

How you can make your resources accessible to deaf children and young people

There are more than 45,000 deaf children and young people in the UK, and four more babies are born deaf every day. Many of these children will want to access the information you provide, just like other children.

It is important for your organisation to think carefully of the needs of your audience so that they can get the most out of what you're offering. Some children and young people, including those who are deaf¹, will have difficulty accessing your information.

This factsheet has been created by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) to help you provide information that is inclusive to deaf children and young people. The suggestions made in this guidance will also make your content more engaging and useful for other children and young people.

¹ For information on how to make your content accessible to deafblind children, please contact Sense.

***NDCS uses the word 'deaf' to refer to all levels of hearing loss.**

What does it mean to be deaf?

Deafness in childhood has a major impact on the acquisition of spoken language which is critical to a child's social, emotional and intellectual development.

Deafness therefore will impact on a range of skills that children need to learn, including; language development; literacy skills and incidental learning (such as learning by overhearing others).

Deaf children and young people can do anything other children can do, given the right support. As the reading age of many deaf children is still substantially lower than hearing children of the same age, the onus is on you to think of the best possible way to deliver information to them.



How do deaf children and young people communicate?

There are a number of ways that a deaf child may learn to communicate and this will have an effect on how they receive and process information.

Some children will have learned to communicate using **British Sign Language (BSL)**. BSL is a language of its own, which uses different grammar and word order to English, and involves making signs using the hands. It has a different word order to English and is a visual language.

Others will have used, **cued speech**, which uses hand shapes to represent the sounds of English visually or **Sign Supported English (SSE)** which utilises signs from BSL but with English word order or a combination of various modes of communication called Total Communication.

Some will have practised **using their residual hearing** well enough to develop good listening and speaking skills, or will use **lipreading** to read words from the lip patterns of the person speaking.

Many children will use a combination of all of these to communicate. Whichever method a deaf child uses, it's important to be aware that the written word may present difficulties.

Deaf children are often reliant on family, friends or professionals to give them information, and so it is important that as they get older they are able to access information themselves, rather than someone else doing it for them.

How to make your online content more accessible

The following tips will help to make your content accessible for deaf young people, but will also make it more appealing to other young people.

Put yourself in their shoes

- What age range are you speaking to – children or teenagers?
- What is going on in their lives at school, home or in friendship groups?
- Would including a deaf character in the resource appeal to your audience?

Know what you want to say and be clear in saying it

- Have one main message and break it down into simple steps, such as 'Fill in the form. Email it to us'.
- A deaf child or young person may need assistance to carry out an instruction.
- Add something simple like 'ask an adult to help you out', for example.



Keep it simple

- Use easier words, like *place* instead of *venue*; *help* instead of *facilitate*; *start* instead of *commence*.
- Keep it short and snappy. For example, 'The course is available to young people and consists of six sessions designed to promote positive mental health and good emotional well-being' can be turned into 'Angry? Sad? Excited? Come and talk about your feelings.'
- Try to avoid confusing language, such as idioms like 'it's raining cats and dogs'. This is hard for deaf young people to understand.



Think visually

- Think about the layout of your page. Large blocks of text are unappealing and your reader will switch off.
- Use images, animation and colour to illustrate what you want to say.
- Pull out key information using box-outs, sub-headings, bullet points and bold font.
- Video and animation can bring a subject to life, especially for deaf children and young people who may be more used to communicating visually. Videos or animations should have captions/subtitles and be accompanied by a transcript. It is also preferable to offer British Sign Language (BSL) translation.

Want feedback?

Ask your audience for feedback on the information you provide by adding a feedback

Producing new video content for children and young people

If you're creating a video with children and young people in mind, think about how much information they will be able to process. If you're trying to convey a lot of information, it will need to be done in an accessible way.

Using imagery, cartoons, animation, flick-through books, picture stories etc. and breaking up information into small, manageable sections, rather than someone talking for a long time into the camera, is more likely to make an impact.

Showing emotions and body language are important to let deaf children know what is happening.

Holding up placards, other visual clues and making a clear change in topic are all helpful devices to use.

Bring your content to life by producing engaging and vibrant content, such as this video produced for deaf young people on choices after school: <http://youngpeople.ndcsbuzz.org.uk/topics/ref:N4F74605602A3D/title:How+many+of+you+are+there%3F/>.

Include deaf children and children with other disabilities in your videos. It's important to show positive role models.

Finding the right service

Video production companies will be able to consult with you on what visual techniques will engage your target audience.

If you want to add subtitles or BSL translation to your video content, try searching online to find the right service for you. The following organisations are just a few offering various services:
Deaf Friendly Business Solutions
ITV SignPost
Red Bee Media
Remark!
Sign Solutions

Making video content accessible for deaf children and young people

If you already have video content in place but want to make sure that deaf users can access it, subtitling and/or British Sign Language (BSL) translation are two options available to you. Remember in addition to provide a transcript for your video.

Subtitles

The terms 'caption' and 'subtitle' have similar definitions. Captions commonly refer to on-screen text specifically designed for deaf viewers, and include descriptions of sounds and music. Subtitles are straight transcriptions or translations of dialogue. For the purposes of this guidance, we have chosen to use the more commonly known term 'subtitle'.

Having subtitles can help any child or young person to understand what is being said on screen, not just deaf users.

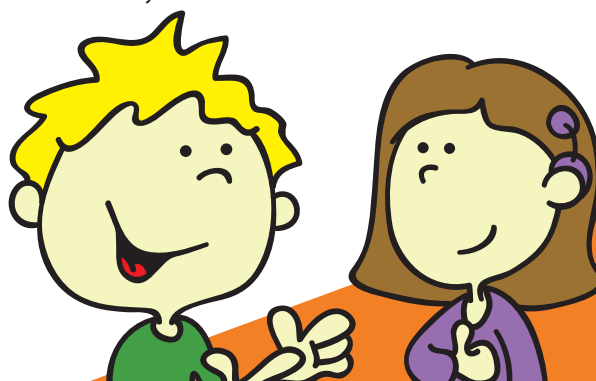
Subtitling your video content is relatively straightforward and can mean the difference between a deaf young person being able to access your message or not.

There are some free subtitling applications available on the internet, which can be used for adding subtitles to your videos in-house. This can be time consuming and often inaccurate, so it is preferable to pay a professional company to subtitle your content.

BSL translation

British Sign Language (BSL) is a language in its own right, with its own rules and grammar. BSL is the language of the UK Deaf community and it is estimated that about 50,000–70,000 people use it as their first or preferred language. For those children who use BSL as their language of choice, offering BSL translation is a must. Offering BSL translation on your video content is quick and relatively inexpensive to do. It will also show deaf people how seriously you take accessibility into account.

The following article is one example of guidance on how to add subtitles and transcripts to your content: <http://support.google.com/youtube/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=guide.cs&guide=2734661>



Why is accessibility important?

The Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010, replacing the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995. The Act makes clear that it is unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person because of their disability, unless this behaviour can be justified.

The Act states it is against the law to

- refuse to serve a disabled person
- offer a disabled person a service that is not as good as a service being offered to a non-disabled person
- provide a service to a disabled person on different terms to those given to a non-disabled person
- provide goods or services in a way that makes it unreasonably difficult or impossible for a disabled person to use the goods or service.

It is good practice and the responsibility of each organisation to take reasonable steps to provide information in an accessible format, such as subtitles and BSL. By making your content accessible in this way, you could potentially widen your audience to include over 45,000 deaf children and young people across the UK.

Any queries?

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) is here to help you if you have any further queries on accessibility for deaf children and young people.

If you have a question or you'd like to give us feedback, please contact us at cyp@ndcs.org.uk or check out our website for more information: www.ndcs.org.uk.

