

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

11 July 2019

British Sign Language (BSL) Charter

Report of Councillor M Thacker MBE, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Overall Strategic Leadership

Purpose of the Report

- The purpose of this report is to outline the benefits of signing up to the British Sign Language (BSL) Charter and commit to the charter pledges.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 Deaf people should have equal access to Council services and access to British Sign Language /English Interpreters whenever they are needed. The Deaf community is a linguistic community with a rich history, identity, language and culture.
- 1.2 The British Deaf Association (BDA), in partnership with Deaf organisations and local authority officers, has written the British Sign Language Charter and toolkit to achieve equal access to services for Deaf people and their communities.

It contains five pledges:

1. Consult formally and informally with the local Deaf community on a regular basis
 2. Ensure access for Deaf people to information and services
 3. Support Deaf children and families
 4. Ensure staff working with Deaf people can communicate effectively using British Sign Language
 5. Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language.
- 1.3 It is hoped that in delivering on the pledges and any associated action plan, the Charter aims to help the Council to:
- Remove direct and indirect discrimination against Deaf people.
 - Empower local Deaf communities.
 - Resolve any conflicts between services provided and Deaf people.
 - Increase awareness of Deaf issues and BSL issues.
 - Be a community lead, promoting the BSL Charter to partner organisations in our community.

The Charter also highlights good practice and will build the Council's capacity to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and build good relations with the Deaf community.

- 1.4 Signing the Charter is the beginning of the process. Should the recommendations of this report be agreed, the BDA will work with the council to deliver the pledges over a period of 3 years.
- 1.5 Following the signing of the charter is when the hard work really begins. The next steps are to set up a Charter Group or Partnership Working Group and then complete a Self-Assessment which is done with support from the BDA and in conjunction with a local Deaf Forum or Action Group.

The council can then utilise the BDA's Toolkit to see what we are already doing well and where the gaps might be. There is an initial audit of each department. All this information is collated and a three-year Action Plan is created. Some adaptations can be done quickly, at very little cost and other issues may be more complex, need more time to develop and require further reports seeking funding.

As outlined in 1.4, BDA will support the process with their considerable experience and expertise. The cost of this support is estimated to be as follows:

Year 1 – Estimated Cost £2500

- Initial contact
- Formal introduction
- Agreement
- Official signing
- Initial Audit

Year 2 - Estimated Cost £2500

- Action plan development
- Putting it into practice

Year 3 - Estimated Cost £2500

- Putting it into practice (continued)
- Review/assessment
- Award achievement

Ongoing - Estimated Cost £600 /yr

- Monitoring, ongoing support and annual revalidation

Total estimated cost for BDA support = £9500 which is for annual support costs and 3 years monitoring.

It should be noted that these costs are estimated for an organisation that has not had dealings with Deaf people previously and therefore it is likely an organisation that has already got procedures or plans in place to support Deaf people will not have to pay the full charge. The actual cost will be negotiated based upon the specific support required.

- 1.6 Without pre-empting the outcome of the above process but in order to give an indication of the type of actions to expect in any such action plan, below is all of the five pledges with indicative actions the council may expect:

Pledge 1 – Consult formally and informally with the local Deaf community on a regular basis

- Building upon the promotion of the signing of the agreement, engage and establish an effective local panel of representatives from the deaf community.
- Commit to an annual/bi-annual open engagement event with the local deaf community.

Pledge 2 - Ensure access for Deaf people to information and services

- Ensure staff receive British Sign Language Awareness/Deaf Equality training, including information about how to communicate with deaf people. It should be noted that we do have existing staff who have completed BSL training.
- Use qualified and registered British Sign Language/English interpreters.
- Review and adapt public information to be more British Sign Language accessible, for example on websites, and using technology such as SMS messaging, textphones, faxes and videophones/webcams.
- Ensure all public information is accessible to deaf British Sign Language users.

Pledge 3 - Support Deaf children and families

- Ensure that deaf children/families are represented on consultation panel
- Provide opportunities for Deaf children to meet with Deaf peers and role models.
- Raise awareness of British Sign Language and Deaf culture within schools and community organisations.

Pledge 4 - Ensure staff working with Deaf people can communicate effectively using British Sign Language

- Provide deaf awareness training for front-line staff and establish access to British Sign Language interpretation.
- Explore using different technology such as British Sign Language information videos to assist with communication.

Pledge 5 - Promote learning and high quality teaching of British Sign Language

- Work with further education and local schools to promote and increase uptake in BSL training.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The BDA promotes better access to public services for Deaf communities through their British Sign Language Charter. They approached the Council as a potential signatory. The delivery of the pledges within the British Sign Language Charter helps the Council to meet its Equality Objectives and general Public Sector Equality Duty as laid out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.2 Signing the charter demonstrates community leadership and that the Council is committed to equal opportunities, working with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups rather than taking decisions and designing services on their behalf.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 The Charter itself does not contain any adverse equality impacts. However, some may be identified when examining individual services. It is anticipated that dialogue with the Deaf community and the BDA, in addition to monitoring the Charter action plan will allow the Council to remove any currently unknown inequalities built in to service deliver.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Do Nothing – The council currently strives to deliver the highest standards of service providing access to all and treating all with respect and fairness. The council will continue to improve access to services. However, the Charter provides access to expert support and a developed tool kit to specifically ensure deaf access is fully considered.
- 4.2 Promote and implement the pledges without signing up to some or all of the charter – It is acknowledged that the council currently lacks the knowledge to effectively implement in a meaningful way the pledges in the Charter. BDA support is a key element in effective delivery of the charter.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

- 5.1.1 The BDA's expertise and knowledge to support the successful implementation of the BSL Charter is estimated to be £9,500. There is likely to be training costs for specific skills and general awareness raising with our own staff however, these costs are anticipated to be funded through existing training budgets. Any significant costs arising from implementation of the action plan will be subject to a further report.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

- 5.2.1 No direct implications however, signing the British Sign Language Charter will help the Council meet its general equality duty, which is set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

5.3 Human Resources Implications

- 5.3.1 Some training in relation to meeting the pledge obligations but nothing consider more than 'business as usual'.

6 Recommendations

That Cabinet agree to:

- 6.1 Sign up to all five pledges of the British Sign Language Charter.
- 6.2 Through consultation with the deaf community and working with the BDA, develop and implement a 3 year action plan to ensure all 5 pledges are delivered.

- 6.3 Allocate a budget of £9500 to fund 3 years support from BDA to assist the development and delivery of the action plan.
- 6.4 To request that Rykneld Homes consider the BDA British Sign Language charter and adopt each of the charter pledges relevant to their service.

7 Decision Information

<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: <i>BDC: Revenue - £75,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £150,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Capital - £250,000</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No
<p>Has the relevant Portfolio Holder been informed</p>	Yes
<p>District Wards Affected</p>	All Wards (Indirectly)
<p>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</p>	<p>Corporate Plan Core Value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value peoples differences and we will treat everyone fairly and with respect. <p>Corporate Plan Priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value peoples differences and we will treat everyone fairly and with respect. • Increasing customer confidence and satisfaction with our services • Improving customer contact and access to information • Championing equality and diversity • Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	BSL Charter (https://bda.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BDA-BSL-Charter-2017.pdf)
<p>Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)</p>	
Report Author	Contact Number
Matt Broughton HOS Partnerships & Transformation	2210

AGIN 8(a) (CAB 0711) 2019 - BSL