

WEBINAR QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Title: Accessible eyecare for Deaf patients and those who are hard of hearing
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- 1 Do people use BSL or Makaton more?
Makaton is not a language, but rather a programme. It is often used with babies and young children. It is estimated that there are over 150 thousand BSL users in the UK. Whilst there is no statistic regarding the use of Makaton, as such, I would say that BSL has a much wider use.
- 2 If I was to learn BSL, how do you recommend keeping up practise if I don't see many deaf patients?
It would be useful to do a little research to find out if there are any Deaf clubs or meeting groups in your area. Alternatively, there are some online groups, where participants can practise their signing skills. Following various Deaf organisations on social media could also be very helpful.
- 3 Which are the most useful gestures/words to learn?
This very much depends on the environment. Greeting signs, numbers, colours, family, work and hobby related signs tend to be a starting point on BSL Level 1 courses.
- 4 What is 'Text Relay'?
*It is a system which helps deaf, speech-impaired and hearing people talk to each other over the phone (also available as an app). The principle behind it is as follows: Deaf or speech impaired person **types** - relay assistant **talks** - hearing person **listens** - hearing person **talks** - relay assistant **types** - Deaf or speech impaired person **reads**.*
- 5 In Scotland NHS interpreters will come for the appointment for free but not for the collection of specs. Any tips for dealing with this?
Collection of spectacles should not involve any medical information exchange, therefore in the absence of an interpreter the process could be completed successfully by learning some relevant signs to replace the usual phrase which we tend to use at this stage of the customer journey.
- 6 Is there any provision for an NHS interpreter if delivering NHS eyecare services - it is classed as a disability after all & no different to having another language as a first language
I could not answer this question with certainty, as this remains a somewhat grey area for eyecare providers. As far as I am aware, currently only hospital services have such a provision.
- 7 In my practice, I would get the length to bends measured with the interpreter there during dispense, so the collection is much easier. I did a quick "BSL for optics" course with the local college, so I learned basic signs (like "measure") and a thumbs up or down has always been ok
Fantastic! Some common phrases, like 'vision', 'glasses', 'read', 'drive', 'like', 'happy' etc. are easy to remember and would most certainly impress your Deaf patient.