

Deaf Communication Support in Derbyshire – Engagement Report

In March of 2021, the Adult Social Care and Health Commissioning Team (ASCH) at Derbyshire County Council (DCC) undertook an engagement exercise with members of the Deaf Community.

The contract for the Deaf Communication Support Service, currently delivered across the county by Communication Unlimited, is due to end in March 2022. The service offers communication support including British Sign Language interpretation. We wanted to gather information about how the Deaf Community in Derbyshire feel about the current communication support service and understand what is useful and / or most important to them to inform the re-procurement of the service. The engagement exercise hopes to ensure that we are listening to and co-producing the service with the support of the people who use it.

Methodology:

The period of engagement took place from Monday 8 February to Friday 26 March. The engagement used a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative questions to gather respondents' views.

To encourage participation and meet communication needs we offered a range of ways to complete the engagement questions: a 3 way video call with a DCC staff member and a BSL interpreter, Text, WhatsApp video call, email, a paper copy in the post (with pre-paid return envelope) and, latterly an online version of the survey. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to offer face-to-face opportunities such as focus groups.

The engagement opportunity was promoted via partners including: DCC Adult Care Sensory Team, The British Deaf Association and Deaf-initely Women and Communication Unlimited (the current provider of the service). We'd like to thank all partners who supported the engagement and we give a special thanks given to Deaf-initely Women for developing, hosting and promoting the online version of the survey to enhance ease of access.

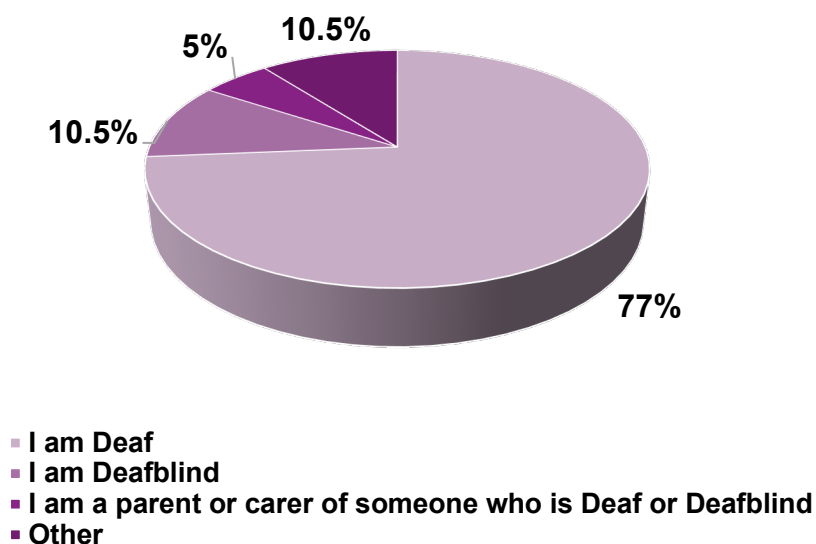
The engagement questionnaire was made up of 17 questions around communication preferences, accessing communication support, emergency communication support, information and advice and general thoughts about the service offer/how it could be improved. A total of 21 people completed the engagement, however not all respondents answered all of the questions. The majority completed a paper form and returned by post or filled in the questions online.

Free text comments throughout this report pick out the key themes of respondents' answers.

Your Support Needs

This section asked respondents about their support needs and which form of interpretation/communication support they use to meet their needs.

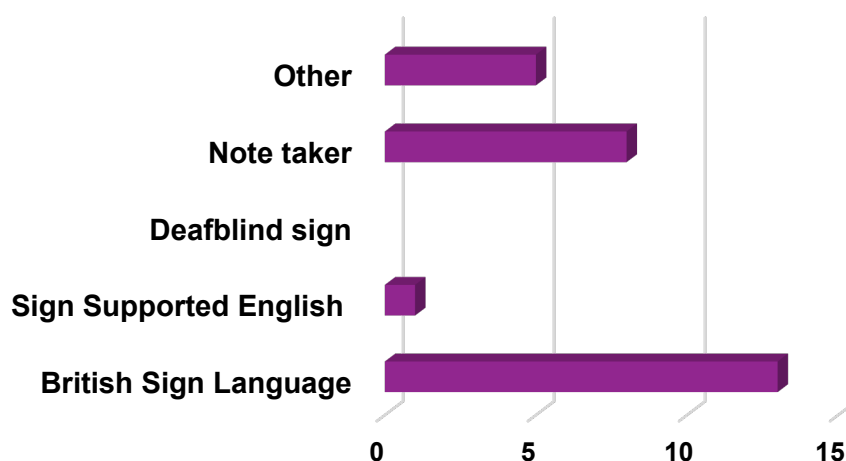
Which of the following best describes you?



Of those who selected 'other', one person described themselves as 'Deaf with speech' and another explained they were 'deaf in one ear and hard of hearing in the other'.

Please tell us about your communication support needs

Respondents were advised they could select all options that were applicable to them.



Of those who selected 'other', 2 people stated they used captions or subtitles on online platforms video call such as Teams or Zoom, 2 use lip reading and 1 uses the support of a personal assistant.

Communication Preferences

The first group of questions asked respondents about their communication preferences and which platforms / methods they found most useful.

Please rank communication support methods in order of your preference with 1 being most helpful or important to you and 7 being the least helpful or important

In order of preference the responses were:

Method of communication	Order of preference
Online video calls / meetings (Teams/Zoom) with an interpreter	1
Face to face communication with an interpreter	2
Online written communication (emails, text, instant messaging)	3
Staffed text facility	4
Smartphone apps (WhatsApp, Facebook)	5
Sign-live Service / 3-way video call BSL interpreting service	=6
Staffed telephone line	=6

Please note that some respondents struggled to complete this question correctly as they found the way it was asked was too complex. We have noted this and will take this learning into future engagement.

Various respondents pointed out that auto generated captions on apps and online meeting platforms were only useful if they are accurate.

Is there a different way you would like to communicate?

“People to speak clearly and use simpler English.”

“I get very stressed with telephone calls so prefer texts or emails.”

“Video chat with places like banks.”

“Making more accessible options for Deaf people to choose.”

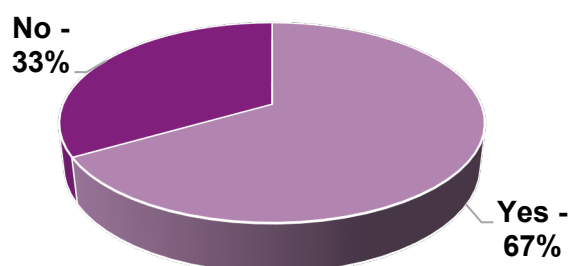
“Teams and Zoom or Google with video calls and verbatim text.”

“Other types of communication support, e.g. captions and electronic notetaking.”

Accessing and Quality of Communications Support

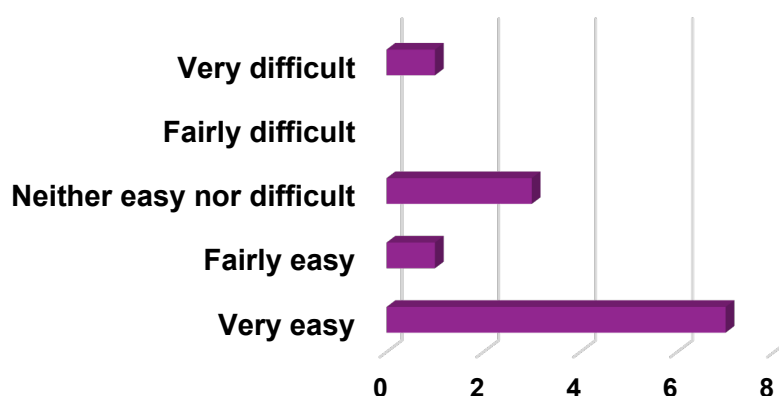
The second group of questions asked people about their experiences in booking and waiting for appointments with interpreters and whether they felt the interpreter was able to support their communication needs.

Have you ever had an appointment with an interpreter?



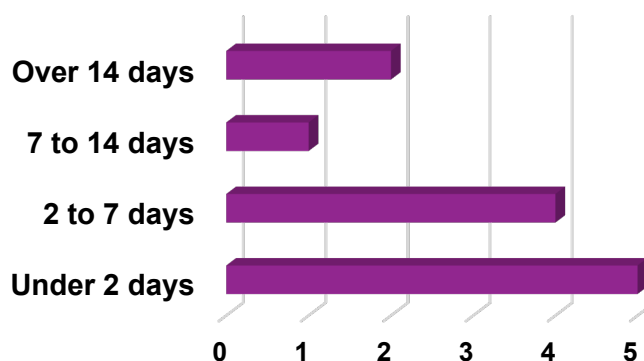
Those who answered no to this question were advised to skip the next 3 questions.

How easy or difficult was it to get an appointment with an interpreter?



12 people answered this question. The results show that 92% of people did not find it difficult to get an appointment.

How long did you have to wait between booking and having an appointment with an interpreter?



12 people answered this question. 75% of people were able to get an appointment within a week.

Did the interpretation support you to talk about more complex matters?

3 people simply answered 'yes'. 1 person stated they did not understand the question.

"The interpretation support helps me to receive clear information. If I am unsure the interpreter assists to ask for clearer details. It makes sure that I understand what is happening at the appointment or at the meeting."

"I would not go to an appointment or meeting if I did not understand what was going on - the interpreter asks for further breakdown of information if needed to explain some complex matters."

"Interpreters have supported me at school, SEND, post 16, audiology, college, GP."

"The interpretation support is perfect for any emergency or visit to GP or dentist (health issues etc)."

"Interpreters always help to clarify the situation however complex and help leave the Deaf person in a better frame of mind."

"Yes, very much so!"

"Yes, for me and the clients I work with who are also Deaf."

Emergency Communication Support

Please tell us what urgent or emergency communication support help would be most useful to you?

"Communication Union (CU) /SignLive are best one for any emergency, but I have to pay to cover the minutes for SignLive Video Relay Service, I would like to see Derbyshire have a link and deal work with SignLive for free services."

"BSL online rather than text message."

"Communication support when dealing with or contacting the police."

"An SSE communication support worker"

"Support at hospital and doctor's appointments."

"Urgent help with things like bank appointments."

"WhatsApp video/text/video emergency phone line with BSL interpretation or verbatim text included."

"BSL interpreters 24 hours / Video Relay Service interpreting."

"BSL videos about different events and situations."

Information and Advice

How could we make more people aware of the Deaf Communication support offer?

“Need more promotion of Deaf communication support from the Council.”

“Advertising and informing other agencies and professionals of what’s available.”

“Promoting on Websites, Social media, Libraries, NHS premises and Derbyshire County Council premises.”

“More leaflets, visuals, videos – tell people how, where, who to contact and what support is available.”

“Promote accessible communications on all websites so Deaf people can request interpreter support in all areas we use”

“Include information with council tax invoices.”

“Training all Derbyshire staff about what’s available.”

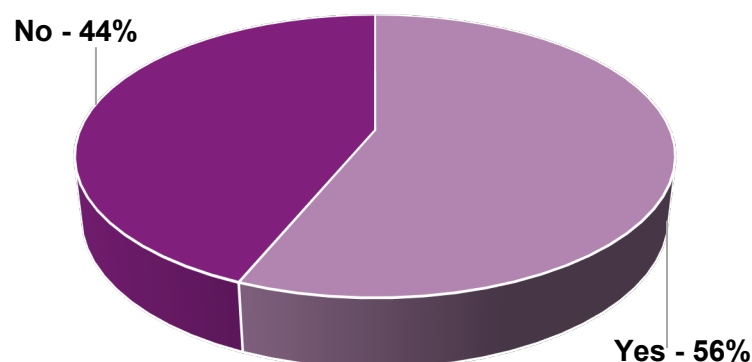
“Advertise on Social Media platforms - add the service’s details on other websites – i.e. all Derbyshire health websites, Derbyshire Deaf organisations websites, Deaf equipment websites, disability services websites, voluntary sector websites.”

“More BSL videos about the service.”

“Letter to every Deaf person from Council or doctor – but information needs to be accessible – what I received recently from the hospital was poor.”

“Consultation with Deaf forums by BDA and others.”

Have you found that COVID-19 has made it harder to get information or advice about Deaf communication support in Derbyshire?



If you choose yes, please tell us your reason for choosing this answer

“Most Deaf people I have spoken to were confused with Covid-19 guidelines. The BBC/ITV have no live BSL interpreter when the Prime Minister announced new guidelines and updates. I would have liked to see the Deaf Communication Support service translate this information to BSL.”

“As services are shut there is a huge reliance on telephone which has caused many Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing people to be isolated which has impacted their mental health and wellbeing.”

“I have not had any information locally. The only support available is with Deaf-initely Women.”

“I requested BSL interpretation support at my Covid-19 vaccination, but I didn’t get one and had to lipread and missed a lot of information” (please note, Nottinghamshire GP).”

“Not harder to find - just so much out there and it’s not very clear.”

“I’ve had to get info / help through my wife’s son who works for the NHS.”

“As services are shut there is a huge reliance on telephone which has caused many Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing people to be isolated which has impacted their mental health and wellbeing.”

“Communication Unlimited support provide fantastic excellent online services and some face-to-face services, mainly in the 9am - 5pm hours.”

“The fact different areas of the UK had different rules made it more confusing as not all BSL interpretations were relevant to all Deaf people.”

“The British Deaf Association’s information about Leicestershire was better than Derbyshire’s, which is a shame.”

Have Your Say About the Current Deaf Communication Support Offer

What are the most helpful things about the current Deaf Communication Support offer and why?

"It is free for Deaf BSL users in Derbyshire."

"Nothing."

"The Deaf community have a strong bond with Communication Unlimited but not Derbyshire County Council's adult social services."

"Communication Unlimited are professional, have good BSL interpreters, have NRCPD badges and have insurance."

"It enables me to lead my life, healthy without worries, stay financially stable and stay in my own home."

"Offering a variety of communication access - as everyone has different needs. BSL, Lipreader, text, Glide, video, CSW (Communication Support Worker) - help with English, deafblind manual."

"Excellent services. Good communication by email /text
Qualified BSL interpreters."

"Good service in arranging for equipment provision."

"It helps me to live in a hearing world safely and with less confusion after leaving Deaf school."

"I am a member of Deaf-inately Women and would always go to them first."

What are the least helpful things about the current Deaf Communication Support offer and why?

"Communication Unlimited work really well within all types of establishments to translate / interpret."

"Deaf people have to wait for an interpreter booking. I am not aware that C.U do verbatim notetaking for Deafblind people who have English as their first language."

"I need support more urgently sometimes."

"Not enough inclusion...mostly focus on BSL."

"The services that we need the communication support need to be aware of how to use interpreters and how to book them for Deaf people who use their service (health, community service, voluntary service, education service, training services)."

"Not being available/lack of team in that area."

"CU being difficult, always busy and think of money."

How do you think the current Deaf Communication Support offer could be improved?

"Communication Unlimited need more staff and Deaf community supporters to offer for any help to deaf people. I know they are very busy everyday."

"More information / vlogs for us to share on social media with BSL, voiceover and captions. And more posters in places."

"More options for video calls."

"Have more out of hours support to allow us to access more functions, training sessions and meetings outside of the 9am - 5pm hours."

"More interpreters."

"Services not assuming straight away that everyone can call, this means that I have to offer an explanation of my communication preferences which makes me feel inferior."

"A worker / communication support worker reaching out a wide range of Deaf and Deafblind people."

"A BSL helpline like British Deaf Association's."

"Greater awareness of their services and how to use them."

Is there anything else you'd like to comment on?

"I would like to have Deaf support workers who have knowledge of the Deaf community, sign language, understand the range of deafness, and have Deaf awareness knowledge."

"I appreciate that BSL interpreters are vital for BSL users, but Deaf/ Hard of Hearing and Deafblind people have different Communication needs. It's very Important to find out Individually which form of communication is used."

"Please involves Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing people in the shaping of services and tender panels as they are the experts."

"In my experience of working with the CU they mainly provide support for profoundly Deaf BSL users. BSL is the main language for culturally Deaf people however many people are deafened later in life so they will not be using BSL at all."

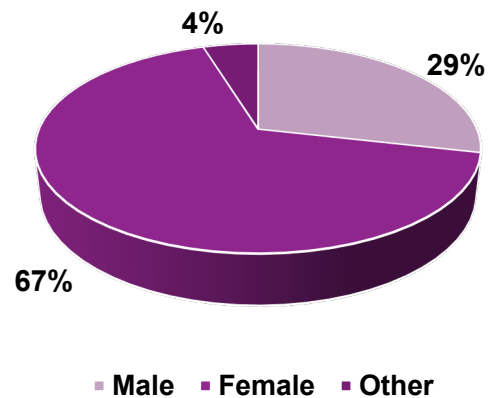
"There is a need for better access to notetakers, or telephone equipment that will type up verbatim English."

"When I have appointments at the doctors or hospital it helps if I can see a screen with my name on it. I never hear it when I get called even though I have usually told reception that I cannot hear when they call me."

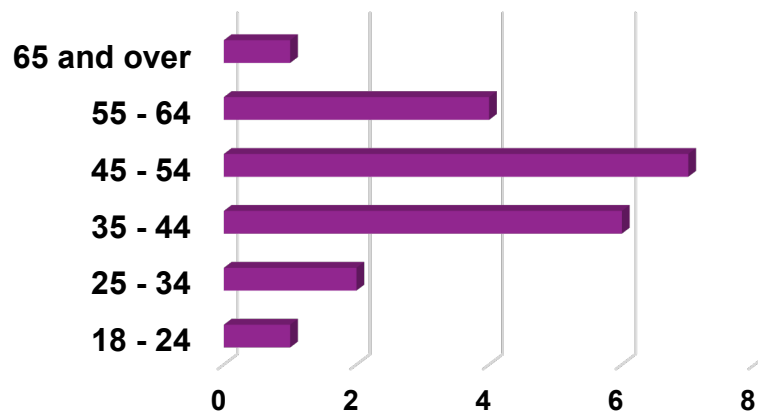
"CU have helped me in my work and in my health - giving me greater confidence to be as independent as I can be. I am very grateful to be in Derbyshire where communication services are provided to help us stay healthy and well"

Demographics of Respondents

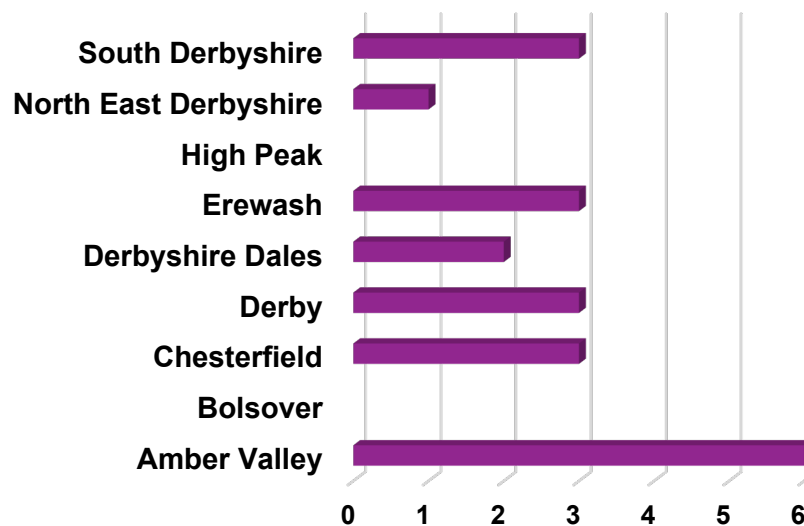
Gender of respondents



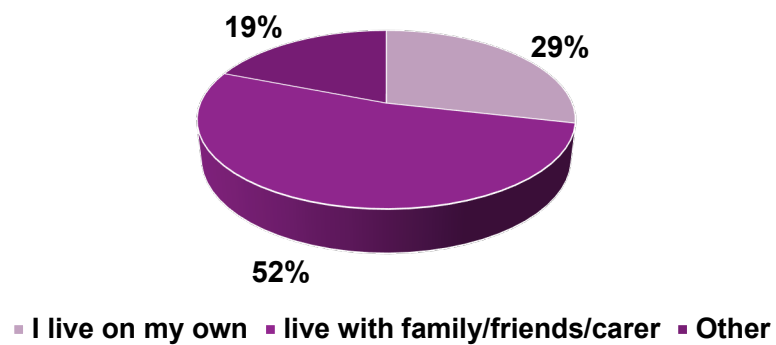
Age range of respondents



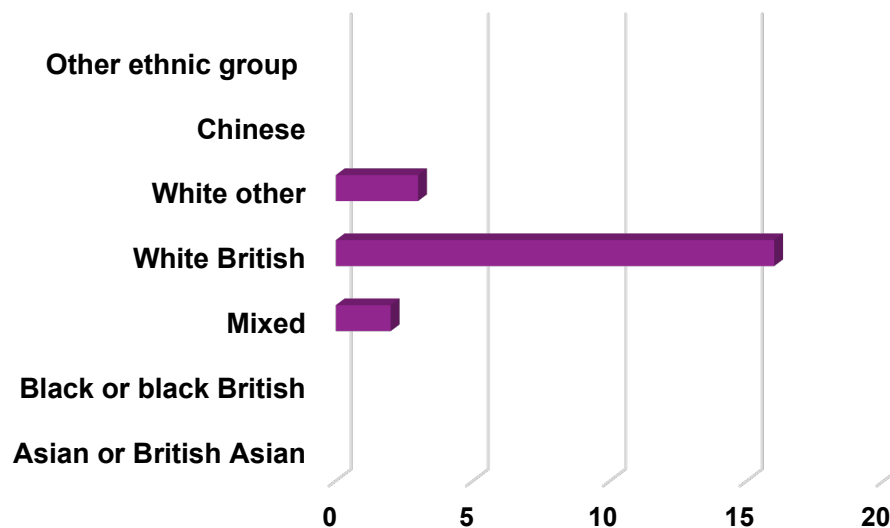
Area respondents live in



Living situations of respondents



Ethnicity of respondents



Thank you to all those who participated in the engagement.

The findings captured in this report will help inform the new Deaf Communication Support Service which will be re-procured in the summer of 2021.