

Facts and Figures on Deafness - The Hidden Condition.

Deafness is measured in decibels of hearing loss (dB HL). It is graded as follows:

- 20-40 dB HL: mild, cannot hear whispers.
- 41-70 dB HL: moderate, cannot hear conversational speech.
- 71-95 dB HL: severe, cannot hear shouting.*
- 95 dB HL: profound, cannot hear sounds at all.*

There are 900,000 people with extreme* categories (1-in-74 of the UK). Including age-related hearing loss, there are **11 million** people affected (1-in-6 of the UK). The UK Census tells us that 65% of people using BSL as their main language cannot speak English either 'at all' or cannot speak it 'very well'.

BSL is an official Minority Language in the UK, such as Welsh, Cornish or Gaelic. The latter have legal protection – BSL does not. This means that young BSL users are not taught in their own language. Without 'phonetic input' reading becomes excruciatingly difficult. 50% of the Deaf graduate with the reading age of a 9 year-old. 30% are deemed functionally illiterate. They are not taught, or judged in their own language – but in one they cannot hear.

It is impossible for monolingual BSL users to comprehend English fully. They must have information in their own language. The new law ensures this for NHS patients, but until BSL is granted 'legal status' it won't happen in other public institutions such as schools, where the bench mark is always set in English.

You may not go to the foreign country you learnt the language for, but if you want to prepare for something almost guaranteed to affect you40% of fifty year-olds have started to have hearing loss. This increases to **70% by the age of seventy**.

Deaf BSL users must rely on hearing '*English-to-BSL*' interpreters. Due to funding cuts which have discouraged learning across the board, there are now only 1000 registered qualified '*English-to-BSL*' interpreters for the whole of the UK. In the South-East it is estimated that for every BSL user with an interpreter booked – there were 20 people that couldn't have one at all. In 2014, 68% of people requesting a BSL interpreter for their doctors' appointment, didn't get one.

Could this be a role for you in the future?

At Dot Sign Language, our goal is for every school, college, supermarket, doctors, dentist and any customer-facing business to have a '*go to*' person with BSL skills. If you would like us to run a Deaf Awareness event at your workplace or teach BSL to your staff, we will tailor the session to fit your schedule and your needs.

If you have a Deaf child, please speak to us about funding.

Don't learn a foreign language – learn a British one.



Dedicated to Raising
Deaf Awareness.

To arrange Deaf Awareness training in your department: Telephone Voice: 01428 751561, Text: 07989 017945. Visit www.dotsignlanguage.co.uk Email: bsl@dotsignlanguage.co.uk

Dot Sign Language® is a 'Not-for-Profit' organisation devoted to promoting D/deaf awareness, British Sign Language and equal access to opportunities for the D/deaf. Reg No 07379903.