

Coronavirus Impact Guidance for GPs



Deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) are significantly more likely than the general population to have poorer mental and physical health. They experience higher levels of stress and more difficulties accessing health information and services.

The Covid-19 crisis has accentuated the health inequalities faced by Deaf people. The difficulties in accessing reliable information in BSL means that they may also be at greater risk of contracting Covid-19 and passing it on.

News Update

- A new interpreting service: **bslhealthaccess.co.uk** is now being provided by SignHealth and InterpreterNow. Easy to use and free for all medical services!

What you can do to support mental well-being for Deaf BSL users (you may already be doing some of these)

- Ensure that your surgery is accessible to Deaf people. For example, consider using text messaging; accepting phone calls from Relay UK, using Skype / FaceTime / WhatsApp / Zoom to make appointments; accepting phone calls from third parties e.g. BSL interpreters speaking for a Deaf BSL user to make appointments.
- Place an introductory video in BSL on your website to explain how Deaf people can contact you at this time.
- If you already have an arrangement for providing BSL interpreters please continue to use this especially for appointments on the phone. If not, then there is a new BSLHealthAccess service (see News Update).
- Remind your Deaf patients that the **NHS 111** website is accessible with a BSL facility.
- Consider how your Deaf patients can renew their prescriptions – some will walk or drive to the surgery to renew their prescription because they can't make an appointment by telephone.
- Contact your local social services or council to get in touch with community groups of Deaf BSL users. They are often likely to provide informal support.

If you are worried about a Deaf patient's mental health:

- Check the advice from the Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health: **jcpmh.info/good-services/services-deaf-people/**
- For a service in your region, check BSMHD's list of contacts: **bsmhd.org.uk/2020/05/05/new-list-of-mental-health-services/**



Deaf Community Action

Deaf BSL users are helping other Deaf BSL users to download apps such as **Zoom** or **WhatsApp**



Deaf Community Action

Deaf BSL users have set up a **Stay at Home** community on Facebook