**Information for Social Care in relation to working with Deaf Children and young people**

**Background Information**

* 90 % Deaf children are born to hearing parents.
* Deafness can have a severe impact upon the development of a secure attachment between caregiver and child
* Deafness can have a significant impact upon communication between caregiver and child and in turn this can affect the ability of parents / carers to meet basic needs effectively.
* Deafness can be a barrier to accessing language, communication and incidental learning.
* Many deaf children have delayed theory of mind and delayed social and emotional development as a result.
* Many deaf children do not have their views heard and taken on board because of lack of access to communication and information. Many professionals assume a level of understanding due to the child’s age which is often an inaccurate assumption of understanding.
* Do not assume that a deaf child who is able to use their voice clearly is able to understand spoken language. They may also struggle to understand written English their level of spoken ability does not always match their understanding of written English.
* Deaf children are very good at being able to disguise their lack of understanding by answering with what they think an adult wants to hear, using positive facial expressions and body language.
* Deaf children often struggle with abstract concepts and need concrete language and explanations. You may need to be very direct with your questions and use real life objects/pictures/ references

Speak to the specialist staff who know and work with the children for advice about the best way to communicate with them and levels of understanding.

Do not assume that they can lip read or have an understanding of the same vocabulary that other children of their age will understand. Use plain, non-complex language and use gestures, pictures, visuals to help

Deaf children are cued into facial expressions and body language and so you should be mindful of this when communicating with them. For example, a ‘concerned’ face could be perceived as a ‘cross’ face and this could affect your communication with the child.

**If a child is a British Sign Language user there are a number of additional factors that need to be considered and protocols to follow:**

Deaf children who use spoken English may also need their understanding scaffolding with the use of Sign Supported English or British Sign Language (BSL):

* You must use an appropriately qualified professional to provide the BSL interpretation – a fully qualified BSL / English interpreter is required for section 47 assessments, meetings, reviews.
* It is not acceptable to use a person who ‘knows a few signs’ or can sign a bit’ Level 6 is the minimum acceptable level for a conversation unless it is a member of staff who works with the child regularly and approved by the lead teacher of the deaf.
* You should not use any member of the child’s family to interpret.
* BSL is a visual language with its own grammar structure. It does not follow the same word order as spoken and written English and there are many words in the English language which do not feature in BSL due to its complex grammar structure.
* Deaf children who are BSL users will often struggle to understand written English. Writing things down is NOT a substitute for an appropriately qualified BSL interpreter and should not be used in the event of an interpreter not being available.
* Deaf children may become frustrated, dysregulated and upset if a meeting goes ahead without a BSL interpreter as they will not have access to the discussion / information
* If an interpreter is not available, any meeting should be rescheduled.
* Many profoundly deaf children will also need a **Deaf Relay Interpreter** present as well as a BSL / English interpreter to ensure full understanding. **The specialist staff who work in school with these children will be able to tell you if this is the case and will usually be able to provide you with a member of staff to carry out this role**.
* BSL interpreters can be difficult to book and are often not available at short notice. It is advisable to block book for any upcoming meetings as soon as you can. E.g. if you know that you will need an interpreter for core group meetings every 6 weeks – fix the dates at the earliest stage and book the interpreters.
* For any meeting longer than 1hr you will usually require 2 interpreters.
* Please be aware that the same applies to any parent / carer who is Deaf.
* In order to book an interpreter, contact Morley Street Resource Centre. **bsl.interpreting@bradford.gov.uk****or 01274 435001/435019**
* If they are unable to provide one, then you can look at the following websites to try and book a freelance interpreter:
	+ NRCPD
	+ Yorkshire BSL Interpreters
	+ RBSLI
	+ Visual Language Professionals
	+ ASLI

There are also a range of online interpreting services that can be used at short notice or in an emergency if you are unable to book an interpreter

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For further advice please contact Karen Turner, Service Manager – deaf and MSI Children’s Service:

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