

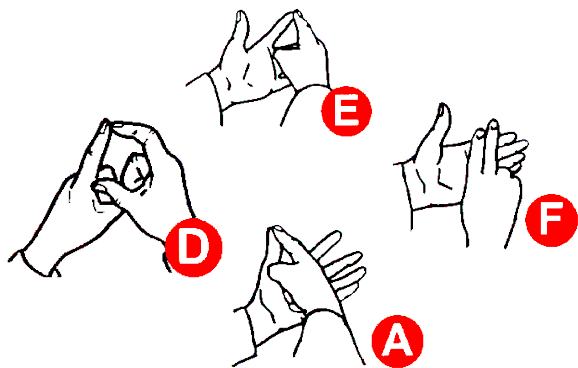
THE LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE APPROACH

The London Ambulance Service NHS Trust is committed to providing equal treatment and equal opportunity for all.

Our aim is to provide a world class health care service, equal at the point of access, and to create excellent opportunities for all our current and new staff.

The use of BSL provides a challenge for a telephone based service which relies mainly on telecommunications for the giving and receiving of information.

With all this in mind, the LAS Deaf Awareness Forum was established early in 2010 following a call for expressions of interest in the Routine Information Bulletin (RIB).



THE LAS DEAF AWARENESS FORUM

To date, the Forum has:

- ◆ Its own Terms of Reference
- ◆ Held regular meetings
- ◆ Formulated an action plan as part of the equality work with a view to:
 - ◆ Participation in Deaf Awareness Week each year
 - ◆ Participation in Learn to Sign Week each year
 - ◆ Attendance at the annual Deaf Day @ City Lit, London
- ◆ Raising deaf awareness amongst LAS staff Been formally adopted as part of the Staff Disability/Carers Group
- ◆ Is welcomed and actively supported by the London Ambulance Service NHS Trust

THE FUTURE

This is an exciting and demanding agenda for such a new group, but it is a worthwhile cause and one which it's Chair and members of the Forum feel strongly about.

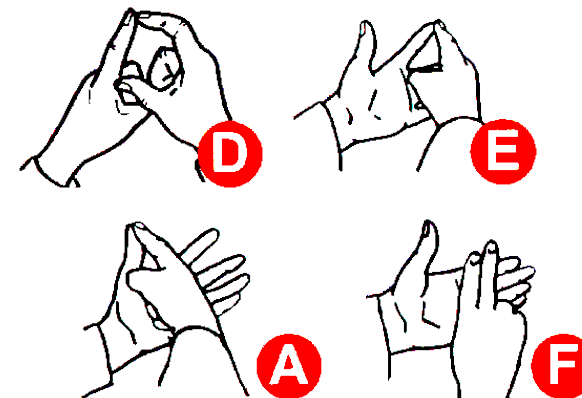
The forum is always looking out for new and innovative ways to promote d/Deaf awareness.

If you have any queries or wish to join the LAS Deaf Awareness Forum, please contact Mark.Weller@lond-amb.nhs.uk for further information.



LAS DEAF AWARENESS FORUM

(Published February 2013 v1-2)



Dear Awareness Forum
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BACKGROUND

Deafness is not a disability but not being able to communicate effectively is.



Deaf people are not easily identified as disabled showing no outward sign that they are any different.



For them communication, not access or mobility, is the key issue.



FACTS AND FIGURES

The term 'deaf' is used to refer to people who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing.



- ◆ There are 9 million people in the UK who are deaf or hard of hearing which is 15% of the 60 million people living in the UK, or one in every seven people.
- ◆ Most will have become deaf or hard of hearing as a result of getting older.
- ◆ They will be able to access information in English and will probably use subtitles on television.
- ◆ However, many people who are born deaf, or become deaf in early life, use sign language to communicate.

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE (BSL)

- ◆ The government recognises British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right.
- ◆ Current estimates suggest that BSL is the first or preferred language of more than 70,000 Deaf people in the UK.
- ◆ It is a full and complete language in its own right, with its own grammar, vocabulary and syntax and is totally separate from English (which may be used as a second language)
- ◆ Accessing information in English can be difficult for many BSL users.
- ◆ Sign language cannot be written down
- ◆ The language makes use of space and involves movement of the hands, body, face and head.
- ◆ Signs are slightly different for left handed people

BSL continued

- ◆ Many thousands of people who are not deaf also use BSL, as hearing relatives of deaf people, sign language interpreters or as a result of other contact with the British deaf community.
- ◆ BSL has many regional [dialects](#).
- ◆ Signs used in [Scotland](#), for example, may not be used, and may not be understood immediately by those in Southern England, and vice versa.

- ◆ Some signs are even more local, occurring only in certain towns or cities (such as the Manchester system of number signs).



- ◆ Likewise, some may go in or out of fashion, or evolve over time, just as terms in spoken languages do.

