 22 teams)** regularly use, compared to 50% who never use and 27.3% who rarely use  
The use of SMS is an increasingly preferred method of communication for Deaf BSL users when making contact with services and/ or arranging appointments. If this is adopted it can make the initial point of contact and ongoing communication with services more accessible.
- **Social Media - 9.5%** (2 out of 21 teams) regularly use compared to 61.9% who never use and 19.1% who rarely use
- **Webcam (software such as Skype/OoVoo)- 80% never** use and 20% (4 out of 20 teams) rarely use

SMS, Social Media and webcams/VRS are all currently used less frequently across departments in the Council, they are both visual means of communication that are used amongst the Deaf community.

#### **Q 4: HOW FREQUENTLY DOES YOUR SERVICE/TEAM INTERACT WITH DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC?**

The more popular methods included:

- **Post - 11.1% (2 out of 18 teams) use regularly** and 22.2% (4 out of 18 teams) use frequently
- **Email- 5.6% (1 out of 18) and 16.7% (3 out of 18) regularly and frequently communicate by email** compared to 16.7% (3 out of 18) that never use and 50% (9 out of 18) rarely use.

Less popular methods included:

- **Face to Face - 19% (4 out of 21 teams) never use and 61.9% (13 out of the 21 teams) rarely use** compared to 14.3% (3 out of 21) that regularly and 4.7% (1 out of 21 teams) that frequently communicate face to face with Deaf and Hard of hearing
- **Textphone - 42.1% (8 out of 19) never and rarely use** compared to only 10% (2 out of 19) that occasionally and 5.3% (1 out of 19) that frequently use textphones.
- **Webcam (software such as Skype/OoVoo) - 88.9% (16 out of 18) never use** and 11.1% (2 out of 18) rarely use with 0% of staff using on an occasional, regular or frequent basis
- **SMS 65% (13 out of 20) never use and 20% (4 out of 20) rarely use.** This is compared to only 15% (3 out of 20) that do use SMS to communicate with Deaf and hard of hearing regularly
- **Social Media 73.7% (14 out of 19) never use and 21.1% (4 out of 19) rarely use** compared to only 5.3% (1 out of 19) who do make use of Social media to communicate with Deaf and hard of hearing.

The above shows that teams are still relying on communication methods that are heavily English based (post and email) For British Sign Language users this could mean that information is not fully understood.



Only a small percentage of team/staff members are utilising communication methods that are more accessible. Face to face and Webcam software can utilise British Sign Language interpreters and SMS can give Deaf and hard of hearing the independence to make contact with council staff directly.

Survey questions 5-7 asks council departments if they have any members of staff who are Deaf or hard of hearing and explores the inclusion of these members and questions 8-10 shed light on training that services have had access to.

**Q5: DO YOU HAVE ANY STAFF MEMBERS WHO ARE DEAF OR HAVE A HEARING IMPAIRMENT<sup>2</sup>?**

- 7 responded Yes (28%)
- 17 responded No (68%)
- 1 responded with Don't know (4%)

**Q6: DO YOU FEEL CONFIDENT THAT YOUR DEAF OR HEARING IMPAIRED MEMBERS OF STAFF FEEL SUPPORTED AT WORK? (I.e. they have all that they need to feel safe and do their job effectively.)**

- 7 responded Yes (87.5%)
- 1 Responded No (12.5%)

**Q7: WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE ADVICE OR HELP ON HOW TO MAKE THE WORKPLACE MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STAFF?**

- 3 responded Yes (42.87%)
- 4 responded No (57.1%)

**Q8: HAVE YOU AND/ OR YOUR TEAM RECEIVED:**

- Training in Deaf Equality and Awareness – Only 4% (1 in 25 teams) has received a substantial amount of training with 60% (15 in 25) having received no training and 4% (1 in 25) not knowing if they have.
- Training in British Sign Language- Only 8% (2 in 25 teams) have received either a substantial amount of some training in British Sign Language whilst 56% (14 in 25) have received no training and 8% not knowing if they have.

**Q9and Q10: ACCESS TO TRAINING AND WHAT PREVENTS YOU AND YOUR TEAM FROM GOING ON BSL OR DEAF AWARENESS TRAINING?**

- **Most departments (71.4% /15 of 25 teams) do not know how to access British Sign Language or Deaf Equality training** and that given the opportunity 85% (17 of 20 team managers) would consider sending staff on British Sign Language or Deaf Equality Training.

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<sup>2</sup>Though used largely in the public domain, the British Deaf Association advise that *Hearing Impaired* is a term that many in the Deaf community dislike or find offensive. Impaired suggests the idea of being damaged and many Deaf people do not see themselves as damaged nor disabled, rather a linguistic minority.

- The survey suggests that lack of access to training is down to a lack of resources (time and cost) or due to having no Deaf members of staff or clients.

### Comments

- A comment was made about the number of Deaf members of staff or clients not warranting the need for staff to access training British Sign Language and Deaf awareness. It should be noted such training is still beneficial for potential future engagement with a Deaf member of staff or clients.
- Another comment concerned arranging a British Sign Language interpreter for a meeting with a social worker. It should be noted that it should not be the social worker's responsibility to book an interpreter. It is the responsibility of the party/ service that the Deaf person wishes to access to ensure that the appropriate communication professional is booked.

### Q11: HOW DO YOU PROVIDE CURRENT PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE?

There is a high reliance of providing information via the website (61.9%/ 13 out of 21 teams) or by use of written plain English (52.4% / 11 out of 21 teams). Other methods used included SMS and Fax (both 19.1% / 4 out of 21).

Blackpool Council website is mainly text based. There is no use of British Sign Language video to convey key information from different departments. There is also no use of Video Relay Services or webcam software. This is a method of communication that the Deaf community highlight as being particularly beneficial to them.

### Q12: DO YOU KNOW HOW TO BOOK AND CONTRACT QUALIFIED AND REGISTERED INTERPRETERS FOR DEAF CUSTOMERS AND FOR DEAF STAFF MEMBERS?

- Yes 56.5%      This highlights the need for the Council to clarify its process for
- No 43.5%      booking interpreters through a language/ communication policy.

**Questions 13 and 14:** The following two questions from the survey relate to information and communication access for British Sign Language users.

### Q13: ARE THERE ARE ANY VIDEOS PRESENTED IN BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE ON YOUR SECTION OF THE COUNCIL WEBSITE?

- Yes 0%      With almost 73% responding no and 27% not knowing whether
- No 72.7%      British Sign Language videos are included on their service's
- Don't Know 27.3%      section of the website this suggests that there are no British Sign Language videos. This identifies a key issue. The Council should consider the need to provide British Sign Language videos to allow the Deaf community access to service information.

**Q14: CAN BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE USERS ACCESS YOUR PROCEDURES FOR COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS IN THEIR FIRST OR PREFERRED LANGUAGE?**

- Yes 26.1%
  - No 13.0%
  - Don't know 60.9%
- Although 6 services responded yes to this question, it is not clear how their complaints procedure is accessible for the Deaf community. Is it face to face with British Sign Language interpreters, via email or webcam? This should be clarified by the Council and if it is a procedure that works well, this should be shared as good practice across all departments. For those respondents that answered "No/ Don't know", again the Council needs to address this and ensure all departments are aware of how to make sure complaints procedures are accessible for the Deaf community

**Questions 15 to 25** are questions exploring information and access for Deaf Children, Young People and Families, including information around Education.

**Q15: DOES YOUR TEAM WORK WITH CHILDREN AND/OR FAMILIES?**

8 responded Yes (34.78%) including:

- Adult Services - Mental Health and Learning Disabilities
- Children's Services - Youth Offending Team
- Adult Services - Customer Relations Team
- Places - Neighbourhood Services - Residential
- Deputy Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Development, Engagement and Communications
- Commercial and Environmental Services - Waste Services
- Children's Services - Special Education Needs with Disabilities

**Q16: ARE YOU AWARE OF A POLICY OR POLICY CLAUSE TO PROMOTE LEARNING OF BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE FOR FAMILIES OF DEAF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?**

One respondent, the Special Education Needs with Disabilities service, was aware of a policy or policy clause promoting learning of British Sign Language for families of deaf children and young people. It would be recommended that the Council clarifies where and what this policy is and if appropriate, ensure it is implemented across all departments. If the policy does indeed promote learning of British Sign Language for families, deaf children and young families this ties in with the Pledge Three of the British Sign Language Charter and could be identified, using the British Sign Language Charter toolkit, as an area already covered but in need of further action.

**Q17: IS THERE A SYSTEM IN PLACE FOR CONTACTING PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF NEWLY DIAGNOSED DEAF CHILDREN TO ENABLE THEM ACCESS SUPPORT SYSTEMS?**

Of 10 respondents only 2 teams (20%) selected yes. These were the Social Care Benefits Team (Resources) and Special Education Needs and Disabilities (Children's Service). Of the remaining teams 1 (10%) reported that there is no system in place and 7 (70%) replied that they did not know of any system.

As with question 16 it is suggested that the Council identifies the current systems that are in place and evaluates the effectiveness of these systems. If appropriate and effective the systems should be shared as good practice with all other departments. This also ties in with Pledge Three of the British Sign Language Charter.

**Q18: WHAT IS YOUR SERVICE DOING TO SUPPORT DEAF PARENTS WITH THEIR PARENTING SKILLS?**

- Mental Health and Learning disabilities (Adult Services) – *I do not have enough knowledge in terms of case studies to answer the question*
- Youth Offending Team (Children's Service) - *the team would currently have to adapt its service in response to the needs of individual young people or parents*
- Customer Relations Team (Adult Services) - *not applicable to us. This is outside of our remit. We facilitate the complaints service and the professionals are the service specialists*
- Library Services - *Do not offer specialised library services for either deaf children or their parents*
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities (Children's Services) - *I manage the adult and children sensory team and work occurs via these*
- Commercial and Environmental Services -*Not sure, not come across this situation yet*

It is clear there are different levels of contact and support provided to Deaf parents across the various Council departments. There is a need to identify which services provide support to Deaf parents, identify the type of support (e.g. parenting skills) and share this information across all departments so services are able to signpost appropriately. This could be highlighted as an action point within the British Sign Language Charter toolkit.

**Q19: SUPPORT NETWORKS**

- **DO DEAF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER?**
- **ARE THERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEAF CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL, PRIMARY AND SECONDARY AGES TO GET TOGETHER?**

For both parts of the question, of 7 respondents one service (14.3%) responded Yes, frequently (weekly). This was Special Education Needs and Disabilities (Children's Services). The remaining respondents said that they were not aware of any support networks.

It is suggested that the council identifies what support networks these are and whether they are meeting the needs of Deaf children and families at an appropriate level. This information should be shared across the council and made available in an accessible format to the Deaf community. Again this can be drawn up as an action point within the British Sign Language Charter toolkit.

**Q20: FOCUSED ON DEVELOPING BRITISH SIGN OF LANGUAGE SKILLS OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES ASKING RESPONDENTS IF THEY KNEW OF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:**

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
Do you know of any resources/ opportunities for parents and families to develop BSL Skills?	28.6	14.3	57.1
Do you think these are enough BSL learning opportunities?	0	14.3	85.7
Do you think that existing learning opportunities are affordable?	0	0	100
Is training available locally (within Blackpool)?	28.6	0	71.4
Are there opportunities for informal learning?	28.6	0	71.4
Are existing training opportunities advertised well?	28.6	0	71.4

With the majority of respondents selecting 'don't know' this highlights the need for the Council to ensure information is shared across all departments so that staff are confident that they can signpost appropriately when needed. This information should also be made available to deaf children, young people and families via an accessible format, perhaps on the Council's website. As mentioned in the above questions such action points can be noted utilising the British Sign Language Charter toolkit.

**Q21: WHAT WOULD HELP YOUNG DEAF PEOPLE TO ACQUIRE ADVANCED BSL SKILLS?**

There were 3 service respondents to this question including; Mental Health and Learning Disabilities (Adult Services), Special Education Needs with Disabilities (Children's Services) and Waste Services (Leisure and Operational Team). 5 multiple-answer choices were provided to which the aforementioned three services selected as follows:

All three selected

- Funding to access services
- More local training opportunities
- More opportunity to practice in informal settings

Two selected

- Cheaper training opportunities
- Better communication of existing training opportunities

Responses to the above question support much of the Deaf community's views, and identify key ways in which Deaf young people can acquire advanced BSL skills. It is recommended that the council explore ways in which they can support and/or develop training opportunities for Deaf young people.

#### **Q22: HOW DO SCHOOLS PROMOTE BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE AND DEAF AWARENESS?**

8 services responded to this question and selected one or more of the multiple-answer choices outlined below. It is clear that Special Education Needs and Disabilities (Children's Service) is the one service that has a greater awareness of the promotion of British Sign Language/ Deaf awareness in schools, perhaps because the remit of their work allows them to see this, whereas 75% do not know how schools promote BSL or Deaf Awareness.

The Special Education Needs and Disabilities Team knew of the following activities:

- British Sign Language Day/Deaf Awareness Week events and activities
- Signing in class
- Planned lessons through Citizenship or PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education)
- Sessions from visiting organisations

Seeing how knowledge of the above information is concentrated to one service the Council should consider how this information can be shared across all services, to ensure accurate signposting and how this information is made accessible to the Deaf community and families of Deaf children and young people.

#### **Q23: USING A SCALE OF 1 (VERY POOR), TO 10 (EXCELLENT). FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, HOW WELL DO BLACKPOOL SCHOOLS PROMOTE DEAF AWARENESS?**

Respondents awarded a median score of 6.5. Although it is agreed that some services will have more need for information about schools and deaf awareness than others the Council should consider how this information is shared for the purposes of signposting and more importantly how parents of Deaf children have access to information which could help them with choices related to education.

#### **Q24: EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

Youth Offending Team *"I didn't score the last question because I don't have enough information to answer it"*

Special Education Needs and Disabilities *"It varies from school to school so a blanket comment is not appropriate but the SERF (Special Education Resource Facility) at Waterloo has just been praised for its work, some schools work with Deaf and Hearing Impairment parent/CYP. We are working with a parent who is doing her doctorate on improving outcomes for deaf CYP (Children and Young People).*

Again the fact that only one respondent had enough information to answer this question highlights the need to ensure information is shared.

**Q25: DO YOU THINK THAT THERE ARE SUITABLE DEAF ROLE MODELS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?**

Only 4 services responded to this question. All four responded No, which highlights a strong need for the Council to consider the recruitment and use of Deaf role models for Deaf children and young people. This is also a concern that we have seen highlighted by members of the Deaf community in the consultations. As with all the above (Q15-25) this is an action point in line with Pledge Three of the Charter and can be implemented utilising the British Sign Language Charter toolkit.

**Q26: DOES YOUR SERVICE CONTACT THE LOCAL DEAF COMMUNITY TO DISCUSS NEEDS AND PRIORITIES?**

Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

*“We have a care home in Blackpool set up to work with deaf people; the owner is fully engaged with our commissioners.”*

Special Education Needs and Disabilities

*“We are doing this as part of the development of the Special Education Needs and Disabilities Local Offer. Deaf parents were involved in 2 major projects regarding consultation about services with a signer and palantypist.”*

Waste Services (Commercial and Operational Services) also responded

*“Yes, annually in terms of arranging the waste management requirement for the local deaf society.”*

19 out of 22 (86.4%) Services responded “No” or “Don’t Know.”

This question highlights a key concern over the lack of engagement and consultation with the Deaf community. All services, not only those that are in direct contact with the Deaf community, need to consult with the community to ensure information is shared and made accessible, and their views should be considered for future changes to services, policies and procedures that could have an impact on their lives as full and equal contributing members of Blackpool’s local community. The council should support the Deaf community in the development of a British Sign Language forum and utilise this as a means to regularly engage and consult with the community directly. As an action point this would tie in with Pledge Five of the British Sign Language Charter.

**Q27: DO YOU HELP DEAF FORUMS OR USER GROUPS TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOUR SERVICE FUNCTIONS AND HOW THEY CAN INFLUENCE DECISION MAKING?**

Only 9.1% (2 teams) responded yes:

Discretionary Awards Team Social Care  
Benefit Team

*“VIA presentations and liaison with the disability forum, equalities forum and also service, information and support providers from public, statutory, voluntary and community organisations working in the area.”*

Special Education Needs and Disabilities

*“There is regular contact with the sensory team at parents events“*

As noted in question 26, the Council should consider how it consults and shares information with the local Deaf community.

**Q28: DO DEAF PEOPLE IN BLACKPOOL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER?**

Yes, Frequently  
0%

Occasionally (once a month, but not weekly):  
75%

Rarely (less than once a month)  
25%

Only four respondents were aware of regular opportunities for Deaf people to meet. This is an issue that the Council might want to consider; once it identifies where and when Deaf people have the opportunities to meet and support one another it could be considered how the Council supports these opportunities and promotes them to Deaf children, young people and families and Deaf people in general who are seeking further support networks. This information should be shared across all departments for the purposes of signposting and made available in an accessible format to Deaf people.

**Q29:** Focusing on education and developing the British Sign Language skills of Blackpool residents, 20 out of a possible 25 respondents answered this set of questions. Looking at resources and opportunities to learn British Sign Language; the majority of services either identify that there are no opportunities or that they do not know of any. The Council needs to explore this gap in knowledge, identifying what resources or opportunities, if any, are available. Existing learning opportunities need to be developed and promoted both internally and externally to the Deaf community and general public.

**Q30: WHAT WOULD HELP LOCAL PEOPLE TO ACQUIRE ADVANCED BSL SKILLS?**

The question was broken down into 5 possible answer choices to which 15 respondents (out of a possible 25) selected the following:



- Funding to access training - 60% (9 out of 15)
- More local training opportunities – 73.3% (11 out of 15)
- Cheaper training opportunities – 26.7% (4 out of 15)
- Better communication of existing training opportunities – 53.3% (8 out of 15)
- More opportunity to practice in informal settings – 40% (6 out of 15)

As with question 21, responses to the above question show services agreeing with much of the Deaf community's views that more needs to be done to support British Sign Language training opportunities. It is recommended that the council explore ways in which they can support and/or develop British Sign Language training opportunities. This is again a consideration which can be included in the British Sign Language Charter's toolkit when the Council adopts the British Sign Language Charter.

**Q31: DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS OR OBSERVATIONS ON BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE AND DEAF AWARENESS?**

*We are developing a focus on Speech, Language and Communication needs in the youth justice system. If British Sign Language /Deaf awareness is promoted in the wider criminal justice system it would benefit our service users to know about them.*

**Youth Offending Team**

*I found this survey difficult to complete because we are not the first point of contact and don't ask about disabilities, but we do use their chosen communication method i.e. text, e-mail, video, large print, pictures etc.*

**Direct Payments**

It would be useful to have contact details of employees within the organisation who are able to use British Sign Language. Not only would this be beneficial to the organisation, but for someone who has been taught British Sign Language, it is good to maintain skills through having the opportunity to practice.

**Pay, Equality and Policy**

*Hearing loops help - especially with partially deaf older people*

**Library Services**

## **Identified from three consultations and Blackpool Council – British Sign Language Survey and Recommendations**

Taking into consideration the above feedback from consultations held with the Deaf community and Blackpool Council's internal British Sign Language survey, recommendations have been drawn up below. These recommendations are in line with the British Deaf Association's Charter for British Sign Language toolkit which can be utilised if the Charter is adopted by the Council. If it is felt that a separate or additional framework needs to be devised to outline how recommendations can be implemented alongside the Local Authority's budget, policies and procedures this can be developed with support from the BDA too.

Upon adoption of the British Sign Language Charter, Blackpool Council is encouraged to continue working with the British Deaf Association's. The British Deaf Association's will be able to assist with further exploration of identifying gaps and advising on solutions and assisting the Council with the use of the British Sign Language Charter toolkit.

*Please note that the following table highlights actions identified as a result of the consultation events and questionnaires. We are aware that much of this work is already taking place. These areas have been highlighted.*

Consultation Recommendations	Charter for BSL Toolkit - Relevant pledge	Responsibility
<b>BSL Charter Pledge 1: Ensure access for Deaf people to information and services</b>		
<p>Ensure Deaf people can access Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB). CAB Advisers to be deaf aware or appoint an advisor who has fluent signing skills. Provide BSL translation on CAB Website and ensure interpreters are booked for advice appointments.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Ensure Access for Deaf people to information and services</p>	<p>CAB</p> <p>Council can influence this through commissioning, but CAB would need to design and develop their own delivery methods.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote deaf awareness and basic BSL for staff across all Council services. Frontline staff are key to this training but a widespread training course will be beneficial for all staff should they come into contact with Deaf staff or clients in the future</li> <li>• Information regarding BSL course opportunities to be made available to Council staff and members of the general public who have an interest in learning BSL.</li> <li>• To ensure a language/ communication policy is implemented within the local authority across all departments promoting bilingualism.</li> </ul>	<p>1.1</p> <p>Ensuring staff receive BSL Awareness/Deaf Equality training, including information about how to communicate with deaf people.</p> <p>1.1 /4</p>	<p>Corporate Human Resources Customer First</p> <p>Adult, Community &amp; Family Learning</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language policy to ensure staff are aware of where and how to book interpreters when needed.</li> <li>• Reinforce across services and partner organisations the need for registered and qualified BSL interpreters for appointments with the Local authority).</li> </ul>	1.2	Using qualified and registered BSL/English interpreters.	Corporate Human Resources  Sensory Service  Customer First
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a wider range of choices for contacting services, including; SMS, Email and/or Video Relay Service</li> <li>• To review complaint procedures and ensure they are accessible to the Deaf community.</li> <li>• Ensure public transport has visual displays so that deaf people can access information independently.</li> <li>• All Council services/ departments (regardless of public contact levels) need to share information about events, services and access for BSL Users. This allows for general awareness and ability to signpost accurately.</li> </ul> <p>Shared information will also allow more ease for parents who are constantly fighting for their child’s education and attempting to find appropriate staff to assist with their needs.</p>	1.3	Adapting Public Information to be more BSL accessible, for example on DVD or websites, and using technology such as SMS messaging, textphones, faxes and videophones/webcams.	Corporate  ICT  Engagement  Customer First

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all public information is accessible in plain English. Identify the most important and relevant information to be translated into BSL and made available online.</li> <li>• Identify how BSL users are able to access council related events such as voting, town hall meetings and planning meetings. Ensure information is made available and accessible to the Deaf community.</li> <li>• More library resources to be made available for deaf children and parents.</li> <li>• Ensure interpreters are provided at museums and gallery events and that the Deaf community are aware of the provision.</li> </ul>	1.4	Ensuring all public information is accessible to deaf BSL users.	Corporate
<b>BSL Charter Pledge 2: Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language</b>			
<p>To support the development of BSL courses for Deaf children and their parents/ families. (Provide more choice and resources for Deaf children, young people and their families. Work with local charities like Sign Hi, Say Hi and NDCS – i-sign project)</p>	2.1 3.1 3.4	<p>Ensuring that we employ BSL teachers who are native/fluent in BSL and actively engaged with the Deaf community with a comprehensive knowledge of Deaf Culture.</p> <p>Providing opportunities for parents/guardians to learn BSL with their children.</p> <p>Ensuring young Deaf people are offered the opportunity to improve and accredit their BSL learning.</p>	<p>Children’s Services: Learning Access and Inclusion</p> <p>Adult, Community &amp; Family Learning</p>

**BSL Charter Pledge 3: Support Deaf children and families**

<p>To ensure the needs of Deaf children, particularly BSL users, are met. This should include communication and general support in toddler groups, nursery and pre-school settings to aid development and prepare for future schooling.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Support Deaf children and families.</p>	<p>Children’s Services: - Learning Access and Inclusion - Early Help for Children &amp; Families</p> <p>Sensory Services</p>
<p>To support and develop further opportunities for Deaf children, young people and their families wishing to acquire advanced BSL skills.</p>	<p>3.1  3.4</p>	<p>Providing opportunities for parents/guardians to learn BSL with their children.</p> <p>Ensuring young Deaf people are offered the opportunity to improve and accredit their BSL learning.</p>	<p>Children’s Services: Learning Access and Inclusion</p> <p>Adult, Community &amp; Family Learning</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure clear and updated information is provided to parents of Deaf children relating to education needs (e.g. changes to SEN Statements)</li> <li>• Fair and Equal holistic information to be provided regarding deaf education. Include the promotion of bilingualism and bi-culture.</li> <li>• Look at the numbers of Teachers of the Deaf – increase numbers so that one-to-one support needs can be met.</li> </ul>	<p>3.2</p>	<p>Ensuring teachers, teaching assistants, communication support workers and other staff working closely with Deaf children have, or are working towards advanced BSL signing skills.</p>	<p>Children’s Services: Learning Access and Inclusion Sensory Services</p>

<p>Also ensure ToDs are given the opportunity to learn and develop sign language skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide clear and regular communication between the parents of deaf children and services from the council departments for deaf children.</li> </ul>			
<p>To recruit and develop Deaf peers/ role models for Deaf Children and young people</p>	3.3	<p>Providing opportunities for Deaf children to meet with Deaf peers and role models.</p>	<p>Children's Services: Learning Access and Inclusion</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To recognise BSL and the Deaf community as a linguistic minority group.</li> <li>• Ensure support services are promoting in Deaf children, young people and families a strong bi-lingual and bi-cultural identity.</li> <li>• To identify and develop more activities with inbuilt support for Deaf young people. Namely activities that encourage empowerment, independence, and career development.</li> <li>• Monitor the transition gap between Children's services and Adult services – ensure information about services and support is given to Deaf children and their families.</li> </ul>	3.5	<p>Raise awareness of BSL and Deaf culture within children's services and education.</p>	<p>Children's Services: Learning Access and Inclusion</p> <p>Schools</p>

<p>To ensure interpreters are provided for Deaf parents at educational and social development activities.</p> <p>Identify specialised support to be made accessible to Deaf adults/ parents. (For example Computer Skills for older deaf people and Parenting skills for Deaf parents.)</p>	<p>3.6</p>	<p>Ensuring parents who are deaf are fully involved in our strategies for improving parenting skills.</p>	<p>Children's Services:  - Learning Access and Inclusion  - Early Help for Children &amp; Families</p> <p>Sensory Services</p> <p>Adult, Community &amp; Family Learning</p>
<p><b>BSL Charter Pledge 4: Ensure staff working with Deaf people can communicate effectively in British Sign Language</b></p>			
<p>Information regarding BSL course opportunities to be made available to Council staff and members of the general public who have an interest in learning BSL.</p>	<p>4 1.1</p>	<p>Ensuring Deaf young people are offered the opportunity to improve and accredit their BSL learning.</p> <p>Ensuring staff receive BSL Awareness/Deaf Equality training, including information about how to communicate with deaf people.</p>	<p>Human Resources:  Organisation &amp; Workforce Development</p> <p>Adult, Community &amp; Family Learning</p>



**BSL Charter Pledge 5: Consult with our local Deaf community on a regular basis**

<p>Support the establishment of a Blackpool BSL Forum, independent from the council. Utilise this as a resource for regular consultation with the deaf community.</p> <p>Identify any older Deaf people who are in receipt of services and potentially vulnerable/ isolated. Ensure their communication needs are being met potentially through the use of a Deaf advocate who can assist with social and transport needs.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Consult with our local Deaf community on a regular basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building upon links made during this consultation exercise, establish ways for local Deaf groups to feed issues into the Council.</li> <li>- Commit to an annual/bi-annual open engagement event with the local deaf community.</li> </ul>	<p>Corporate HR Policy, Equality &amp; Pay</p> <p>Adult Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social Care</li> <li>- Care &amp; Support</li> </ul>
<p>Identify current systems in place for contacting parents and guardians of newly diagnosed deaf children. Review the effectiveness of these systems and share good practice with others so that parents and guardians are enabled to access support.</p>	<p>Not currently included in BSL Charter but can be implemented within future BSL toolkit.</p>	<p>Children’s Services: Early Help for Children &amp; Families</p> <p>CCGs</p>	

### **Conclusion from the British Deaf Association:**

As a result of the three consultations with local Deaf community members, general feedback and Blackpool Council's internal survey, this report has been able to highlight the key issues and barriers faced by the Deaf community. It is hoped that Blackpool Council will consider these issues and develop an action plan to implement the recommendations outlined above by adopting the British Sign Language Charter and signing up to the relevant pledges.

Once there is adoption of the British Sign Language Charter the British Deaf Association's will offer the British Sign Language Charter toolkit as an aid to enable Blackpool Council to monitor and evaluate improvements across the services.

The work undertaken to date has already established engagement between the Council and the Deaf community. The adoption of the British Sign Language Charter will serve to further this relationship so that it may be sustained for the long term.

### **Acknowledgments:**

The British Deaf Association's would like to acknowledge and thank the Blackpool Deaf Society, "Say Hi Sign Hi" and the Sensory Team for their support during the consultation period. Provision of venues to host consultations and assistance with promotional material distribution was much appreciated.

To Blackpool Council's Equality and Diversity Team, we thank them for their hard work in assisting with the creation of the British Sign Language survey and positive support of the British Sign Language Charter.

Special thanks must also be given to the Blackpool Deaf Community, whose contributions have helped us to highlight the key issues and make the first steps towards improved future changes.

## **CASE STUDY 1**

### **Parent of a Deaf Child**

D was unable to attend any of the consultation sessions, but contacted us to provide feedback on services relating to her two children. D's youngest child, A is profoundly deaf.

A is currently a happy, bright and sociable child, but D is anxious that this may change when A gets older and is not provided with the appropriate and necessary support. This is currently provided through full- time parental care.

These are some of her key issues and concerns:

### **Preparing for mainstream school**

A is profoundly deaf which is the highest level of deafness. Blackpool Council has assigned a Teacher of the Deaf to A. The teacher visits weekly and monthly at a Play and Stay session.

When A was born, D was initially advised that support would be provided at school. Now there are real concerns that, due to funding pressures and the replacement of SEN (Special Needs Education) with the Local Offer, that Blackpool Council is reversing its position on this and are not intending to provide adequate support throughout education.

- At various toddler groups, D has noticed a gap beginning to open up between A and other children of a similar age due to her deafness, her inability to understand what is happening and her less developed communication skills.
- D would like A to attend a pre-nursery to get her used to a new environment. However, A will not be able to attend if Blackpool Council will not fund or provide the necessary additional support. It has been indicated to D that A will not receive support at a pre-school nursery. D believes that without the aural and BSL support of a dedicated worker, A will be lost in an unfamiliar and noisy environment.
- D would like her daughter to attend a mainstream school. She feels that A is already disadvantaged as she will not be able to take up an unsupported nursery place and without this preparation, A will be even less ready to begin school than hearing children.
- There are clear indications that A will not be automatically provided with support to enable her to both understand the teacher and the members of her class at mainstream school. D would like the Council to commit to providing deaf children with an appropriate level of support when they attend school.

### **British Sign Language for families**

D's family receives a significant amount of support from the local deaf children's charity *Sign Hi Say Hi!*; they are helping the family to learn Sign Language at an evening class. This is a critical activity as it greatly helps the family to support A. D worries that if the class numbers drop, Blackpool Council would cease their financial support for this group.

D strongly believes that even if just one family in Blackpool needs to learn sign language to support their child, then this training should be provided. D's husband works and their elder daughter is at school so it is critical that this type of support is received in the evening or at times when the whole family can be involved.

### **Comparative support**

D feels that Blackpool Council sees the small number of deaf children in Blackpool as an insignificant group and therefore, not a priority. This is despite the fact that deaf children gain great benefit from the provision of appropriate support, ultimately reducing long term dependence.

D becomes frustrated when families that live elsewhere in Lancashire receive support for their children without having to battle for it. She sees the provision of appropriate support as a postcode lottery.