
**Framework for the allocation of communication support workers
in education settings**

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Preface



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1. Introduction

This document has been developed to provide sensory support services and education providers with a framework for allocating communication support workers to deaf children and young people.

The communication needs of deaf children and young people are wide and diverse. This means there is no one-size-fits-all form of communication support which will meet the needs of all deaf students. However, there is considerable variation in the qualifications of Communication Support Workers and, in the context of limited resources, little consensus as to what the required minimum standards are to carry out the role. This can mean some children and young people are without the support they require for good access to their programme of study.

2. Glossary of terms

British Sign Language (BSL): is the national sign language of the UK with its own structure, syntax and grammar.

Cued Speech: Cued Speech is a visual form of spoken English. It is a lip-reading based system that uses eight handshapes in four positions near the mouth in combination with the natural lip patterns of speech to support visual speech perception.

Oral language modification (OLM): a qualified individual who supports deaf students with difficulties in reading and processing written English by rewording or rephrasing exam questions.

Sign Supported English (SSE): is the use of sign language with spoken English or English lip patterns with signs used in English order.

3. What is in this framework document?

This framework recognises that the needs of a deaf student will vary depending on how they communicate, and what level of study they are undertaking. It also outlines other factors that should be taken into consideration, such as a student's personal preferences or their subject of study. This document contains an explanation of BSL level, and a list of other qualifications/skills that may be appropriate for a CSW to hold.

The appendices provide an example of a junior and a senior Communication Support Worker job description from an FE college, with those in the senior role responsible for BSL interpretation. It illustrates how a provider can create an incentive for professional development by enabling career progression.

4. Availability of qualifications

It is acknowledged that there is limited availability of some of the qualifications referred to within this document. However, this framework aims to provide clear recommendations for the qualifications that those providing communication support should be working towards in order to meet the needs of deaf students.

5. Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to the Association of Deaf Education Professionals and Trainees (ADEPT)¹ and the Royal Greenwich Sensory Service² for their support in helping to put this framework together.

¹ See: <http://adeptuk.co.uk/>

² See: <http://familiesinformation.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/kb5/greenwich/fsd/service.page?id=nxsBtm4x3ak>

6. Communication Support Worker or Learning Support Assistant?

The term *teaching assistant* has often been used to describe all forms of additional support provided in classrooms including Classroom Support Workers (CSWs). This framework document distinguishes the role of the CSW from a learning support assistant (LSA) or teaching assistant (TA).

The National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP)³ uses the term TA (or LSA) to describe an adult who is employed to support the learning, social and emotional development and access to the curriculum of deaf learners. A communication support worker falls within this broad description but also has a specific role defined as a 'professional who provides communication support for individuals or groups of deaf learners'. For learners who use BSL, it will involve providing bilingual support.

Where a CSW is required to provide direct support through British Sign Language (or Sign Supported English) it is crucial that the individual is qualified to at least Level 3 BSL standard.

Whenever a CSW or TA/LSA is provided to support a student, it is important they have sufficient knowledge of the needs of deaf students, and also have a GCSE A-C pass in English (or equivalent).

When allocating a support worker, it is important to consider whether the support required is direct or indirect support. The qualifications and experience of the support worker should be appropriate for the task being carried out.

6.1 Direct support

Direct support includes (but is not limited to):

- a) Interpreting from spoken English to BSL/SSE and vice versa
- b) Note-taking
- c) Lip-speaking
- d) Prompting
- e) Cued Speech transliterating
- f) Use of visual phonics (see references)
- g) Oral language modification in exams

6.2 Indirect support

Indirect support includes (but is not limited to):

- a) Adapting learning materials
- b) Checking over a deaf student's written work
- c) Advising school or college staff on the learning environment

³ See: <https://www.natsip.org.uk>

7. Factors influencing the choice of support worker

In deciding who should support a student, you should consider the following factors:

Type of task

Some work carried out by CSWs is not direct communication support but work that is typically carried out outside of the classroom such as modifying learning materials in advance of a lesson.

The wishes of the student

A student may find one CSW easier to understand than another or have a better rapport with them.

Mode of communication

It is important to understand what is the normal method of communication used by the student: British Sign Language (BSL), Sign-supported English (SSE), cued speech or spoken English. Where a student relies on BSL to communicate, they will require a CSW that can accurately interpret English into BSL and vice versa using appropriate structure and syntax.

Level of study

Level 3 courses (A-level or equivalent) will involve greater use of technical language and the ability to understand more complicated concepts than Level 2 courses.

Subject of study

Having subject knowledge about the subject the student is studying will be advantageous. For example, limited knowledge of maths can make it very challenging for a CSW to interpret mathematical terminology into sign language.

Additional needs

Where a deaf student has additional special educational needs or disabilities, the experience in supporting students with the additional need (e.g. autism) should be taken into account.

8. British Sign Language qualifications

BSL qualifications have been developed within the National Occupational Language Standard⁴ framework. The table below outlines the standard that would be expected at each sign language level. It is important to be aware that BSL qualifications are assessing language fluency and not interpreting skills.

Qualification:	Language standard expected
Pre-qualifications	
Level 1 Certificate in BSL	<p>Can use a small number of common signs and key phrases to communicate basic messages in very familiar, face to face situations.</p> <p>May be hesitant and make some grammatical errors, but you could, for example, meet and greet colleagues, giving your job title and company name, ask for directions or prices and say what you want in shops or in a restaurant.</p> <p>Can understand basic signs and key phrases in a few familiar, face to face situations, provided the other person signs them carefully and clearly, and is willing to repeat or rephrase when needed.</p> <p>Vocabulary relates mainly to personal details such as name, family, job role, and specific work situations. You can meet and greet people, understand some key expressions and follow simple directions.</p>

⁴ See: <https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/Pages/index.aspx>

Qualification:	Language standard expected
	Level 1 is not an appropriate standard to be able to provide direct communication support through BSL or SSE.
Level 2 Certificate in BSL	<p>Can use a limited range of signs and simple sentences in predictable and familiar situations.</p> <p>May be hesitant and make grammatical errors in less familiar situations, but you can get simple messages across.</p> <p>Could handle simple exchanges, for example at a college reception desk or in a restaurant, and provide standard work-related information, for example concerning products, services, orders or quantities.</p> <p>Can understand a small range of signs and simple sentences in familiar and predictable face-to-face situations, provided they are signed clearly, with opportunities for you to check back.</p> <p>Can follow short and predictable conversations, manage simple work-related and social situations, e.g. shopping, following simple instructions</p> <p>Is not an appropriate standard to be able to provide direct communication support through BSL or SSE.</p>
Required qualifications	
Level 3 Certificate in BSL	<p>Can make yourself understood in routine situations, using set phrases and adapting simple structures with the right vocabulary.</p> <p>May lack fluency and grammatical accuracy, but you can start up a conversation, and keep it going if the topic is familiar and the other person is willing to take the lead.</p> <p>Can make initial social contact and discuss familiar subjects, or provide routine information about your area of work.</p> <p>Can understand common everyday language signed clearly in familiar situations, preferably with opportunities for you to check back.</p> <p>Can follow conversations on familiar subjects, handle routine exchanges of information about your area of work, understand routine step-by-step instructions and take simple video calls.</p> <p>At this standard may be able to provide some direct communication support through BSL or SSE. However, is likely to struggle to relay complex information.</p>
Level 4 Certificate in BSL	<p>Can contribute in a range of social and work-related situations, and you have a good vocabulary which you can adapt to get straightforward messages across, usually finding alternative ways to explain when needed.</p> <p>Can keep the conversation going fairly smoothly within familiar areas, but you may have difficulty expressing complex or abstract ideas.</p> <p>Can make new contacts and manage uncomplicated negotiations.</p> <p>Can follow conversations and discussions delivered at normal speed on arrange of topics in different social and work situations.</p> <p>Can take part in straightforward social interaction as well as following uncomplicated negotiations, discussions and instructions within your area of work.</p>

Qualification:	Language standard expected
	<p>Can understand straightforward news items, interviews and documentaries. If appropriate, you can deal with straightforward video calls.</p> <p>At this standard direct communication support in BSL or SSE can be provided. However, may struggle to relay some complex information.</p>
Level 6 NVQ Certificate in BSL	<p>Can communicate fluently over extended periods with only occasional inaccuracy - which you can usually correct.</p> <p>Can discuss all topics within your field, even when abstract or complex, and keep the conversation going smoothly.</p> <p>Can use your language skills to develop relationships with individuals and groups, and also, if required, negotiate in formal meetings to reach decisions or solve problems.</p> <p>Can extract complex information from a wide range of sources, even when the language is delivered at speed.</p> <p>Are comfortable with a range of regional variations, formal and informal language, relevant technical vocabulary and colloquialisms.</p> <p>Can take part in negotiations and deal with complaints, problems or disputes. Can also make video calls effectively.</p> <p>At this standard a CSW should be able to provide good direct support. If a Level 6 qualification is combined with an interpreting qualification, they can become a fully qualified BSL interpreter.</p>

9. Other qualifications

A Communication Support Worker can enhance his or her skills and experience through taking one or more of the qualifications listed below:

9.1 Communication support

These qualifications aim to provide learning support practitioners with the underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills in order to fulfil the CSW role.

- Level 3 certificate in communication support for deaf learners (Signature)
- University of Greenwich Language Service Professional (CSW) Level 4 Certificate

9.2 Note-taking

Notetaking is a task commonly carried out by a CSW. A notetaking qualification will help ensure that a CSW can adapt their notetaking to meet the needs of a deaf student (e.g. understanding the vocabulary a deaf student might struggle to read or being able to provide a comprehensive account of a class/lecture)

- OCN Level 2 certificate in notetaking for disabled students
- Laser Level 3 notetaking skills for support staff working with sensory impaired learners

9.3 Electronic notetaking

An electronic notetaker will be expected to type at a speed of around 60-90 words per minute. A CSW with a qualification in electronic notetaking will be able to offer this service to their students.

- OCN Level 3 training for electronic notetaking

9.4 Oral Language Modification

An oral language modifier will support deaf students with difficulties in reading and processing written English by rewording or rephrasing exam questions (avoiding technical terms). This function can be carried out by a CSW if they have taken oral language modification training.

- Oral language modification accredited training

9.5 Modifying English Texts

A qualification in modifying written English texts can help a CSW recognise structures and discourse in English which can cause particular problems for deaf readers, and modify it so that it is more accessible without changing the meaning of the original text.

- Signature Level 3 Award in Modifying Written English Texts for Deaf People

9.6 Lip-speaking

A lipspeaker is a person who has been trained to be easy to lipread. They will repeat what is said in a classroom environment. Lipspeaking can be a function of a CSW if they have been trained in lipspeaking.

- Signature Level 3 Certificate in Lipspeaking

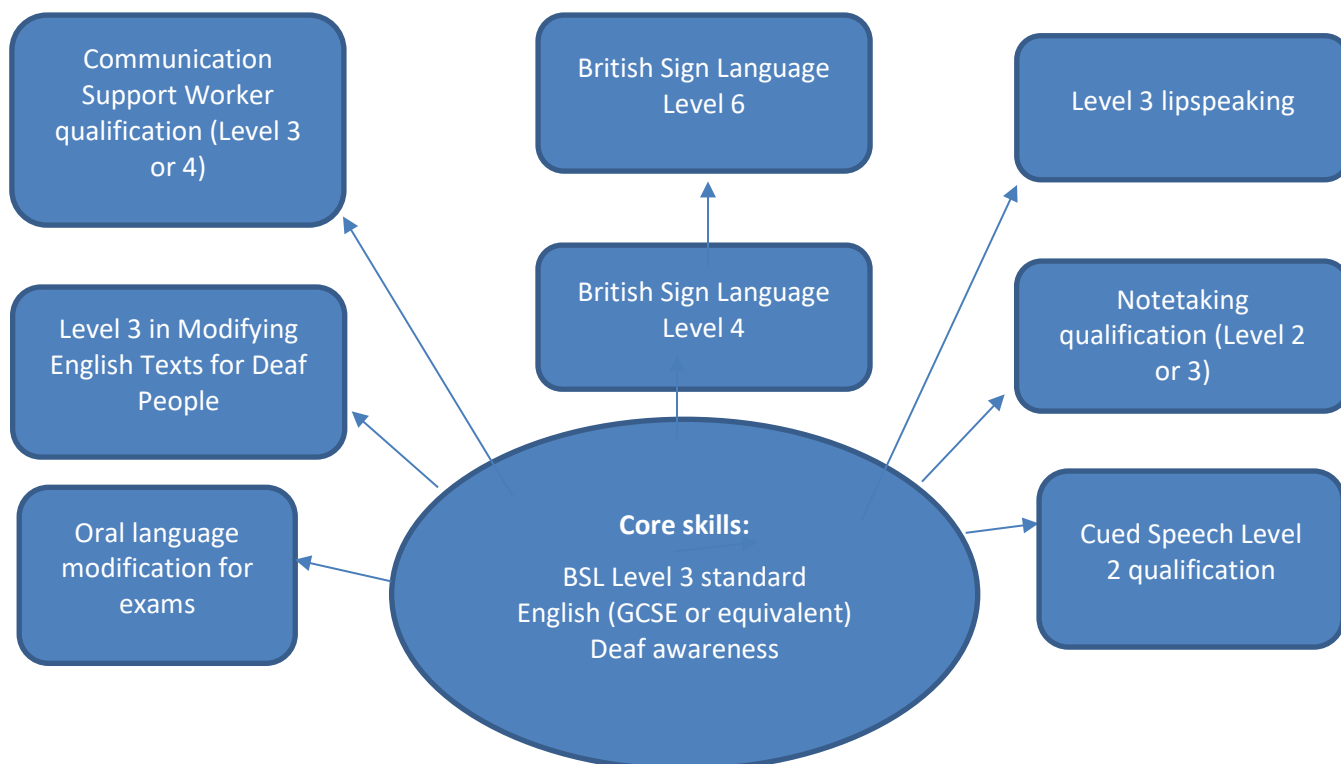
9.7 Cued-speech

Cued Speech is a visual form of English consisting of 8 handshapes and 4 positions which clarify the lip-patterns of speech. Cued Speech transliterating can be carried out by a CSW who is fluent in Cued Speech. This would only be appropriate for a student able to read Cued Speech.

- Cued Speech Association UK Level 2 Certificate in Cued Speech

10. The framework

The diagram below summarises the skills and knowledge required of a CSW. At the bottom are the essential skills required. These can be built on through attainment of additional qualifications. Implementing incentives (e.g. a pay scale) for acquiring additional skills should be considered by employers of CSWs.



11. Other useful resources

Adept (2014) CSW Code of Practice for Communication Support Workers for Deaf Learners.⁵

NatSIP (2012). Effective working with teaching assistants in schools. A suite of documents covering HI, VI and MSI.⁶

Visual Phonics by Hand - a system of hand cues for teaching and using phonics with deaf children.⁷

NatSIP (2017). Training pathways and professional development for careers in sensory impairment.⁸

⁵ See: http://adeptuk.co.uk/DDT_ShowEntry_documents?GalleryName=Adept_Documents&EntryID=983&ImageSeqNo=1

⁶ See <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/curriculum/teaching-assistant-guidance>

⁷ See: <http://www.visualphonicsbyhand.com/>

⁸ See: <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/training-pathways/1369-training-pathways>

12. About the appendices

The appendices provide an example of a junior and a senior Communication Support Worker job description from an FE college where those in the senior roles are responsible for BSL interpretation.

They job descriptions illustrate how a provider can create an incentive for professional development by enabling career progression.

- An example of a junior communication support worker job description.
- An example of a senior communication support worker job description from the same institution as the junior role.

For model job descriptions for professionals working in schools, see NatSIP's resource *Teaching Assistant Guidance for HI*⁹

⁹ See: <https://www.natsip.org.uk/doc-library-login/curriculum/teaching-assistant-guidance>

Appendix 1 – Junior Communication Support Worker - Job Description

Job title	Communication Support Worker	Contract	Support
Salary	Scale 5 APT&C pts	Hours & Basis	Various, 39 weeks per year
Reports to (direct)	Deaf Access Co-ordinator	Reports to (indirect)	N/A

Primary purpose of role	
<p>This role is to work proactively in supporting our D/deaf customers to access a range of activities. The role is around employing strategies and procedures that provide inclusive person-centred support, thus improving retention and achievement.</p>	
Job Dimensions	Key relationships
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No direct reports but a requirement to support key customers drawn from a wide range of provision and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-18 & 19+ conventional curriculum study programme learners • Apprentices • One-off activities • Part time learners • Adult learners accessing evening classes • Higher Education provision 2. Support across all College sites and partner organisations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deaf Access Co-Ordinator 2. Lecturers/Curriculum delivery staff 3. Inclusion and Support Specialists
Key role responsibilities and deliverables	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) To work collaboratively in a team of multi-skilled Inclusion and Support staff, to identify students with support needs b) To work with a variety of teams to assist in carrying out screening and ongoing assessment of learners' potential support needs c) To liaise closely with curriculum staff in identifying where in a learners' study programme, support would be most beneficial (usually RAG rating timetables) d) To liaise with designated team members in creating individualised support plans and personalised support activities for learners e) To work with learners, providing support as identified in assessments, directed by teaching staff. Teaching staff may reasonably request you to support others in the group if your learner does not require your support f) To work flexibly and responsively in all elements of the Inclusion Department as required to meet business needs g) To support the tracking and review of support for designated learners from entry to exit, working with the curriculum teams to ensure that support is effective and ensuring their retention on programme and achievement of their study programmes h) Completion of detailed records of the support given, including distance travelled and destination data i) To attend where possible, curriculum and inclusion meetings and report on the progress of supported learners 	

- j) To work with the Inclusion Team to ensure that teaching teams are fully aware of their learners' Inclusion needs and to assist staff in reviewing their group profiles and adapt their learning materials and delivery methods where necessary
- k) To assist the Inclusion Team in the gathering of information for audit
- l) To undertake personal care if required

College responsibilities and deliverables

- a) To provide a professional customer service to both internal and external customers
- b) To ensure that quality standards are set, monitored and reviewed in all areas of our work
- c) To take responsibility for one's own professional development and continually update as necessary
- d) To comply with all relevant policies and to assist in the development of inclusive practices to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act
- e) To comply with all Health and Safety policy, Safeguarding and Risk Assessment policy and legislation in the performance of the duties of the post
- f) To take reasonable care of your own health, safety and welfare and that of any other person who may be affected by your actions or omissions whilst at work. You are also required to co-operate with the College to enable it to fulfil its legal obligations. Appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision will be provided to enable you to perform your duties in a manner that is deemed safe and without risk to health
- g) To comply with all aspects of the Data Protection Act
- h) To adhere to the College's Computer Network Acceptable Use Policy
- i) To undertake dynamic risk assessments during your working practice and ensure formal RAs are carried out for any ongoing activity
- j) To carry out any other reasonable duties within the overall function, commensurate with the grading and level of responsibility of the job

Capability requirements (E = Essential, D = Desirable, A = Application, I = Interview)

Knowledge of the Equality Act 2010	E	A,I
Experience of working in an FE environment & supporting deaf learners	E	A,I
Knowledge of current approaches and research around deafness and specific learning difficulties/disabilities	E	AI
Understanding of how to support basic skills or ESOL needs	E	A,I
Awareness of ALS funding	E	A,I
Knowledge of SEND reforms, the Social Model of Disability and the development of Education, Health and Care Plans	D	A,I
An awareness of the curriculum areas including ESOL	E	A,I
Understanding of a variety of assessment & support methods to meet the diverse needs of our learners eg sign support, notetaking	E	A,I

Qualification Requirements (E = Essential, D = Desirable, A = Application, I = Interview)		
Level 3 BSL (or working towards)	E	A
Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support for Deaf Learners (or willing to work towards)	E	A
Level 2 Maths	E	A
Level 2 English	E	A
Level 2 IT	D	A
Level 4/6 BSL	D	A
Level 3 Notetaking or Electronic Notetaking	D	A
Essential Competencies (A = Application, I = Interview)		
Communication	E	A,I
Customer Focus	E	A,I
Approachability	E	A,I
Integrity and trust	E	A,I
Interpersonal skills	E	A,I
Independent working	E	A,I
Managing diversity	E	A,I
Self-development	E	A,I
Organisation	E	A,I
Team work	E,	A,I
Informing	E	A,I

Appendix 2 – Senior Communication Support Worker - Job Description

Job title	Senior Communication Support Worker	Contract	Support
Salary	Scale 6 APT&C pts £30,000 per annum pro rata	Hours & Basis	Various, 39 weeks per year
Reports to (direct)	Deaf Access Co-ordinator	Reports to (indirect)	N/A

Primary purpose of role	
To support deaf students on courses at various college sites and provide an interpreting service for the local deaf community in training and educational events	
Job Dimensions	Key relationships
<p>No direct reports but a requirement to support key customers drawn from a wide range of provision and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-18 & 19+ conventional curriculum study programme learners • Apprentices • One-off activities • Part time learners • Adult learners accessing evening classes • Higher Education provision <p>Support across all College sites and partner organisations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deaf Access Co-Ordinator 2. Lecturers/Curriculum delivery staff 3. Inclusion and Support Specialists
Key role responsibilities and deliverables	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) To undertake interpreter bookings, relevant to experience & skillset, as required through the Deaf Access service, within the College and externally in the local community and surrounding area. b) To assist with the booking process via telephone & email and to provide completed documentation in a timely manner, in order to meet invoice requirements of external agencies. c) To share specialist knowledge and expertise with other support staff. d) To attend relevant training events and meetings as required, to review and publicise the service. e) To maintain and develop interpreting skills, knowledge and experience. f) To apply for NRCPD registration annually and to log CPD after undertaking relevant training in order to maintain registration. g) To work collaboratively in a team of multi-skilled Inclusion and support staff, to identify students with support needs. h) To work with a variety of teams to assist in carrying out screening and ongoing assessment of learners' potential support needs. i) To liaise closely with curriculum staff in identifying where in a learners' study programme, support would be most beneficial (usually RAG rating timetables) 	

- j) To liaise with designated team members in creating individualised support plans and personalised support activities for learners.
 - k) To work with learners, providing support as identified in assessments, directed by teaching staff. Teaching staff may reasonably request you to support others in the group if your learner does not require your support.
 - l) To work flexibly and responsively in all elements of the Inclusion Department as required to meet business needs.
-
- m) To support the tracking and review of support for designated learners from entry to exit, working with the curriculum teams to ensure that support is effective and ensuring their retention on programme and achievement of their study programmes.
-
- n) Completion of detailed records of the support given, including distance travelled and destination data.
-
- o) To attend where possible, curriculum and Inclusion meetings and report on the progress of supported learners.
-
- p) To work with the Inclusion Team to ensure that teaching teams are fully aware of their learners' Inclusion needs and to assist staff in reviewing their group profiles and adapt their learning materials and delivery methods where necessary.
-
- q) To assist the Inclusion Team in the gathering of information for audit.
-
- r) To undertake personal care if required.

College responsibilities and deliverables

- a) To provide a professional customer service to both internal and external customers
- b) To ensure that quality standards are set, monitored and reviewed in all areas of our work
- c) To demonstrate flexibility in responding to changing demands in personal, sectional or the College's workload
- d) To take responsibility for one's own professional development and continually update as necessary
- e) To comply with all relevant policies and to assist in the development of inclusive practices to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act
- e) To comply with all Health and Safety policy, Safeguarding and Risk Assessment policy and legislation in the performance of the duties of the post
- f) To take reasonable care of your own health, safety and welfare and that of any other person who may be affected by your actions or omissions whilst at work. You are also required to co-operate with the College to enable it to fulfil its legal obligations. Appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision will be provided to enable you to perform your duties in a manner that is deemed safe and without risk to health
- g) To comply with all aspects of the Data Protection Act
- h) To adhere to the College's Computer Network Acceptable Use Policy
- i) To undertake dynamic risk assessments during your working practice and ensure formal RAs are carried out for any ongoing activity
- j) To carry out any other reasonable duties within the overall function, commensurate with the grading and level of responsibility of the job

Capability requirements (E = Essential, D = Desirable, A = Application, I = Interview)		
Knowledge of and ability to apply the NRCPD Code of Ethics for Sign Language Interpreters	E	A,I
Experience of attending interpreter bookings in a variety of settings, including education, business & medical	E	A,I
Knowledge of the Equality Act 2010 (E&D opportunities and discrimination legislation)	E	A,I
Experience of working in an FE environment & supporting deaf learners	E	A,I
Knowledge of current approaches and research around deafness and specific learning difficulties/disabilities	E	AI
Understanding of how to support basic skills or ESOL needs	E	A,I
Awareness of ALS funding	E	A,I
Knowledge of SEND reforms, the Social Model of Disability and the development of Education, Health and Care Plans	D	A,I
An awareness of the curriculum areas including ESOL	E	A,I
Understanding of a variety of assessment & support methods to meet the diverse needs of our learners eg sign support, notetaking	E	A,I

Qualification Requirements (E = Essential, D = Desirable, A = Application, I = Interview)		
Level 4/6 BSL	E	A
Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support for Deaf Learners (or willing to work towards)	E	A
Level 6 interpreter training (to meet NRCPD standards)	Ea	A
Level 2 Maths	E	A
Level 3 English (to meet NRCPD standards)	E	A
Level 2 IT	D	A
Level 4/6 BSL	D	A
Level 3 Notetaking or Electronic Notetaking	D	A
Essential Competencies (A = Application, I = Interview)		
Communication	E	A,I
Customer Focus	E	A,I
Approachability	E	A,I
Integrity and trust	E	A,I
Interpersonal skills	E	A,I
Independent working	E	A,I
Managing diversity	E	A,I
Self-development	E	A,I
Organisation	E	A,I

Team work	E,	A,I
Informing	E	A,I

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