

Sign language

What is sign language?

In Britain the term 'sign language' usually refers to British Sign Language (BSL). BSL is a complete language with a unique vocabulary, construction and grammar. In Britain there are over 70,000 people whose first or preferred language is BSL. Other sign systems, such as Signed English or Sign Supported English (SSE), use signs from BSL but follow the word order of spoken English. Deaf children communicate in a number of ways.

Where can I learn British Sign Language?

There are many different ways of learning sign language but the best way is to be taught by a fluent user of the language.

In Norfolk Adult Education provide classes in a number of areas. Their contact details are at the end of this factsheet. These are usually part-time or evening classes taught by trained tutors

Deaf Connexions organises a coffee morning.....where at the Deaf Centre, Johnson Place, Norwich.

What qualifications are available?

- **Level 1 Certificate in BSL (Stage 1)** is designed to give students a basic introduction to the vocabulary and construction of BSL. It involves at least 60 hours tuition.
- **Level 2 Certificate in BSL (Stage 2)** gives the student more information about the construction and grammar of BSL, as well as adding to the vocabulary and developing practical skills. It

- involves at least 120 hours of tuition (90 hours in the classroom and 30 hours studying alone) and contact with deaf people.
- **NVQ Level 3** is a vocational course and is intended for people who will be working with deaf people, or who want to take the next step towards becoming an interpreter. You can get further details of courses and centres that offer this qualification from The Council for the Advancement of Communication (CACDP)

Interpreting qualifications

To begin to train as an interpreter you will need to have at least an NVQ level 3 in BSL. You then need to follow an approved interpreter training or assessment programme. You could do a degree or an equivalent in BSL/English interpreting. The length of the course can be between two and four years. For information on which universities provide these courses, phone **UCAS** (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service for the UK) on 01242 222 444. or you can visit their website at www.ucas.ac.uk

You could get a level 4 (NVQ) in BSL/English Interpreting. After successfully completing the course you can be registered as a Junior Trainee Interpreter (JTI), a Trainee Interpreter (TI) or a Member of the Register of Sign Language Interpreters (MRSLI).

For any further information on training please contact Deaf Connexions.

Opportunities for practising BSL

Like all languages it takes a lot of practice to become fluent and confident in using BSL. The best practice is communicating with deaf people. Contact deaf Connexions for any opportunities that are available in your area.

Deaf Connexions also has a range of resources available, such as books and videos, to help students of BSL to gain a deeper awareness and knowledge of the theory and practice of sign language and deaf issues in general.

Useful contacts

CACDP Durham University Science Park Block 4 Stockton Road
Durham DH1 3UZ. Phone: 0191 383 1155 Textphone: 0191 383 791
Fax: 0191 383 7914; Email: durham@cacdp.org.uk Website:
www.cacdp.org.uk

Forest Bookshop Warehouse The New Building Ellwood Road
Milkwall Coleford GL16 7LE. Phone: 01594 833858 (voice and text)
Fax: 01594 833446 Email: forest@forestbooks.com Website:
www.forestbooks.com

NDCS Freephone helpline on 0808 800 8880 (voice and text)
between 10am and
5pm, Monday to Friday.

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Deaf Connexions produces a range of information sheets covering all aspects of hearing loss and deafness. If you would like further information contact :

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