

Equality and Diversity Toolbox Talk

ED004/2025: BSL Interpreter for Deaf/BSL Users



A Deaf BSL user is a person who is Deaf* and uses British Sign Language (BSL) as their primary or preferred language for communication.

*The term “Deaf” with a capital ‘D’ is often used by members of the Deaf community to signify their cultural identity and connection to BSL.

It is important to note that not all Deaf people use BSL. Some Deaf people may use spoken English, others may use other sign language or a combination.

It is also noteworthy that BSL is a visual-gestural language with its own grammar. It is not a direct translation of English.

Working with a BSL Interpreter

NHS Grampian uses qualified and registered BSL interpreters to facilitate communication between a Deaf sign language user and hearing people. They are trained and will use their skills and knowledge of the two languages (i.e. English and BSL) and share their understanding of the Deaf culture.

The BSL interpreter can provide information on how they can effectively support the communication including the ideal seating position and briefing before and after the appointment.

Communication Tips

To communicate effectively with BSL users:

- Get their attention
- Ask their preferred method of communication (BSL interpreter, use pen and paper, IT or technology)

- Face them directly
- Use clear, simple language
- Avoid shouting or exaggerated mouth movements
- Be patient as communication can take longer
- Be mindful of background noise and lighting

Booking a BSL Interpreter

NHS Grampian staff within the department or service are responsible for booking a BSL interpreter for their patients. A Deaf BSL user may have their preferred BSL interpreter. Please do not hesitate to ask them prior to making the booking.

For services in Foresterhill Site (e.g. ARI, AMH, RACH), please contact ARI General Office by email

gram.interpreterbooking@nhs.scot

For other services, please contact Equality and Diversity by email

gram.equalitydiversity@nhs.scot

For further guide, please go to the Equality and Diversity NHS Grampian Intranet page.

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July 2025