

Coronavirus Impact Guidance for Hospitals

Deaf people, and people with hearing loss



There are people whose hearing has a big impact on their communication. Some people are deaf from birth. Others lose their hearing to varying degrees.

Around 70% of over 70's will have some form of hearing loss. Occasionally your hospital will have a patient who is a British Sign Language (BSL) user

This Guidance is designed to assist you and your staff teams at a time of crisis. Here is a simple checklist to ensure that your teams are able to support patients with hearing loss or who use BSL.

What can you do?

- Make deaf awareness training available for all staff.
- If you already have a current and local arrangement for the provision of sign language interpreters, do maintain this. For those that do not have any, there is a new free BSL interpreting service provided by SignHealth and InterpreterNow: bslhealthaccess.co.uk which will need to be

advertised to all staff. This provides immediate access to a remote interpreter using a computer/laptop with a web browser and camera. This is free for all medical services during the Covid-19 crisis. However, for those that already have arrangements in place, this new service should be considered as back-up and not a replacement service as it is yet unknown whether this new service will continue after any lockdown.

- Find out and advertise if hearing enhancing equipment is available, such as a Conversation or Personal Listener, or a loop system.
- Identify staff in your organisation who may be able to use sign language.
- Provide an internal information hub (intranet) with sources of information about how to support people with disabilities including Deaf BSL users & people with hearing loss.
- Find out if your NHS Trust has made a commitment to the BSL Charter with the British Deaf Association, or Louder than Words with Action on Hearing Loss.
- Make links with your regional or national deaf mental health service, they can provide advice and guidance. See: [bsmhd.org.uk/https://bsmhd.org.uk/2020/05/05/new-list-of-mental-health-services/](http://bsmhd.org.uk/2020/05/05/new-list-of-mental-health-services/)
- Make links to local social care services to get in touch with community groups of Deaf BSL users or people with hearing loss. These are often able to provide informal support, such as visitors and volunteers, who can be vital to help maintain mental health and prevent isolation.