

Guidelines on Working within the Deaf Community

Mission Statement:

Love Jesus. Love People. Encourage People to Love Jesus.

THE AIM

1. To help familiarise yourself with how to engage with people with various levels of hearing loss within the church setting. Be aware of their needs in terms of communication.
2. This guidelines are for members of the clergy, lay people and the congregation.

INTRODUCTION

People who have a hearing loss are all individual and have individual communication needs. Here are some examples below:

Deaf people

The term 'Deaf' (with a capital D) defines members of the Deaf Community who identify themselves as part of a cultural language community.

British Sign Language is their primary language. This language is a distinct and visual way of communicating; the grammatical structure is completely different from spoken English.

Deafened/Hard of Hearing people

These people have gradual or considerable loss of hearing during their lifetime. There are three groups:

1. Hearing loss at an early age. Some may have proficiency in using sign language but they use hearing aids daily. They can communicate and integrate well with the Deaf cultural language community.
2. Hearing loss at a later age. Some people cannot identify themselves as 'deaf' due to a difficulty in admitting that they have hearing loss. They rely heavily on a hearing loop system or amplified aids.
3. Deafened people. These are people who have become totally deaf in adulthood for various reasons. They cannot use hearing aids and probably cannot communicate using sign language.

When communicating with any deaf people:

DO

- Always smile! Never show your nervousness.
- Face the person when talking to them as they need to lipread you.
- Make sure that you face the light so they can see your lips and hands.
- Always attract their attention **before** speaking so they are looking at you. It is often easier to tap a person on the shoulder.
- Speak naturally and clearly, DO NOT babble or talk too fast.
- When you have a conversation, always start with the topic of the conversation so they can understand what you want to talk about.
- Please remove your mask when communicating with a deaf person.

- Use gestures if a deaf person doesn't understand you.

DON'T

- Be impatient if the deaf person cannot understand you.
- Shout – remember that they are deaf and so cannot hear you!
- Look away from the deaf person – they won't be able to see your face.
- Talk with your mouth **FULL**. This is not polite!
- Cover your mouth when talking with a deaf person.
- Assume that they will understand you straightaway.
- Keep repeating the same sentence again and again. Think of a different way to say it.

Environmental Access

It is very important to make the church inclusive especially in terms of communication access needs.

Benefits of Technology

Due to rapid change in technology, communication can be beneficial for most deaf people in terms of access to information. The internet gives deaf people better access to full information provided by the Church. There is an increasing number of deaf people using mobile phones to allow them to send text messages.

Social media is an excellent way of sharing information to help deaf people access different groups, etc. The terminology in IT has changed considerably over the years for deaf people, e.g., the use of terms like 'vlog' (abbreviation for 'visual blog'); etc. Facetime is an excellent way for deaf BSL users to be able to communicate visually to give them independence.

Please read the below recommendations:

1. Please ensure that your interior loop system is in good working condition by checking the system with a field strength meter.
2. The church environment should be workable in terms of good light and space.
3. Upon deaf people's request, a fully qualified Communication Professional should be booked in advance before they visit your church for the first time. Sometimes a trained and registered trainee interpreter would be acceptable for some services.
4. Please ensure that the interpreter has good knowledge of Christian signs and is familiar with the structure of the services.
5. If you do not know how to work with an interpreter who is a Christian or the deaf community, please contact Rev. Neil Robinson (**his contact details is shown below**).

Useful Contacts for further support

Go! Sign (Christian Deaf Link UK)

Go! Sign Office, 5 Lyndale Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 4BY
Voice/SMS: 07383 613113. Email: general@gosign.org

Signs of God (and Christian Interpreters Network)

Email: info@signsofgod.org.uk

National Register of Communication Professionals for Deaf People's
(NRCPD)

To book a Sign Language Interpreter, please use the website:

<https://www.nrcpd.org.uk>

Deaf Youth 4 Christ

It can be visited via Facebook. Just enter 'Deaf Youth 4 Christ' and it will be found.

For further information, please use the below contact details to contact Revd. Neil Robinson.

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