

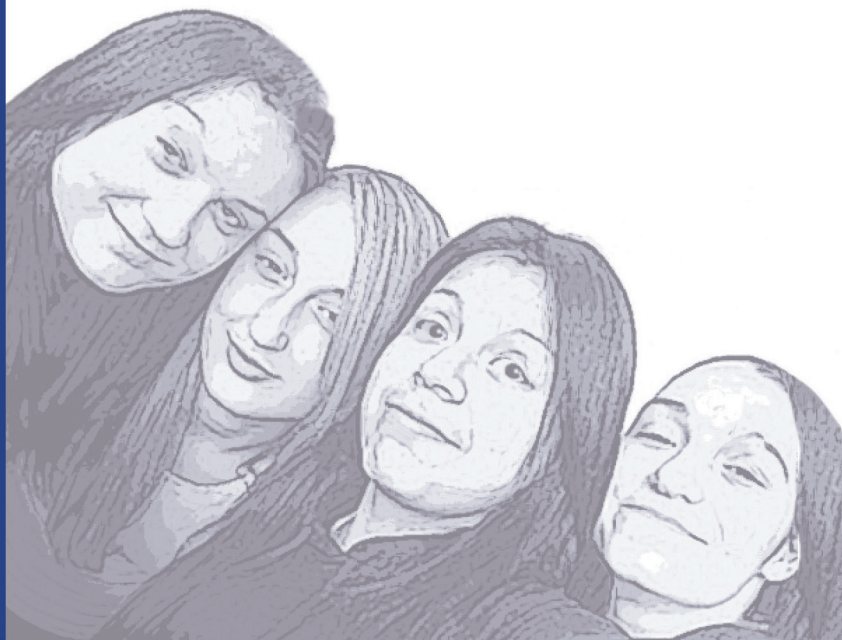
BATOD

British Association of Teachers of
Deaf Children and Young People

CSW

Code of Practice

for communication
support workers for
deaf learners
and employer's guide



Throughout this document BATOD uses the term 'deaf' to refer to people with any level of hearing loss, regardless of communication modes used or cultural background.

Introduction to the Code of Practice for communication support workers for deaf learners

This document outlines the professional Code of Practice required by CSWs working with deaf learners. Issues of confidentiality, integrity, ethics, competency, and personal efficiency are outlined within the code. CSWs should be fully aware of this code and follow it, as far as is reasonably practicable, in any given setting.

The document is divided into two sections. Section 1 defines the role of the CSW and concentrates on how the Code of Practice relates to CSWs, and Section 2 is an employer's guide to the Code of Practice.

Section 1: Communication support workers and the Code of Practice

1.1 The Role of the communication support worker

A communication support worker (CSW) enables access to communication, using a variety of support strategies and communication modes to match individuals' needs and preferences. CSWs liaise with other professionals such as: Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs), audiologists, teachers, lecturers, other CSWs, and team leaders. This support generally involves a two-way exchange of information, through British Sign Language (BSL), written notes or clear speech, and provides access to information and opportunities within the educational institution. Many learners require more than one form of support at the same time and therefore may need the services of more than one professional within the same session. The CSW facilitates access to the curriculum and the wider learning environment in schools, universities, colleges of further education, adult education centres, and other learning environments, and meets the needs of the individual deaf learner wherever possible.

It is essential to promote the employment of appropriately experienced and qualified CSWs, ideally to work as part of a team and not as the sole 'specialist'. It is good practice to match the needs of the deaf learner with the skills and experience of an individual CSW within certain topics of education, for example, catering, health and social care, and English.

The role of the CSW is:

1. To enable equality of access to information and education to meet the needs of learners
2. To empower the learner through the CSW's use of a range of appropriate support strategies, encouraging the individual learner's development within educational, social, linguistic and cultural contexts
3. To consider the learner's needs within their peer group context, and to provide appropriate communication strategies, from a range of skills, helping to facilitate successful integration into the group
4. To provide access to a range of learning materials using appropriate communication methods to match the needs of the individual learner
5. To respond to all communication requirements in the learning environment and with assistive technologies and implement, review, and adapt strategies as necessary
6. To enable and empower learners to discuss their own learning requirements with teaching staff and other professionals
7. To provide deaf awareness training, advice, and guidance for teaching staff and/or peer groups, and to involve the learners whenever possible. To also provide training to front of house staff

The following points may be ongoing:

8. To facilitate access to wider college services, eg counselling, financial support, library, learning resources, etc
9. To work collaboratively in a team, which assesses, delivers, and reviews the learner's individual support needs
10. To enable learners to make independent choices and to learn from their experiences
11. To keep accurate records of work and perform support-related administration as required, eg for purposes of management, inspection and audit.

Key areas of work

1. Familiarise oneself with an individual learner's needs
2. Prepare for support sessions and subject areas as appropriate
3. Develop and use a range of communication strategies, for example working between BSL/Sign Supported English (SSE), Signing Exact English (SEE), lipspeaking, notetaking, and/or language modification. Also, methods of communication used with deafblind learners, such as the Manual Alphabet, Block, Moon, etc
4. Adapt the physical environment using a range of resources, for example, ensuring the lighting is correct and the learner has access to communication and visual materials
5. Empower learners
6. Reflect on and evaluate one's own performance and implement targets to develop skills and abilities
7. Work with a range of professionals
8. Meet professional requirements.

1.2 The Code of Practice

i) Training and development: CSWs should:

1. Hold qualifications in educational and appropriate vocational and communication skills
2. Be registered or listed where appropriate vocational and communication skill registers are available
3. Seek informed feedback from others, eg line managers, and peers, on performance. Also, receive feedback from learners during their Individual Learning Plans and reviews
4. Strive to develop and constantly update professional skills to provide the highest level of support for deaf learners
5. Keep up to date with current legislation, initiatives, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and any changes or developments within the profession
6. Be aware of fundamental changes within the educational sector that may impact on the learning and support environment, eg changes to funding
7. Be aware of the basic principles of teaching and learning and individual learning styles and how these may affect performance
8. Be aware of the diversity of deaf educational settings, ie oral, bilingual, BSL, etc, and the range of experiences/backgrounds of different deaf learners.

ii) Confidentiality and neutrality: CSWs should:

1. Respect confidentiality. All personal information about a learner to which a CSW has access should be treated as confidential. Information about a learner's needs, progress and assessment can be shared within the support team to aid continuity of support. However, the CSW should be aware of the implications of the Data Protection Act, computer security and GDPR requirements
2. Remain impartial and neutral when providing communication support
3. Remain objective and respect individual learners' identities regardless of culture, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, and age
4. Be aware of the legal implications of professional practice
5. Be aware of health and safety issues.

iii) Equal opportunities: CSWs should:

1. Promote equality of access to education, training, and employment opportunities for deaf and deafblind people, and promote positive attitudes
2. Recognise and respect the individual support needs of learners. The CSW should not advocate one method of communication in preference to another but should seek to meet the needs of all
3. Employ direct and indirect support strategies that will empower learners
4. Display non-discriminatory behaviour at all times, eg in relation to culture, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, and age
5. Support a cultural awareness of the educational setting and enable learners to understand the context in which they are learning
6. Encourage learners wishing to explore their identity and culture
7. Enable learners to work in a linguistic and cultural environment that may not reflect that of the minority group to which they belong
8. Recognise the importance of inclusion by using appropriate means of communication at all times in the presence of deaf people
9. Be responsive to the ever-changing needs of both learners and the learning environment.

iv) Professional relationships: CSWs should:

1. Establish a good professional relationship with colleagues. When necessary, a CSW should be able to ask for clarification and support from other staff and in turn offer reasonable assistance and co-operation. A CSW should be in a position to advise and guide members of staff on deaf issues and be able to obtain schemes of work, lesson plans, and handouts
2. Develop respectful and professional working relationships with all involved in the educational process. Be able to liaise clearly with other CSWs and those responsible for booking CSWs to ensure continuity of support
3. Be able to explain the role of the CSW clearly and professionally
4. Understand the role of other professionals within the educational environment, and support learners who may be referred to them, in a professional manner.

5. Establish and maintain links with organisations working to improve access to education for deaf people
6. Take part in professional reviews (appraisals) and observations within their educational organisation
7. Receive feedback from learners, tutors, colleagues, and managers, in a professional manner and act on their comments accordingly
8. Contribute to reviews of support provision to enable learner support to be as effective as possible.

v) Resources: CSWs should:

1. Facilitate the use of assistive technology, eg induction loops, sound field systems, etc
2. Liaise with teaching staff to ensure subtitles are available on DVDs or online clips. Where they are not available, ensure time is given to create transcriptions where they cannot be sourced.

Section 2:

An Employer's Guide to the Code of Practice for communication support workers for deaf learners

Guidelines for recruiting CSWs

The CSW should be employed as part of a team supporting deaf learners, whether in schools, colleges, adult services, universities, or other educational environments. Other personnel may include:

- Tutors for deaf learners
- QToDs
- Deaf educational instructors
- Notetakers (including electronic notetakers)
- Speech-to-text reporters
- Lipspeakers
- BSL/English interpreters
- Educational psychologists
- Audiologists

Each of these roles has different professional responsibilities that employers should recognise. Following an assessment of the individual learner's needs by appropriately trained and qualified personnel, the educational establishment can consider what reasonable adjustments can be made to meet the learner's needs and fulfil any obligations under the Disability Equality Duty.

Appropriate qualifications for team members (plus legacy equivalents):

- Signature Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support for Deaf Learners, or equivalent
- Signature/iBSL BSL/ISL NVQ or Levels 3 or 6
- Signature Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting/Level 3 in Lipspeaking, or equivalent
- NVQ/Stages 2 or 3 in Notetaking/Electronic Notetaking
- Level 3 in Communication and Guiding Skills with Deafblind People
- Signature Level 3 Award in Modifying Written English Texts for Deaf People
- OCN Level 3 in Notetaking for Learners with Disabilities
- Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) Language Modifier (LM) course
- BATOD Online Language Modification Tier 1 or 2
- BEd/PGDip SEN (HI)/MEd/Qualified Teacher of Deaf children/BSc in Speech and Language Therapy
- C&G Adult Education Teaching certificate eg Certificate/Diploma in Education and Training (CET/DET), CTLLS, DTLLS, 7407 Parts 1&2, or equivalent.

It is desirable that CSWs who work with BSL users achieve a minimum recognised qualification in BSL at Level 3 and should be encouraged to obtain BSL at Level 6. Those who wish to undertake interpreter training should be actively encouraged to do so. Also, those who wish to become qualified notetakers or lipspeakers or undertake further training in modifying texts for deaf and deafblind people should also be actively encouraged to do so.

The employment of CSWs should take place within the context of an existing good practice framework for the employment of all staff.

i) Before recruiting CSWs

The recommendation is that employers should:

1. Place the job within the organisational structure.
2. Compose a clear job description based on the agreed role
3. Define a person specification, which at a minimum considers qualifications, previous education or knowledge, skills, and experience
4. Determine the desirable opportunities for professional training and set aside funding eg Signature CSW (or equivalent), NVQ Level 3 and 6 in a professional skill
5. Arrange appropriate conditions of service, eg Common Pay Spine, with related entitlements to holiday, sick pay, etc. Arrange appropriate sessional contracts with holiday entitlement
6. Determine pay scales and grading that match the level of responsibility in the job, are compatible with other workers having similar responsibilities and grades of pay within the same educational institution, and which reflect the specialist nature of the work. Determine pay increases upon achieving higher qualifications, such as BSL levels 3 and 6, and CSW qualifications
7. Nominate whether the job is full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary (including fixed term), and what working pattern is required. If part-time, consider the most appropriate form of contract, eg fractional, sessional, annual hours, etc, and the effects of the related pay systems on recruiting and retaining quality employees
8. Decide on termination arrangements and notification of contractual changes
9. Consult with and seek agreement from appropriate employee representatives.

ii) Recruiting CSWs

Communication support work is a specialist field. Employers are recommended to advertise through routes that may reach potential CSWs, including BATOD, Deaf UK Jobs (Yahoo Group), British Sign Language & Deaf Jobs And Events/courses (Facebook) and LinkedIn.

iii) Interviewing CSWs

The recommendation is that the interview, assessment, and selection procedure should include the following:

1. A communication assessment with a deaf BSL tutor. This is to gauge the applicant's aptitude, attitude, and ability to establish a rapport. If the post requires signed communication, this assessment should replicate as near as possible the job requirements, focusing on the candidate's expressive and receptive skills and ability to work between two languages, and to draw up a training plan for the new CSW
2. A formal interview by a panel including an appropriately qualified and experienced person such as a Senior CSW or QToD, as well as the prospective line manager
3. A possible further skills test, eg notetaking, modification of a written text, video transcript/notes, etc
4. A functional skills assessment to ensure the CSW's own skills are of a suitable standard (a minimum of GCSE Level 4/5 in English & Maths) to match the requirements of the deaf learners they will support.

iv) Induction of CSWs

The recommendation is that CSWs need induction into the following:

1. The balance of tasks, including time spent in contact with learners, in preparation, in administration, and other responsibilities, eg video transcripts and modification of written texts
2. The working practices and procedures, and professional boundaries in their own department, eg maintenance of log sheets/records, what to do when a learner is absent, who to contact if affected by illness etc
3. The working practices and procedures for working with lecturers. The role of the CSW eg If there is a fire alarm, etc
4. The working practices and procedures regarding safeguarding

5. The working practices and procedures regarding disability and diversity
6. The lines of management and the roles of colleagues
7. The expected levels of responsibility, eg when to deal with a situation and when to report or refer
8. The educational institution's professional expectations around confidentiality
9. The procedures for claiming, eg travel expenses, time off including holiday and other entitlements
10. The opportunities for training and development offered by the educational institution and access to administration systems
11. Health and safety at work, eg repetitive strain injury (RSI), situational/environmental risks, and lone or evening work
12. The role of human resources and their services, eg pensions. Most educational institutions will have procedures for DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service, formerly CRB) checks and professional indemnity insurance. However, these safeguards must be checked if employing freelance/agency staff.

v) 'On the job'

1. Employers should seek advice from specialist staff with regard to when it is appropriate to employ a CSW and when another professional is required. This is usually established during the assessment of the learner's needs.
2. Employers should be aware of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (influenced by and incorporating the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and the implications for compliance relating to staff and learners.

The educational institution is responsible under the Equality Act 2010 to make anticipatory adjustments in order to arrange appropriate access for deaf learners, such as planning for future provision in order to recruit qualified support staff.

Educational institutions need to conduct regular audits to ensure that they have suitably representative specialist staff and/or a service-in arrangement, eg with the local authority or agency.

3. The learner's needs, the qualifications and expertise of the staff, and the curriculum demands must be considered. Employers should not assume that a CSW with poorly developed BSL might support a learner with poorly developed BSL skills. Learners require support from staff with skills and knowledge that exceed their own, where possible.

4. The CSW has the right to discuss issues with their manager when they feel a task is beyond their level of training and present ability.

Good working conditions contribute to the quality of service given by the CSW. These include the following:

- a. Appropriate pay and conditions (including hours and holidays)
- b. Job security (including contracts)
- c. Sufficient non-contact time for breaks, preparation, review, liaison, etc
- d. Training and development opportunities
- e. Access to information, eg staff and team meetings
- f. Access to a staff room, a library card, the IT network, etc
- g. Attention to the physical environment, eg availability of office space, suitability of lighting
- h. Health and safety information specific to CSWs such as that relating to RSI and supporting learners in practical situations. This includes consideration from the employer about co-working. For fast-paced classes, it will be necessary to have two CSWs working together
- i. Support from fellow professionals
- j. Realistic expectations as to responsibilities for control and discipline
- k. Procedures to cover colleague absence and unexpected work requirements.

vi) Training and development

To provide a professional service for learners, educational institutions should endeavour to employ qualified CSWs holding, for example, the following qualifications:

- Signature Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support for Deaf Learners (or equivalent), and
- Signature/iBSL qualifications in the required communication and language skills to the appropriate level, recommended at Levels 3 or 6, and
- appropriate GCSEs, including English with the minimum GCSE level 4/5 (also required as entry qualifications for the Signature CSW Certificate), and other functional and wider key skills.

In the best interests of their client groups, educational institutions employing unqualified CSWs (ie those who do not hold the Edexcel or Signature qualifications) should take some responsibility for their professional development and facilitate access to appropriate training and qualifications.

Support for training can take the form of assistance with course and assessment fees, travel expenses, time allocated to development, time off from other duties, support with work placement observations, etc.

vii) Registration

Qualified CSWs should be members of an appropriate professional organisation, for example, BATOD, and apply for registration if available.

viii) Networking

CSWs work in a specialist field and are often isolated by distance from colleagues doing the same job. Employers need to recognise the value of opportunities for CSWs to network on a regional, national, or UK-wide basis, and encourage and facilitate their participation. Support and enrichment gained through these activities can enhance the quality of service to learners. It is advisable that CSWs join a relevant professional organisation, for example, BATOD, to keep up to date with new initiatives and for networking opportunities, including online forums and email groups.

viii) Career progression

Promoted posts for experienced CSWs may include responsibilities, for example:

- a. Co-ordinating the work of other CSWs
- b. Acting as a mentor and/or line manager
- c. Delivering CSW training
- d. Developing educational institutional systems with regard to the employment and supervision of CSWs and support for learners.

Glossary of terms

ACSW	Association of Communication Support Workers
APT&C	Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical
BATOD	British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BSC	Bachelor of Science
BSL	British Sign Language
C&G	City & Guilds
CET	Certificate in Education and Training (previously CTLLS)
CIEA	Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CSW	communication support worker
CTLLS	Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (now CET)
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DET	Diploma in Education and Training (previously DTLLS)
DTLLS	Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (now DET)
HI	hearing impairment/impaired
iBSL	Institute of British Sign Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISL	Irish Sign Language
IT	Information technology
LM	Language Modifier course
NATED	National Association for Tertiary Education for Deaf People
MEd	Master of Education
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PGDip	Postgraduate Diploma
QCSW	Qualified Communication Support Worker
QToD	Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People
CIQToD	Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (Cochlear Implants)
SEE	Signing Exact English
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLT	Speech & Language Therapist
SSE	Sign Supported English

This Code of Practice has been in existence for a number of years. In 2007 it was adapted by NATED following a series of meetings with CSWs, other relevant staff, and deaf learners around the country, and endorsed by ACSW. It was updated by ADEPT in 2014. This present version was reviewed by BATOD in April 2023.



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