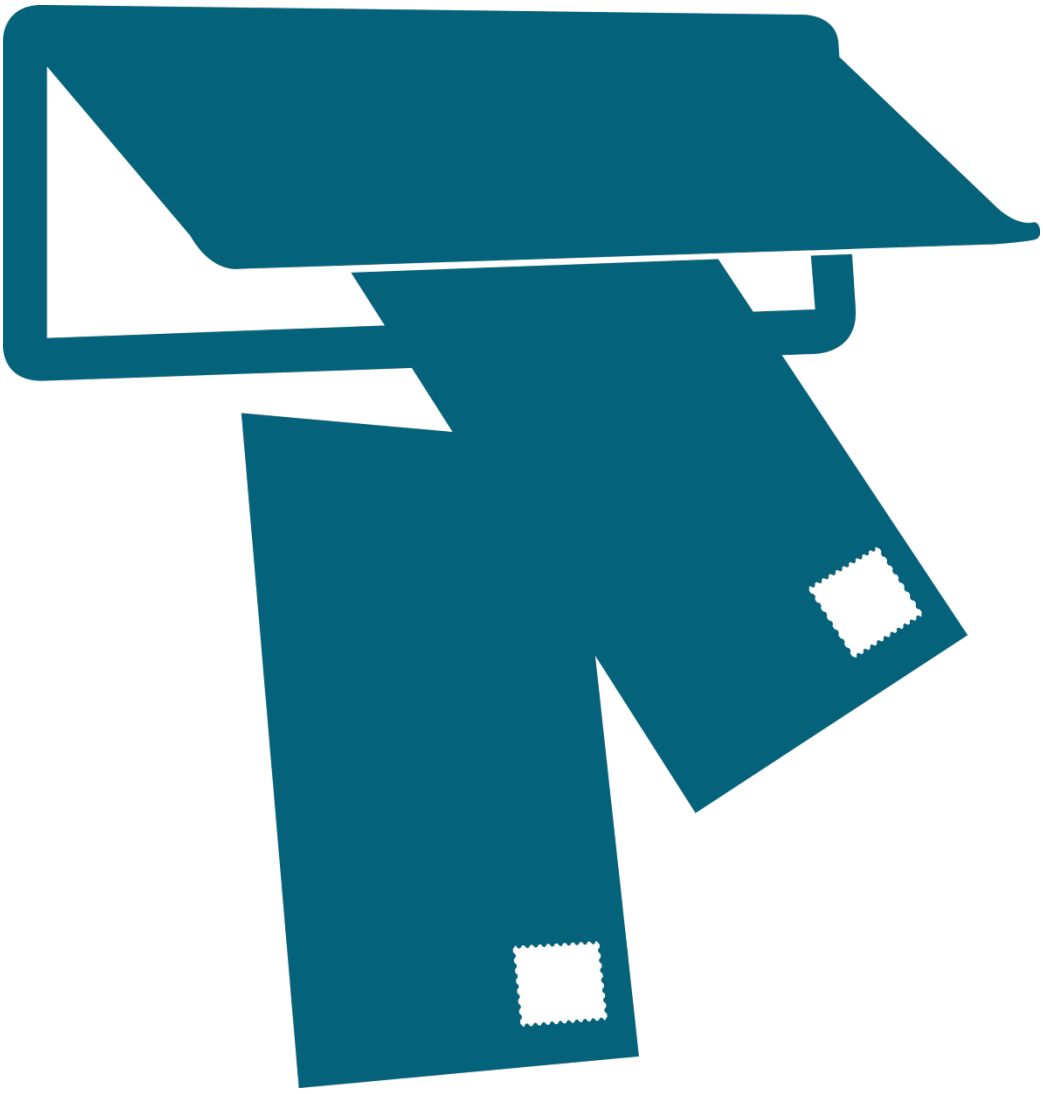
BSL Users

Financial Capability Best Practice Guide



citizens advice

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Introduction

The target area of 'challenging discrimination through advice' in The Citizens Advice Stand Up for Equality Strategy focuses on improving access to advice clients who are users of British Sign Language (BSL), who otherwise experience barriers in accessing mainstream advice services.

Financial capability has a key role to play in this strategy in terms of both reaching these clients and links with advice provision. The aim of this best practice guide is to help local offices consider the issues attached to this, and how these might be addressed through financial capability work to achieve the desired outcomes of the Stand Up for Equality Strategy.

This guide sets out some of the basic steps that a financial capability trainer needs to consider before developing their work in this area. We will be adding to this guide as our experience develops and your thoughts and feedback would be appreciated – email financial.skills@citizensadvice.org.uk

We do not wish to imply that we are experts in this particular area: this briefing is based on the work of Citizens Advice staff who have experience in delivering training to people who are BSL users. We are particularly grateful to Liverpool Central Citizens Advice and Thanet Citizens Advice for their valuable contribution to the development of this document through the BSL task group.

This guide was written by a financial capability specialist with a qualification in BSL (level 1), but will include advice of use to generalist advisers and volunteers at Citizens Advice as well.

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Background

Within the Citizens Advice service and elsewhere, there is a lack of awareness of the need to provide BSL interpreting and other reasonable adjustments (under the Equality Act 2010) for Deaf people to ensure that they can access the services they need, including financial capability training.

There are two principal ways in which local offices have delivered financial capability training to BSL users (either one-to-one or groups):

- Deaf-led delivery by a trainer who has BSL as their first language.
- Delivery by a trainer through a qualified BSL interpreter (this could also include relay interpreting where a Deaf interpreter assists the hearing interpreter).

This guide focuses on delivery of financial capability training through a BSL interpreter.

There is some excellent practice within the service and we have used this to set out some of the basic steps that a financial capability trainer needs to consider before developing their work in this area. We will be adding to this guide as our experience develops and your thoughts and feedback would be appreciated.

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The Facts and Figures

It is estimated that there are about 9 million people in the UK who are deaf or hard of hearing, including 70-100,000 deaf people in England and Wales whose language of preference is BSL.

Many Deaf people who communicate through BSL consider themselves part of a distinct community with a common language and cultural heritage.

BSL is a language in its own right: it is a visual language with its own grammatical structure and syntax. It is important to be conscious that it is distinct from spoken or written English.

There is a thriving Deaf culture across all geographical locations of the UK, meeting in clubs and pubs, holding their own sports and social events, and engaging in the political process.

British Sign Language (BSL) was officially recognised by the UK government in 2003. It was given legal recognition in Scotland in 2015.

It is the fourth largest language used in the UK, after English, Welsh and Scots Gaelic.

However

Deaf/BSL users generally leave school with fewer qualifications and have lower levels of English literacy than the general population.

Ninety percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents, but only 1 in 10 parents learn sign language, which means the child misses out on early language acquisition.

Many people and services are not aware of the experiences of Deaf people and hence remain unsure how to communicate or provide accessible services.

As a result BSL users are:

- Among the most socially excluded in society
- More likely to be unemployed
- More likely to experience mental health problems.

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Terminology

The term 'deaf' can cover a whole range of people:

- 'Deaf' people (with a capital D) are part of the Deaf community and culture, they are sign language users and BSL is their first language. They are culturally Deaf, just like hearing people consider themselves culturally British or French.

- 'deaf' is as a description of someone who is profoundly deaf. They may have lost their hearing through an illness like meningitis.

- 'deafened' people have lost their hearing, perhaps as a consequence of getting older or from being exposed to loud machinery. These people are not likely to use BSL and may be able to lip read or have a reasonable command of English.

- 'hard of hearing' people have some level of hearing and may rely on hearing aids. These people will usually communicate through speech.

- 'deaf-blind' are people who are profoundly deaf and are visually impaired. They have their own version of sign language, based on drawing signs on the palm of their hands.

It may be that in a session you have a variety of different people in your group. You will need to adapt your resources and techniques to meet the different needs of those attending.

For more information about how to engage with the Deaf/BSL community, check out this section on the Citizens Advice website and the Improving Access and Advice: Getting Started Guide

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Practical steps

The following steps are broad practical steps for working with clients who use British Sign Language (BSL).

As with all resources falling under the remit of the financial capability team, this best practise guide is considered to be a live document and will be periodically updated and refreshed. We encourage any local Citizens Advice to contact us with comments, ideas and case-studies that we can incorporate into future versions, in order that we can continue to share good practise across the local Citizens Advice network.

To contact the Citizens Advice Financial Skills for Life team, email us at financial.skills@citizensadvice.org.uk

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Step one: Consider your own knowledge and skills

- Do you already have experience of working with Deaf people?
- Have you completed Deaf awareness training? There is guidance on the CABlink BSL resources page for working with Deaf people.
- Have you completed any introductory training in the use of BSL? Based on the experience of existing CAB trainers, completing a level one module not only aids communication but also helps in establishing mutual respect and trust. Costs are around £150- £250 for a BSL level 1 course.
- Have you talked to an experienced trainer about their work? We would recommend shadowing a colleague wherever possible to see the issues and challenges that can arise.
- Are you familiar with working with interpreters? There is guidance on using interpreters on the CABlink BSL resources page.
- Does your local Citizen Advice website use Browsealoud software? Browsealoud adds text-to-speech functionality to websites. This includes those with dyslexia, learning difficulties, mild visual impairments and those with English as a second language. Many local Citizens Advice offices around England and Wales use Browsealoud to provide audio-visual reinforcement of content on their websites. Information on the software can be found here.

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Step two: Outreach and engagement

Following our existing model of financial capability, we recommend delivery to groups of Deaf people in settings where they already meet, and where they feel comfortable and are more likely to feel able to share their issues and concerns. This includes Deaf centres, linked welfare to work programmes, Deaf schools, etc.

Points to be considered:

- Personal contact – introduce yourself at the centre and find out more about the needs of people who are interested in your training.
- Ask direct questions to find out their preferred communication needs – interpretation, lip reading, speech to text reporting and/or note taking. They may well prefer a combination of approaches.
- Ensure that you don't forget their wider access needs as well – they may experience other disabilities or communication needs independent of their hearing loss which also need to be considered.
- Check if they have an interpreter that they already use or if there is a Deaf trainer who you can co-tutor with. Only use registered, qualified BSL interpreters (NRCPD Registered). Click here for our guide to using BSL interpreters. They will be trained to a sufficiently high standard and committed to a professional code of practice to enable them to interpret accurately and professionally in all situations. **In no circumstances** should anyone be employed who does not have at least a Signature Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting or equivalent.
- Find out if your training can be linked to other services that are needed, e.g. a financial capability session linked to an outreach advice session can be effective.
- Check if participants have a Carer or Personal Assistant who will be attending with them – they can be pivotal to your work.

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Step three: Preparing resources

- Be aware that Deaf people, like anyone, may have limited English literacy skills – ensure all resources are written in plain English and where possible use diagrams / illustrations. Experienced trainers recommend flip charts or PowerPoint presentations using clear language and plain styles.

- BSL is a visual language, meaning that BSL sentence structure is completely different to written English. For example:

Did Gillian Guy appear on TV last week?

would be signed:

LAST WEEK….TV….GILLIAN GUY (you will need to finger spell these names letter by letter)….ON

(the facial expression would indicate a question)

- Avoid jargon and remember that not all words translate into sign language, e.g. 'provider' does not have an equivalent term in BSL.

- Ensure that any contacts / further information you provide are accessible by Deaf people – e.g. no landline phone numbers!

- Consider the practical exercises that you want to incorporate in your session – e.g. use of debts and consequences cards and money bingo are good ways to use resources that rely on visual skills to get their message across.

- Keep the session content focused and short – working through an interpreter will add extra time. Interpreting involves in-depth concentration which can only be sustained for a short period. If you need to deliver sessions that last longer than 45 minutes, if the subject content is complex, or you want the group to carry out a range of learning activities, you may need to involve two interpreters. You may also wish to consider having trained signers as 'facilitators' to help.

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Step four: Before the session

- It is helpful to send presentations and handouts to the interpreter before the session.
- Arrange to meet with the interpreter before the session starts and discuss the content of your session, its purpose, and the context in which it is being delivered. This will help them to ensure that they understand the context and background to your session and the content of what you are intending to cover in your training session.
- Take along the materials you plan to use (if you haven't already sent them in advance). Ensure these are well laid out using illustrations, and that where text is used it follows our recommendations on accessibility.
- Make sure the interpreter knows where the venue is, and how to get there. Remember, without them the session won't be able to happen!

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Step five: Delivering sessions

- If you are able to use basic sign language to introduce yourself, this will help to put the group you are addressing at ease.
- Make sure you have the group's attention before you start speaking: maintain eye contact, speaking directly to them so that participants have the option to lip read.
- If you are delivering a session to a mixed group of hearing and non-hearing people, make sure you leave plenty of time so that everyone feels included. Also explain that only one person should speak at a time otherwise the signer won't be able to translate.
- Always speak to the participants and not to the interpreter.
- Speak clearly and in your normal speed and manner. Don't shout or exaggerate your lip movements and be natural with facial expressions and gestures.
- Keep things simple. Use plain English. Always substitute long words for short words where possible. For example, say 'use' not 'utilise' and 'buy' not 'purchase'.
- Keep long hair away from your face so that you have good eye contact with participants and they can see your facial expressions.
- Ensure that the room has good lighting and is away from other distractions.
- Be prepared to spend longer delivering a session than you would to hearing participants.
- Communicating in BSL can cause fatigue on the eyes, so you should have regular pauses to let both the interpreter and the participants have a rest.

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Further information and resources

The **Royal Association for Deaf People** (**RAD**) is committed to supporting Deaf culture, history and language. They provide a wide range of services which Deaf people want and need, all of which are delivered in British Sign Language (BSL). We also work with mainstream services to help them to ensure their services are accessible to Deaf people. They can be found here at www.royaldeaf.org.uk/

Signature advise government and businesses in ways they can improve their services, and campaign and lobby for better access. They are also the leading awarding body for qualifications in British & Irish Sign Language, deafblind communication and other deaf communication methods. Signature can be found at www.signature.org.uk

Deafsign is a small site with useful resources for working with BSL users. It can be found at www.deafsign.com/ds/

The **Royal National Institute for Deaf People** is actually known as **Action on Hearing Loss**, and can be found here at www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/. They are experts in providing support for people with hearing loss and tinnitus, as well as offering practical advice to help people protect their hearing.

Those wanting to learn BSL should go to www.british-sign.co.uk/, which is where the website **British Sign** promotes its courses and information.

Sense is a national charity that supports people who are deafblind, have sensory impairments or have complex needs enjoy more independent lives. They can be found here at www.sense.org.uk/

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The **British Deaf Association** exists to develop greater understanding in the country as a whole of what deafness means, and to raise money to finance its community development and campaigning programme. Established in 1886, its current incarnation can be found at www.bda.org.uk

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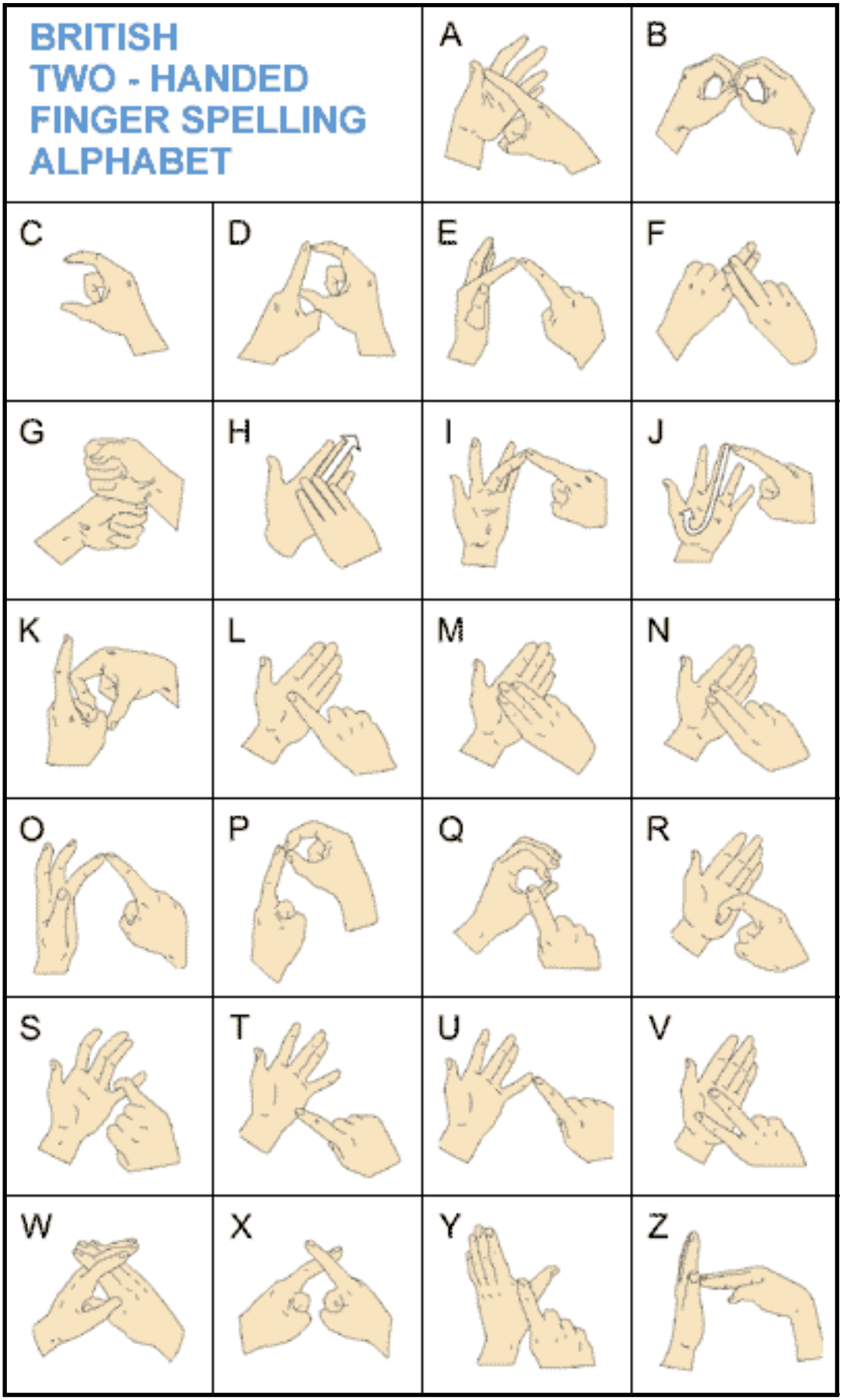
Appendix – The BSL alphabet



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ASLI
Association of Sign Language Interpreters

Sign Language Interpreters

Who is this leaflet for?

Anyone who needs to know about Sign Language Interpreters for deaf people, when to provide one and how to book one.

This leaflet contains information about when Deaf people use an interpreter, how to ensure the interpreter is registered and why it is important that they are registered.

When do Deaf people use an interpreter?

Deaf people need an interpreter whenever important communication is taking place and it is their right to access that information.

For example:

- Hospitals, GPs and other NHS services
- Job interviews or at the job centre
- At work: training courses, meeting, calls
- Schools, colleges and universities
- Attending a public meeting or council appointment
- Attending court or a police station
- Banks, other providers of services

What is a registered Sign Language Interpreter?

The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) is a registration system for interpreters with qualification requirements for admission to each registration category. See below:

A Registered Interpreter
(Yellow badge):

- Has reached the National Occupational Standards in Interpreting
- Can work in **most** areas depending on their experience including as courts, police, conferences, mental health and medical.

A Trainee Interpreter
(Purple badge):

- Has not yet completed their full interpreter training.
- Has the level 6 standard in British Sign Language
- Can work in **some** areas depending on their experience

What is a CSW/Communicator?

A Communication Support Worker (CSW) or Communicator is someone who has passed some qualifications in BSL but has had no interpreter training and cannot be registered as a Sign Language interpreter.

How do you know the interpreter is a registered interpreter?

All registered Interpreters have an ID card so **check the badge!** Remember to check the date.

Registered Interpreter (Yellow badge)

Trainee Interpreter (Purple badge)

- Has achieved or is working towards the National Occupational Standards.
- Has a police check (CRB Enhanced Disclosure)
- Has Professional Indemnity insurance
- Has agreed to follow a Code of Conduct (including behaving professionally, being impartial and maintaining confidentiality).
- Can be made subject to a complaints procedure (NRCPD)

What rights do Deaf people have to a registered interpreter?

The Equality Act 2010 service providers must make "reasonable adjustments" to ensure they are fully accessible, including providing an interpreter.

NHS guidelines on the provision of interpreters within the Health Service, "Doubly Disabled Equality for Disabled people in the new NHS Access to Services", NHS Executive (1999), clearly states that only registered Interpreters should be used.

Police, Courts & other Legal Agencies
Only registered interpreters should be used for legal bookings as per guidelines.

Access to Work
ASLI supports the National Access to Work Delivery Managers' Policy Statement (2007) that the recommended minimum requirement for the engagement of an interpreter is a trainee or registered interpreter with the NRCPD.

The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) holds the register of interpreters. If you are using a registered interpreter and have a complaint, you can inform the NRCPD and they will investigate. You cannot complain about an interpreter who is not registered.

Further Information

www.asli.org.uk
www.nrcpd.org.uk
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
www.direct.gov.uk
www.cilt.org.uk
www.iti.org.uk

How do you find an Interpreter?

- ASLI's free online directory.
- The NRCPD website (see further information) has a free online directory of registered and trainee interpreters.
- Through an agency
- Online/video interpreting service.

Booking an Interpreter?

Remember to book in advance and provide as much detail as possible such as:

- **When?** Dates and times are important.
- **Where?** The address of the office or place where you need the interpreter.
- **Why?** The purpose of the booking, e.g. meeting, training or supervision.
- **Who?** The name of the Deaf person and explain who else will be attending.
- **What?** Additional details will help you get the most suitable interpreter.

Interpreting is demanding. For health and safety reasons and the access needs of Deaf people two interpreters are recommended for intense bookings over an hour such as a meeting or training course.

Video/online interpreting services can be used for short meetings. It is not advisable to use them for bookings over 40 minutes.

Who pays for the interpreter?

Some funding is available such as Access to Work (DWP) or Disabled Students Allowance. Some services have a centralised booking service such as hospitals.
In other instances it is the responsibility of the service provider under the Equality Act 2010.

What does ASLI do?

ASLI is the professional association and support network for British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters in the UK. Our membership includes those who work as interpreters and people who support our aims.

The aims of the Association are:

- To encourage good practice in sign language interpreting
- To represent the interests and views of sign language interpreters and the interpreting profession in the UK.

The aims are achieved by:

- National and regional meetings
- Developing and implementing policy, guides and statements
- Encouraging training and research
- Providing information to interpreters and users of interpreting services
- Providing support to interpreters
- Representing interpreters and liaising with other organisations involved in the fields of deafness and interpreting

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Who this pack is for

Main user groups: Advisers and support workers working with BSL users across England and Wales
Other user groups: anyone who has an interest in providing community learning

Acknowledgments

Thanks to all who contributed. Their expertise and guidance was invaluable.

Updates

Although every care has been taken to ensure that this pack is accurate at the time of delivery, many of the areas contained within will evolve and change over time. This means that there may be short periods where the information in this toolkit will require updating. All the Citizens Advice financial capability toolkits will be subject to regular reviews to ensure that these occasions are kept to a bare minimum.

Feedback

We'd be happy to get your feedback on this toolkit, and in fact on any of the financial capability resources. You can email us at Financial.skills@citizensadvice.org.uk

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