

The role of each other

- Regular worship in Sign Language.
- Baptisms, weddings and funerals in Sign Language.
- Pastoral care for deaf and hard of hearing people.
- Helping deaf people develop their theological understanding and encouraging spiritual growth.
- Assisting deaf people to discern their own vocation.
- Promoting the Gospel among deaf people.
- Contact with deaf students in schools, deaf clubs and hard of hearing clubs.
- Encouraging the Church to implement the Disability Discrimination Act as it affects deaf and hard of hearing people.
- Advising churches on the consideration of deaf and hard of hearing people attending services; offering advice on Loop Systems and sound enhancement.
- Establish the presence of deaf people within the synodical structures of the Diocese.
- Raising awareness of the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people and their contribution to the life of the church.
- Promoting a positive attitude towards deaf and hard of hearing people.

DISCIPLESHIP AND
MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICER (DEAF AND
DISABLED PEOPLE)

Chaplaincy Among Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in the Diocese of Gloucestershire



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A specialist ministry among deaf people

'Deaf' people with Sign as their first or preferred language, have skills and talents just as hearing people do.

But they also have particular needs that require a ministry by someone with the particular understanding of what it is to be deaf.

Chaplains who minister among deaf people may be deaf themselves or they may be hard of hearing.

Chaplains need to have deaf awareness. That means having a good understanding and a working knowledge of the Deaf community, its culture and its language.

The deaf community

The deaf community means people who were either born deaf or who became deafened in early childhood and who use Sign as their first or preferred language.

Deaf people who in later years identify increasingly with the deaf community and who use Sign Language as their first, or as their preferred language.

Other people (eg. family and friends who identify with deaf culture and who also use Sign are often considered to be also members of the deaf community.

People who are part of the deaf community are often designated deaf with a capital 'D'.

Deaf culture

Deaf culture means sharing in and experiencing a distinctive way of life that is particular to deaf people. Deaf culture is sometimes referred to as the 'Deaf Way'.

It has:

- A strong sense of identity with other deaf people.
- A sharing of the many experiences of life that take place because of deafness and people's attitudes towards it.
- A particular code of behaviour as well as a particular system of beliefs and values.
- Sign language as first or preferred language.

Sign language

British Sign Language (BSL) is a visual language that is not just gesture but which has strict rules covering placement, context, single compound and multi-channel signs.

Other aspects include facial expression and role shift; these are referred to as non-manual features.

Sign is a living, evolving language. Older signs might slip from use and many new signs continue to come into being.

Facts and figures

- In the UK approximately one person in every seven has a hearing loss.
- 2.5million people use hearing aids.
- 50,000 people are profoundly deaf.
- An estimated 365,000 people are deaf-blind.
- In the UK many culturally deaf children leave mainstream schools at sixteen with a reading age below that age level.
- Over 800 babies are born deaf each year. Many more become deaf through illness.
- 90 per cent of deaf children grow up in families who are hearing and who have no experience of deafness.
- In Gloucestershire there are approximately 200 culturally deaf people who are profoundly deaf and use Sign Language.
- In Gloucestershire there are approximately 500 children and young people who have a hearing impairment.
- Hard of hearing people often face a real sense of isolation, feeling as though they live between the two worlds of deaf and hearing.
- One of the greatest concerns of deaf people is that of being denied equal access to things that hearing people will often take for granted.