



## Deaf Support Team (DST) Language and Communication Guidance

DST Vision: An inclusive bilingual service enabling, equipping, and empowering deaf children and young people to succeed.

Reports suggest that a bilingual approach develops deaf children's self-esteem. A research study reported that children in bilingual settings had positive notions of themselves and their deafness. (Gregory and Smith 2017: 553);

A bilingual service means children are given the opportunity to learn two languages at once, British Sign Language (BSL) and English. Learning a sign language does not hinder development of spoken language. Bilingualism promotes cognitive development and executive function.

### Positive Terminology

We use the term 'deaf' to refer to all types of hearing difference. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary hearing difference such as glue ear. Unless otherwise stated, we use the term 'children' in the broadest sense, to include children and young people 0-18. We use the term 'parent' to refer to all parents and carers of children.

The term 'Hearing Impaired (HI)' is outdated, and it is offensive to some. It is key that our language is respectful and inclusive. The language we use speaks to our ethos and values. Our learners are not impaired. With the right support and appropriate adjustments, they are as capable as their hearing peers.

d/Deaf is often used to distinguish between deaf people who are more aligned with a medical model of deafness, and those who are more aligned with a social model of deafness. When deaf is written in the lowercase it refers to those who identify more with the audiological experience of deafness. When deaf is written in the uppercase, Deaf, it refers to those who identify as Deaf through a cultural experience of deafness. While this terminology was widely accepted at the beginning, and is referred specifically for the Deaf community, we feel it can be perceived as if deaf people should firmly be in one 'camp' or the other. The reality for many deaf people is that they fluctuate between both 'camps,' and this should be supported. The DST will use deaf in all written publications to mean all levels of deafness and experiences. More people are moving away from the d/D definition as it is binary, and many young deaf people are part of the Deaf community even if they do not primarily use British Sign Language.

## Languages

### [English](#)

English originated in the United Kingdom (UK) and is the dominant language of the UK, the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and various island nations in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is also an official language of India, the Philippines, Singapore, and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa. English is often the first choice of foreign language in most other countries of the world, and it is that status that has given it the position of a global lingua franca. It is estimated that about a third of the world's population, some two billion persons, now use English.

### [BSL](#)

BSL is an Indigenous language of the UK with its own dialects and rich variation. The language has its own grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. It is the preferred language of over 87,000 Deaf people in the UK. In 2015 The [BSL Scotland Act](#) legally recognised BSL as a language. Access to the City of Edinburgh Council's BSL Plan is available [here](#).

### [Home Languages](#)

It is crucial that we value children's and young people's home languages and see these as a rich resource for learning, developing competences in the language of schooling. Through such a rich range of home languages, we can also celebrate the linguistic and cultural heritage that bilingual learners bring to the classroom and to the wider school community.

## Communication Systems

### [Makaton](#)

Makaton is a communication system that uses symbols (pictures), signs (gestures) and speech to enable people to communicate. People with learning, language and communication difficulties often use Makaton symbols and signs, either as their main method of communication or to support speech.

### [Signalong](#)

Signalong is a key word sign-supported communication system based on British sign language and is used in spoken word order. It uses speech, sign, body language, facial expression, and voice tone to reference the link between sign and word.

### [Signed Exact English \(SEE\)](#)

Signing Exact English (SEE) is a sign language system that strives to be a visual representation of the English language, including its vocabulary and grammar. It is designed to provide a one-to-one mapping between English words and their corresponding signs. While it uses some BSL signs, it also includes invented signs and fingerspelling to represent English grammatical elements and nuances.

### [Sign Supported English \(SSE\)](#)

Sign Supported English (SSE) describes signing and speaking English at the same time. Often, SSE borrows BSL signs and uses them in the order they are used in spoken English, following the same grammatical rules as English. Researchers have explained it as: “contact signing” (which describes the borrowing of English words through fingerspelling or mouthing, and the use of English Grammar) or “code blending” (which describes the production of both a signed and spoken language).

## Communication Approaches

### [Auditory Verbal \(AV\) Therapy](#)

Auditory Verbal Therapy aims to develop children’s spoken language through listening. It is delivered in partnership with the child’s parent or carers. Auditory Verbal Therapists promote early diagnosis of hearing loss in children, followed by immediate audiological management, using appropriate, state-of-the-art hearing technology to obtain maximum benefits of auditory stimulation. AVT practitioners guide and coach parents to help their child use hearing as the primary sensory modality in developing listening and spoken language through active consistent participation in individualised Auditory Verbal Therapy sessions and by creating environments that support listening for the acquisition of spoken language throughout the child’s daily activities. Natural developmental patterns of audition, speech, language, cognition, and communication are used. Parents and carers are coached to help their child self-monitor spoken language through listening.

### [Augmentative & Alternative Communication \(AAC\)](#)

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) covers a vast range of techniques which support or replace spoken communication. These include gesture, signing, symbols, word boards, communication boards and books and Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) Some people have additional physical difficulties and may need to use different ways to access these AAC methods.

### [Cued Articulation](#)

Cued Articulation supports the teaching of speech sounds visually, using:

1. Hand signs
2. Colour coding
3. Single and double lines to represent whether voice is used

## Cued Speech

Cued Speech is a manual system that is used to support deaf children to lipread and learn spoken languages. It was created in America in 1968 and has been used in the UK since 1970. The system is based on phonemes and effectively turns any spoken language into a visual one. Cued Speech is particularly focused on literacy learning because of the direct correlation with phonics. The theory is that once the language being cued is securely understood by the deaf child the use of cueing can change, lessen, or stop altogether.

## Inclusive Communication

Inclusive communication is an approach that seeks to ‘create a supportive and effective communication environment, using every available means of communication to understand and be understood’ (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists). This could include:

- An oral approach
- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Visuals
- Signalong
- AAC

## Lip-reading

Lip-reading (sometimes called speechreading) is the ability to understand speech by carefully watching a person's lip patterns and the movement of their tongue and face. From an incredibly early age, children begin to recognise the lip patterns of familiar words. Most deaf children naturally try to lip-read when they are communicating, and to some extent we all do – especially in noisy conditions. Lip reading skills can be taught but it is estimated that only 30% to 40% of speech sounds can be lip-read even under the best conditions.

## Total Communication approach

The original definition (Denton 1968 – USA) referred more to a philosophy than a communication approach or method. Denton described it as ‘the full spectrum of language modes, child devised gesture, the language of signs, speech reading, finger spelling, reading, writing and residual hearing’ There is now much variation in its interpretation and use. Some people see it as a flexible approach to communication in which children may vary in how they receive and express language. Therefore, they may use a variety of modes such as aural/oral communication, BSL, fingerspelling, SSE. Others describe it as a method in which signed and auditory/oral components are combined, e.g. SSE.

## DST

The DST will promote and encourage an inclusive approach to communication with learners. Language should be supported with visuals and the written word where appropriate to aid comprehension.

- All pupils will usually learn written and (to a greater or lesser extent depending on the child's level of hearing or preferences) spoken English. Learning English as a second language is essential for children to develop literacy skills as there is no written form of BSL.
- Pupils will be given opportunities to learn BSL through the 1+2 pack and the deaf clubs. When a bilingual approach is used for teaching deaf children from hearing families it is sometimes referred to as 'Bilingual-bicultural' ('bi-bi') education. Although most deaf children come from hearing families, they will be taught about deaf identity and experience deaf culture in addition to BSL lessons. Many families of deaf children who use hearing technology will continue to use BSL as part of their inclusive communication approach, even if spoken language becomes the main way they communicate. This ensures a child can communicate successfully when not wearing hearing technology or in difficult listening conditions (Wheeler et al., 2007). It may also allow children to communicate and play with deaf friends who use BSL and help them to feel connected to the Deaf community.
- The DST will use age and stage appropriate English and BSL with learners as opposed to SSE. There is no agreed definition or format for SSE, and it is difficult to regulate effectively due to its varying forms and structures. Use of SSE can create a lot of confusion about the differences between languages and communication systems as unfortunately many people equate BSL with SSE
- Signed Exact English may be used in limited circumstances e.g. when a BSL user is learning written English or when supporting lip-reading for deaf people who use speech.
- When BSL is used as part of the communication approach for deaf pupils' provisions and families are encouraged and supported to learn BSL alongside the learner
- The DST has had training in Auditory Verbal Therapy and utilises some of its techniques. We do not offer the therapy exclusively but can share details of private practitioners if this is something a family wishes to explore.
- The DST does not currently use Cued Speech/Cued Articulation due to limited resources and expertise.
- The DST follow SLT advice regarding the most appropriate speech articulation methods.
- Many deaf children pick up lip reading but it should only be used alongside other approaches and resources due to the low percentage of speech that can be accessed solely using this method. Deaf children find it easier to access lip reading or speech reading from a familiar live lip speaker. It is vital that any deaf child completing a listening assessment is given the opportunity to do so in this context and that a recorded audiovisual resource is not used.

- Most children use facial expressions and body language to aid understanding. This is particularly true of deaf children, non-verbal cues need to be clear. The DST will ensure they raise this in educational settings. The most important part of your body when communicating (even when using BSL) is your face.
- The DST does not use the description of a total communication approach due to the inconsistency of interpretation and lack of clarity regarding its meaning.
- Makaton was previously used with some learners in Edinburgh, but it has widely been replaced by Signalong. The DST does not promote its use with deaf children.
- Signalong is used by many nursery provisions and by Additional Support for Learning colleagues but is not usually appropriate for deaf learners.
- Signalong is used in The City of Edinburgh Council with children with severe and complex needs including with some deaf children where deafness is not considered to have the greatest impact on their communication.
- The Communication approach best suited to a pupil is decided collaboratively by working in partnership with parents and other professionals.

## SLT

The DST works closely with allied health professionals in the NHS particularly Speech and Language Therapists (SLT). Their Guide to communication with reference to children with hearing loss written by Alison McNair (Clinical Lead for d/Deaf Children, pan Lothian. Nov 2018) outlines their approach.

## BSL input

The following access to BSL support from the DST will be available:

	Advice and Guidance Pupils	Additional Support Pupils	Intensive Pupils
0-3	Signposting to NDCS family courses, Deaf Action toddler group and BSL course providers		Minimum of weekly support from a BSL tutor or a specialist nursery nurse in addition to support offered 'Advice and Guidance' and 'Additional Support' Pupils is available
Nursery pupils			
Primary pupils	Signposting to NDCS family courses and BSL course providers. Access to the Highland 1+2 pack		Invitation to pupil BSL clubs in addition to support offered 'Advice and Guidance' Pupils
Secondary pupils			

Pupils who are first language BSL users		Pupils who are first language BSL users will be assigned support from Communication Support Workers (CSW's)
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