

# DEAF FRIENDLY ATHLETICS AND RUNNING RESOURCE



# Welcome

We are proud that athletics is perceived by many as being a trailblazing sport in the area of inclusive delivery.

We have made a deliberate commitment to ensure that all our resources, events and delivery programmes are inclusive at the point of use in recognition that the sport of athletics should be accessible to all and that there should be no divisions.



Athletes are athletes and with specific adaptations and an open mind huge gains can be achieved with minimal impact on the club/group, the coach, the volunteer and the facility provider.

We have made great strides in this respect during the last few years and are committed to continuing to take further steps to better attract and support deaf participants to athletics.

None of this would have been possible without the commitment and dedication of numerous volunteer coaches, leaders, officials, parents, teachers and facility providers who have embraced this mission without question.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the National Deaf Children's Society for their continued partnership and expertise and for their general support in compiling this resource. We hope that you enjoy reading this resource and that it provides inspiration to you to take action in whatever important role you play to make athletics a deaf friendly sport.



**Chris Jones**

*Chief Executive, England Athletics*

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# The Equality Act 2010

In 2010, an Act was passed that brought together existing equality legislation. The Equality Act 2010 protects against the discrimination of disabled people. It is unlawful for employers, service providers and public bodies not to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people. In practice, this means you should do things differently if the usual way would substantially disadvantage a deaf person. It may also mean providing additional services and equipment.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- ◆ changing standard procedures, such as forms, so disabled people can complete them
- ◆ adapting activities, modifying leadership or providing alternate forms of activity
- ◆ adapting facilities, such as providing flashing fire alarms or written instructions
- ◆ providing additional services, such as a sign language interpreter or materials in an alternate format
- ◆ training staff and volunteers to understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act

For further information on the Equality Act 2010, you can visit:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-guidance)

or the Sport and Recreation Alliance's 'Equality Act Toolkit'

[www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/news/13-06-2011/equality-act-toolkit](http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/news/13-06-2011/equality-act-toolkit)

## Kevin Reeve is a coach at Birchfield Harriers

*Apart from all the usual challenges that you meet with any athlete the most obvious one when I started coaching a deaf athlete was communication. Most deaf people are pretty good at making themselves understood to hearing people, but this is not usually the case for hearing people to make themselves understood to deaf people.*

*The athlete involved joined other athletes I coach and through a mixture of using visual examples of other athletes, finger spelling and some inventive (but mostly incorrect!) sign language and the use of ipads we have not encountered any major difficulties in understanding each other.*

*Like a lot of other hearing people who have never encountered deaf people before there was initial wariness from other athletes but the other athletes have improved their own communication with the athlete and they are now just another group member.*

*It all comes down to each of you making yourselves understood - I started to learn signing from the internet and use it with my athlete, who puts me right very quickly if I am incorrect! Things do get easier as time goes on and you both get to know each other better and they understand what is required to be an athlete.*

*Kevin's advice to other coaches is 'Every athlete wants the same thing irrespective of who they are, what they look like or what abilities they may possess. They want to enjoy, improve and succeed in their sport, just help them to obtain this , it might take some adaption and change to what you are normally used to but you will be surprised how very little this will be.'*

# Barriers to Participation

Deaf people face multiple barriers to participate and to achieve. Many of these barriers an athletics or running club, coach or leader may have never considered, and may, with just a little bit of thought, be able to either remove or support the deaf person to overcome.

## Physical

- ◆ Balance – however, balance issues affect a very small percentage of deaf people.
- ◆ A deaf person has exactly the same physical capabilities as a hearing person! There is no physical barrier to stop a deaf person reaching the pinnacle of athletics.

## Psychological

- ◆ Low self-esteem, deaf people are twice as likely to suffer from mental health problems than the general population
- ◆ Low confidence through not feeling like part of a club
- ◆ Loneliness and feelings of isolation
- ◆ Frustration through not being able to understand or be understood
- ◆ Aggravation at not being able to follow instructions
- ◆ Disappointment at not understanding the reasoning (for example, why wasn't I picked?)
- ◆ Anxiety of how clubs, coaches and peers will react to their deafness

## Technical

- ◆ Not hearing a starting gun or a whistle.
- ◆ Not understanding a coach or leader's instructions and guidelines
- ◆ Not understanding a coach or leader's coaching interventions
- ◆ Not understanding technical information during participating, for example the call of a relay runner coming in to hand over a baton
- ◆ Not understanding technical discussions with peers and other key influences
- ◆ Not understanding the rules of an activity or event
- ◆ Not understanding officials or loud speaker announcements at a competition/race
- ◆ Reduced learning opportunities due to just copying peers
- ◆ Reduced responsibility due to perceived lower ability

## Social

- ◆ Not being able to join in conversations before, during or after an activity
- ◆ Not being able to join in conversations during social time – i.e. the clubhouse
- ◆ Bullying due to being different
- ◆ Limited opportunities to participate due to a lack of inclusive clubs
- ◆ Attending a club for the first time and not knowing how you will be treated

# Understanding Deafness

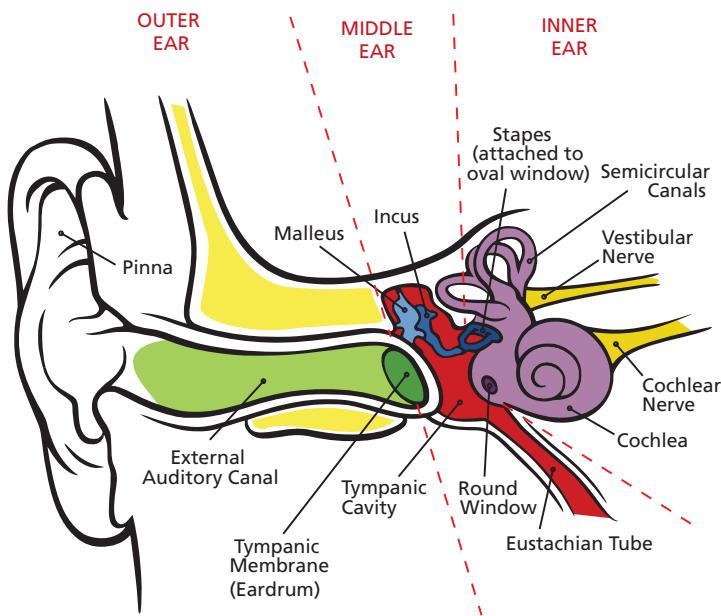
## The Ear

The ear has two functions – hearing and balance – both of which are closely connected. Hearing involves the ear, part of the nervous system and part of the brain. All three must work together for the brain to receive sound and be able to interpret it so that it becomes meaningful and is understood.

Balance involves the semi-circular canals. These are three tubes filled with fluid that work like spirit levels sending messages to the brain when we move around.

The ear can be divided into three main sections:

- ◆ Outer ear
- ◆ Middle ear
- ◆ Inner ear



## How the Ear Works

Sound waves enter the ear canal and cause the eardrum to vibrate. These vibrations are passed across the middle ear by three tiny bones: the hammer (malleus), anvil (incus) and stirrup (stapes). These act as levers, increasing the strength of the vibrations before they pass into the cochlea via the oval window. In the snail-like structure of the cochlea there are thousands of tiny sound-sensitive hair cells, which are set in motion by these sound vibrations. The movement of the hair cells is converted into electrical signals that travel along the auditory nerve to the brain where they are interpreted and given meaning.

## What is Sound?

Sound is an invisible vibration. It travels in waves, spreading outwards from the source of the sound and is made up of small and very quick changes in air pressure.

Individual sounds are different in both loudness (intensity) and pitch (frequency). Loudness can be measured in decibels (dB). The 'pitch' of a sound is also important. A high-pitched sound is where sound waves occur at a very fast pace; this is why it is referred to as high frequency. Low frequency is where low-pitched sound is made up of slower sound waves. Frequency is measured in Hertz (Hz). Speech is a mixture of high and low frequency sounds. Consonants are generally higher in frequency than vowels.

## Levels of Deafness

The definitions below are a simple way to understand different levels of deafness.

### Mild (21–40dB)

- ◆ People can usually hear everything that is said to them in a quiet room, but not if there is lots of noise present or they are far away from the person speaking.
- ◆ A person would not be able to follow a whispered conversation.
- ◆ Some people with mild deafness use hearing aids.
- ◆ A person with glue ear will usually have mild deafness.

### Moderate (41–70dB)

- ◆ Most people with moderate deafness use hearing aids.
- ◆ Without their hearing aids, these people could hear most of what someone says to them in a quiet room as long as the speaker is talking clearly, but could not follow a conversation in a group if there is lots of noise or they are far away from the person speaking.

### Severe (71–95dB)

- ◆ Most people with severe deafness use hearing aids and as a result can follow spoken conversation with one person in a quiet room.
- ◆ Even with the use of hearing aids they may need additional support to follow speech in places with background noise and in groups.
- ◆ Without hearing aids they may not hear someone talking to them but may hear some louder sounds, like a starting gun or fire alarm.

### Profound (95dB+)

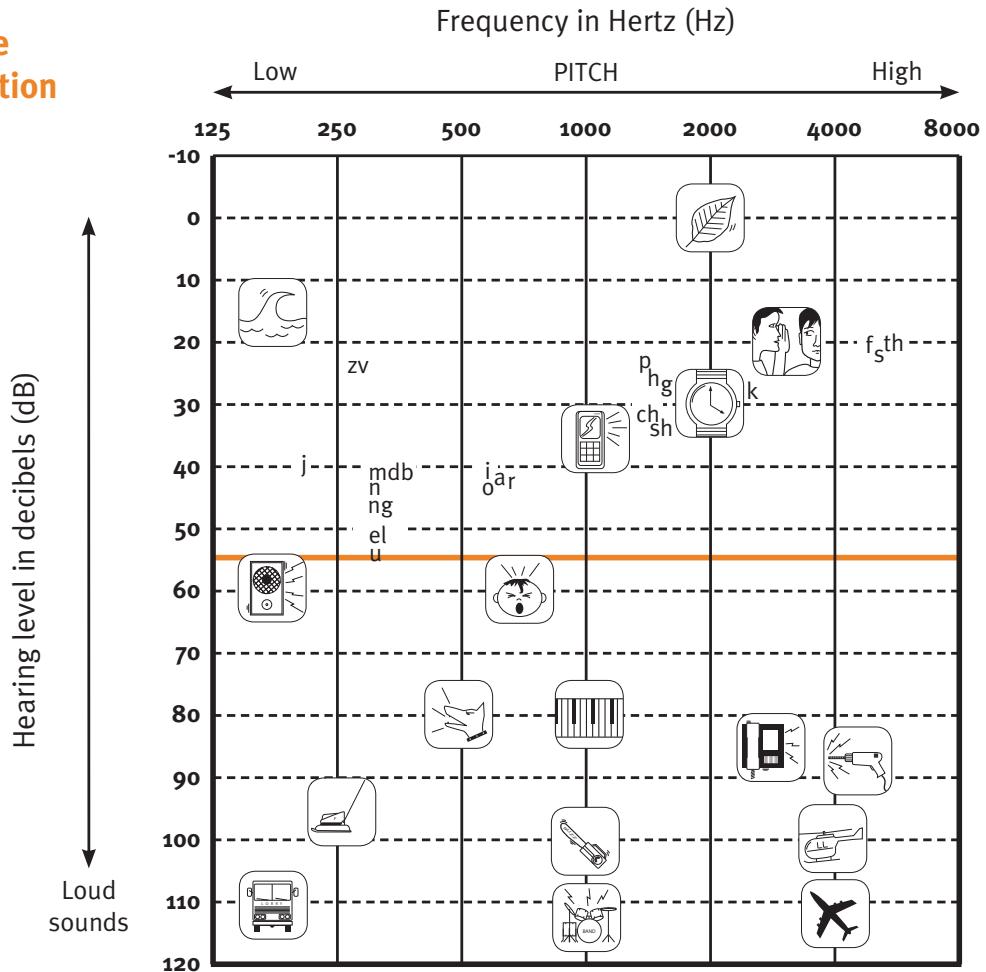
- ◆ A profoundly deaf person may use either hearing aids or cochlear implants or neither, should they wish. This could be through personal choice or because they receive no useful benefit from them.
- ◆ Without hearing aids or cochlear implants a profoundly deaf person cannot hear someone talking but may be able to feel very loud noises such as a passing lorry.
- ◆ Even with hearing aids or cochlear implants they may need additional support following speech in background noise and in groups.
- ◆ Some profoundly deaf people will use signing as their main means of communication, many others will use signing as a way to support their understanding of spoken communication.

It is very rare for a person to have no hearing at all (total deafness) but this may be caused by a congenital (born-with) abnormality in the inner ear, for example because there is no cochlea or hearing nerve, or because the cochlea has suffered extensive damage caused by an illness such as meningitis. In these individuals a hearing aid or cochlear implant would offer no benefit and they are likely to use sign language as their main means of communication. These are very basic descriptions of the different levels of deafness. It is important to remember that every individual's hearing ability is different and may not easily fit into a certain bracket. A person's hearing may also be different in each ear. As a leader or coach it is important to understand how much a deaf person can hear and understand what their requirements are.

## Visual representation of the loudness and pitch of a range of everyday sounds

**55db and above  
=S15 classification**

Levels of deafness:
Mild deafness 21 - 40 dB
Moderate deafness 41 - 70 dB
Severe deafness 71 - 95 dB
Profound deafness 95+ dB



# Types of Deafness

There are two main types of deafness.

# Conductive deafness

This is the most common type of deafness in childhood and occurs when sound cannot pass through the outer and middle ear to the cochlea and auditory nerve in the inner ear. This is often caused by fluid building up in the middle ear (known in children as glue ear). Glue ear can cause temporary deafness and often clears up naturally after a short time. However, it can also develop into a long term condition requiring surgical intervention such as grommets or the wearing of hearing aids.

# Sensori-neural deafness

Sensori-neural deafness is the most common type of deafness in adults. A person may have been born with sensori-neural deafness or it may develop later in life. Sensori-neural deafness is usually caused by the loss of or damage to the hair cells in the cochlea which is in the inner ear. This means that the cochlea does not process sound effectively. In adults sensori-neural deafness is most often caused by long-term exposure to loud noise or the aging process. However it can also be genetic (inherited) or caused by an illness or infection such as measles, mumps, rubella, cytomegalovirus (CMV) or meningitis. Sensori-neural deafness is permanent.

## The Impact of Deafness

People develop communication, learning and social skills on a daily basis. The impact of deafness in these areas will be different for each individual. No two deaf people are the same but any level of deafness can affect a person's access to communication. Being unable to access communication often has the greatest impact on language development. English is a spoken language, and from a very early age, we learn about speech patterns and sentence structures from listening to other people talk.

Deaf people usually hear some frequencies (pitches) better than others. This means they may not hear all the parts of every word that is spoken. For example, m, b and d are low frequency sounds and s, f and t are high frequency speech sounds. This means the deaf person may only hear part of the word. For example instead of hearing *strides*, they might only hear *ride* or instead of *next week's session is fartlek*, they might only hear *nex week eion i arlek*. Some deaf people may not hear a whistle whereas others will, and for some deaf people a whistle may be painful due to a hearing aid amplifying the noise.

Deaf people may have a limited vocabulary because they do not hear different words being used in conversations around them and may not be confident that they have heard a new word correctly. This includes place names and technical terms that might be used in sessions or practices. For example "single leg drills" or "drive phase".

Some deaf people, because of their communication difficulties, may come across as quite shy or quiet. They may lack confidence or self-esteem and find it difficult to interact with others. Some deaf people will very confidently ask for clarification or for you to repeat what you have said or explain technical terms. However some will be too shy or embarrassed to ask you. It is really important that you check for understanding and gauge the person's understanding, for example monitoring their facial expressions and checking they are looking at you, while at the same time being careful not to single the deaf person out.

Remember a deaf person may:

- ◆ not be able to hear enough to make sense of what is being said
- ◆ think that they have understood fully and not realise that they have missed out on important information (such as how to do a particular activity correctly or the meeting time for the next session)
- ◆ misunderstand what is said
- ◆ lack confidence or self-esteem

# Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants

## Different Types of Hearing Aids

Most hearing aids work by making the sounds going into the ear louder. Hearing aids come in various shapes and sizes and all are programmed to closely match the individual's hearing loss. Most hearing aids are worn behind the ear (BTE) or in the ear (ITE), but you may also see bone conduction hearing aids.

### Behind the Ear Hearing Aids

BTE hearing aids are the most common type. People might wear one or two hearing aids. A hard plastic 'elbow' allows the hearing aid to hang on the top of the ear and joins the hearing aid to the ear mould that sits inside the ear.

All parts of an ITE hearing aid are enclosed in the shell, which is custom-made to the user's ear. The hearing aid may be visible in the bowl of the ear or may be minuscule and deep in the ear canal so it cannot be seen.



People with permanent conductive hearing loss, for example caused by a congenital (present since birth) abnormality of the outer or middle ear, may use a bone conduction hearing aid. These hearing aids work by converting sound into mechanical vibration. The hearing aid is worn on the bone behind the ear (known as the mastoid) and the vibrations stimulate the inner ear (cochlea), bypassing the outer and middle ear. Some people who use these hearing aids will have had surgery to implant a small screw into the mastoid, which the hearing aid clips on to when being used.

Hearing aids can be set to have one or more listening programmes. The person is likely to know which programme they should use at which times and should be comfortable with adjusting their hearing aid. With children it is the parent's responsibility to ensure a child's hearing aid is working correctly and the programme used is appropriate.

A hearing aid consists of a microphone and an amplifier. The microphone picks up the sounds in the environment which are then made louder. The amplified sound then travels through the ear mould, into the ear canal. A hearing aid enables people to make the most of any residual hearing they may have.

### Hearing aids do not restore typical hearing levels

It is important to remember that all noise, including background noise, is amplified, making communication difficult in noisy environments. The hearing aid microphone works best at a distance of between one and two metres from the speaker in quiet conditions.

### Cochlear Implants

Cochlear implants work differently from hearing aids. Instead of amplifying sound they use electrodes, which are implanted in the cochlea, in the inner ear, to provide electrical stimulation of the nerves that the brain interprets as sound.



These electrodes are connected to a receiver that is implanted into the skull behind the ear. This receives electronic information from the transmitter, which is attached by a magnet to the outside of the head.

The user wears a microphone and speech processor behind the ear, as with a BTE hearing aid. The speech processor converts incoming sound from the microphone into electronic signals that are then passed to the transmitter and on to the receiver in the skull. These signals are then passed to the electrodes in the implanted cochlea.

## **Wearing hearing aids and implants during activity**

Hearing aids and cochlear implants are sensitive pieces of electronic equipment and risk being broken if they fall out of the ear during vigorous activity. For this reason some deaf people will choose to take part in athletics and sport without using their aids. However, others prefer to wear them, particularly if they are taking part in athletics, running or other activities in a mainstream environment where they can use them to hear instructions or calls from teammates.

It is generally accepted that people can use their hearing aids and cochlear implants when playing sport and participating in athletics, provided they are comfortable and securely fitted. If in doubt, advise athletes, runners and where children are involved, parents, to ask for further advice from their audiologist (hearing specialist).

People who use hearing aids may use head protection (such as scrum caps) when playing vigorous sports. This may be relevant if you have an athlete participating in the high jump or pole vault to protect the area and aid when hitting a landing mat.

For a participant with a cochlear implant, the main risk is suffering a blow to the head on or around the site of the internal package which risks damaging the internal package or external parts (when worn) or the skin around the area. Although the risk is very small this could mean that it becomes necessary to have repeat surgery to replace the package. Like hearing aids, the external equipment is sensitive and risks being broken if it falls off.

The British Cochlear Implant Group (BCIG) advises “It may be advisable to remove the external parts of the system. If there is some risk of blows to the head the external parts should be removed and a form of head protection worn (for example, a scrum cap).”

Participants with a cochlear implant should therefore take this into consideration when taking part in events such as pole vault or high jump where there may be impact to the head and to either take part in these events at their own discretion and/or for external parts of a cochlear implant to be removed.

Care and consideration should also be given when taking part in jumping activity to avoid getting sand in the cochlear implant or hearing aid.

Due to the nature of other athletics events it is generally accepted that participants will take part while wearing their aids although it is advisable that they check with their audiologist before deciding to do so.

Individuals who have recently had cochlear implant surgery are advised against taking part in vigorous sport until the operation site has fully healed (approximately six weeks).

Please check with the BCIG for up-to-date advice and recommendations.

The International Committee of Sport for the Deaf (ICSD) governs all national international sports competitions for deaf people. In the interests of maintaining a level playing field, it does not permit the wearing of hearing aids or cochlear implants on the field of play during deaf competitions. Deaf people are not restricted from wearing their aids in 'mainstream' competitions – it is the athletes' personal choice as to whether they are worn.

## Melanie Jewett is a runner at Eastleigh Running Club

*Melanie first got involved in running at school when she competed in 800m and cross-country, then on leaving school/college, she ran for general fitness before finding the marathon distance and becoming hooked.*



*"My main challenge has always been safety. Being deaf, I have to be constantly aware of my surroundings and watch out for traffic, not just cars, but pedestrians too and I've had a few near misses with some cyclists. I can also miss out on communication while running, if focused or I cannot see the person's face, e.g. if it is dark it is hard to lip read.*

*I am very lucky that most of the time I have very understanding running friends who basically look after me. They hear cars before I see them and so make me aware and to make sure I move out of the way, they also repeat things for me that I may miss, or help me understand my track sessions. I have on occasion run too many reps as I heard incorrectly!*

*The main impact running has had on me is confidence! Knowing that I am quite good at my distance is a huge motivator and keeps me training hard and will push myself harder in races. Being able to compete for team GB this summer in the Deaflympics has been the most amazing experience in my time as a runner and has shown me, and others what you can achieve if you really want something enough and are prepared to work hard enough for it.*

*The advice I would give to other deaf people wanting to take part in athletics is don't let deafness hold you back from anything. We may have to focus or concentrate that bit harder, but the opportunities of athletics combined with being deaf are amazing and can be life changing. Find a good coach and look at the qualifying times of the Deaflympics (or other events) and work towards reaching those times / targets and become part of Team GB.*

*The advice I would give to clubs/groups is that good communication and patience is needed in abundance. Communication is the main factor with deaf people. It can be hard to concentrate on your training while getting instructions from your coach / leader, so a lot of patience is required on both sides. It can also be tiring, the actual concentration required by a deaf person, so this needs to be taken into consideration as well.*

# Communication

## How do Deaf People Communicate?

The information below describes a variety of communication approaches that deaf people use. Many people will use a combination of approaches when communicating.

### Auditory-Oral/Oral Approaches

With the use of technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, deaf people develop listening skills and spoken language.

### Lipreading

This involves the ability to read lip patterns. Deaf children naturally pick up lipreading. However, many speech sounds look the same when spoken (e.g.: pat and bat) so it is difficult for deaf people to rely solely on lipreading to communicate. Lipreading is usually used alongside other communication approaches.

### British Sign Language (BSL)

Over 70,000 people within the British Deaf Community use BSL. It is a visual language using handshapes, facial expressions, gestures and body language to communicate. BSL is an independent and complete language with a unique vocabulary. It has a structure and grammar different from that of the written and spoken English. As with other languages, it has evolved over time and developed regional dialects.

### Fingerspelling

This is where each letter of the alphabet is indicated by using the fingers and palm of the hand. It is used for signing names and places or for a word that doesn't have a sign. The British Fingerspelling Alphabet is included at the back of this booklet.

### Sign Supported English (SSE)

SSE uses signs taken from BSL. It is used in English word order but does not attempt to sign every word that is spoken. This may be an easier way to become familiar with sign language as it means that you can use signs together with your own language. As it uses the same signs as BSL, it can be helpful to children, parents and coaches who wish to develop BSL skills at a later stage.

### Signed English (SE)

SE is an exact representation of the English language through the use of signs, where a sign is used for every spoken word. It is usually used in educational settings to develop written and spoken English skills. If a person uses only BSL to communicate they may not be able to fully understand SSE or SE due to the structural or grammatical changes.

### Makaton

Makaton is a sign system that is used with children and adults (deaf and hearing), who may have communication and/or learning difficulties. It uses speech together with signs (taken from BSL) and symbols and is grammar free.

**It is important that you do not make assumptions about a deaf person's communication method. Ensure that you ask the person (or parents) joining the club or activity their preferred communication method!**

## Communicating during athletics or running sessions

It is important deaf people are given the same opportunities to learn new skills and enjoy the activity just like anyone else.

As leaders and coaches you will understand the importance of excellent communication and the ability to offer your participants a safe, enjoyable and positive learning experience.

Below are some simple communication tips to ensure that you are fully inclusive of deaf people in your activities, sessions and other relevant social situations. Many of these tips are useful for communicating with all participants. All it takes is some simple, common-sense adaptations to give everyone the opportunity to access the activities and enjoy themselves.

- ◆ Ask the participants themselves if you are communicating clearly and if there are ways you can improve things. Most will be happy to tell you if you ask!
- ◆ Ensure you have the full attention of all participants before speaking. (This could simply involve calmly raising your arm and waiting for the group to stop talking/signing and face you).
- ◆ Ensure you are speaking in a well-lit area and that all participants can see your face. If using lights indoors / outdoors, make sure that light is shining on your face. Lights shining directly behind you will cause your face to be in shadow and much harder to lipread.
- ◆ Try to stay in one place and maintain eye contact when talking rather than walk around the round room or space. If you need to move elsewhere, for example, to set up equipment, then do not talk during this period. Try and stay within easy talking distance of the participants.
- ◆ When talking, avoid standing in front of a distracting background or in a noisy area (such as a sports hall or near another activity). It can be especially hard to concentrate on listening when such distractions are taking place, particularly for children.
- ◆ Relax and speak clearly. Do not exaggerate lip movements or facial expressions because this distorts the shapes you would normally make and can make it more difficult for people to understand you.
- ◆ Do not shout. This does not improve a deaf person's ability to understand you and your facial expressions when shouting can seem like you are angry. It may, however be necessary to speak louder and clearly particularly if a hearing aid is being used.
- ◆ Give out brief and simple instructions. Tell your participants what technical area you will be discussing before starting the demonstration and summarise and ask questions at the end to check for understanding.
- ◆ Do not eat or chew gum while speaking or block your face with your hand. Many deaf people rely on lip reading and this needs to be as clear as possible.
- ◆ Try to use as little jargon or technical sports/coaching terms as possible and stick to one point at a time.
- ◆ If there is more than one coach, always speak one at a time. If a new person is going to speak, they should raise their hand first to signify they will now be talking, this allows the deaf participant time to turn and face the new speaker.
- ◆ If possible, always use demonstrations to ensure greater understanding of what you want the children and young people to do. Try not to talk and demonstrate at the same time!

- ◆ Use pre-agreed visual signals for different actions during a game or training session (for example, for stop, play, activity names and so on). Most can be fairly straightforward and the whole group can help you to make them up. Always check that all participants understand prior to a game or session. Use these visual signals as well as or instead of oral signals (shouting, whistles, and so on).
- ◆ Make up your own signals and involve all the people in inventing them. Participants will enjoy doing this and it will help improve awareness of deafness throughout the group.
- ◆ If participants are spread out over a sports hall or outdoor athletics track and you need to speak to them all, stop the session using pre-agreed visual signals and bring them in to the middle before speaking. If you need them to remember their positions tell the participants to leave a marker on the spot where they were standing.
- ◆ Be patient. Be aware that deaf people may not respond straightaway to verbal or even visual signals, especially during an activity or game.
- ◆ Persevere. If your deaf participant(s) do not understand, don't give up. Try a different way of communicating or explain again more clearly.
- ◆ Write things down if stuck; write on a flip chart, notice board, white board or use a note book that you carry around with you,
- ◆ When arranging future sessions/matches, it might be easier to hand out a slip of paper to all your participants with the details on. This not only helps your participants who are deaf understand exactly what is planned, but also helps all the other participants too. They won't be able to use any excuses now for turning up late now

## Gaining the attention of a deaf participant

Welfare policies are designed to protect children and vulnerable adults from potential harm and also to protect the integrity of the adults who work with them.

Consequently, adult leaders and coaches are discouraged from physical contact between children and young people in particular. This can be a problem if, as leader or coach of a junior group, you wish to get the attention of a deaf child who has his/her back to you and cannot hear you calling them. As this is a common issue for deaf people, it is quite acceptable to gain the attention of a deaf person by tapping them on the shoulder; this includes deaf children and young people.

There are other ways of gaining their attention, such as walking around them until they see your face or asking a hearing group member who is nearby to get their attention for you, along with flashing lights (if indoors) or raising an arm to get everyone's attention. Any one of these can be used if you are still unsure about tapping a deaf person on the shoulder.

It is always wise to ensure that any communication between a leader or coach and child or young person takes place in an appropriate, open environment to protect both the child and the integrity of the leader or coach.

## Working with a communicator

If there is a deaf person whose first language is BSL attending your sessions then it may be valuable to use a volunteer communicator, communication support worker (CSW) or BSL interpreter to ensure they can fully communicate with the

coach and other participants. Similarly, a communicator may be required for classroom-based sessions or at club meetings. Remember, not all deaf people require communication support. Deaf people are all individual and use a wide range of communication methods. It is important to involve the deaf person, and potentially their parents in decision making about what level of signing a communicator should have.

Levels of communication support include:

#### **Volunteer communicators**

Volunteers can be used to communicate during events and activities to sign instructions to the group. It is important to remember that they are not professionally-trained interpreters.

Typical level: BSL Level 2 or above.

#### **Communication support workers (CSWs)**

CSWs are mainly based in educational settings and help communication between deaf students and hearing tutors.

Level: A minimum of BSL Level 2, but ideally Level 3.

#### **BSL interpreters**

BSL interpreters are professionally qualified to translate between English and BSL. There are different levels that trainees can register with the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) based on the qualifications they have.

Level: Junior Trainee Interpreters must have a minimum of BSL Level 3. Trainee Interpreters must have BSL Level 6

If a communicator, CSW or BSL interpreter is present, you may want to bear the following in mind:

- ◆ It is important to establish the roles and boundaries with the communicator prior to them arriving. This is particularly important if they are a parent, guardian or volunteer. This includes setting out what you expect from them as a communicator using the tips below and informing them that they are supporting in a communication role.
- ◆ Make sure that you let the communicator know, in advance, what you plan to do during a session. Perhaps hand them a copy of the session plan. This will allow the communicator time to prepare and ask any questions about the session that they may not understand
- ◆ Talk to the deaf person directly, rather than to the communicator, even if all the group is deaf and all are looking at the communicator, you are still there to lead the participant, not the communicator.
- ◆ Position yourself so the deaf person can see you and the communicator clearly. Standing side-by-side with the communicator is usually the most effective position.
- ◆ Speak clearly and not too fast. It is hard work listening to someone speak and then interpreting their words into BSL!
- ◆ Plan activities that give the communicator and the deaf person(s) a break from watching. Such activities could include scheduling regular drinks breaks or activities where there is no regular intervention from the coach.
- ◆ If asking a question to a group and you want a response, wait until the communicator has finished signing before allowing a response. This gives both the deaf person(s) the chance to respond and the communicator more time to interpret.

- ◆ It is good practice to get everyone in your group to raise their hand if they want to respond to your questions or ask you a question. This is a good control for turn-taking and allows the communicator and the deaf person(s) time to locate the new speaker. It also gives the coach the opportunity to allow more involvement from those who may be less confident to contribute.
- ◆ You cannot look at two places at once so, when demonstrating or working from a whiteboard or flip chart build in a time lapse so that the deaf person can look at you and then turn their attention to the communicator, otherwise they will miss the explanation. Remember, you should not talk during demonstrations, if possible.
- ◆ Try and use basic BSL yourself, even if the communicator is present. This will help you communicate directly to the deaf person and help build a relationship with them as you would a hearing person.

Be aware that it is impossible to learn BSL just from this resource or from the internet. If you would like to learn BSL and communicate with BSL users then the best place to start is to take a course taught by a qualified sign language teacher.

Contact Signature for more information on attending a BSL course yourself. See the 'Useful contacts' section at the back of this booklet.

### **Where to find a communicator?**

#### **England Athletics**

**The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People – [www.nrcpd.org.uk](http://www.nrcpd.org.uk)**

A database of communication professionals.

#### **Signature – [www.signature.org](http://www.signature.org)**

British Sign Language (BSL) courses are delivered across the UK by a variety of training institutions, including adult education centres, colleges and BSL training centres. Many of the participants are keen to develop their BSL skills through practising and volunteering with deaf children and young people at all levels from Level 1 to Level 6. Signature is the awarding body for BSL courses. Its website has information on local training centres you could contact.

#### **Deaf Jobs UK yahoo group – [deafjobsuk@yahoogroups.com](mailto:deafjobsuk@yahoogroups.com)**

This group is used by deaf people and people who have an interest in working with the deaf community. Jobs and volunteer opportunities can be posted on the website for free and is used by a cross section of people who have an interest in deafness.

#### **National Deaf Children's Society – [www.ndcs.org.uk/me2volunteers](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/me2volunteers)**

Provides advice on finding volunteer communicators and interpreters, and also have a pool of volunteer communicators and interpreters that could potentially support your club. Contact [me2@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:me2@ndcs.org.uk)

### **Cost**

#### **BSL Interpreter**

Typically £30 to £50 per hour. A short sports session may only require one BSL interpreter, whilst a longer session, or a theory based session may require two BSL interpreters. Interpreting is very intensive, therefore interpreters will require breaks over longer sessions, or if natural breaks are not included in the session.

#### **Communication Support Workers**

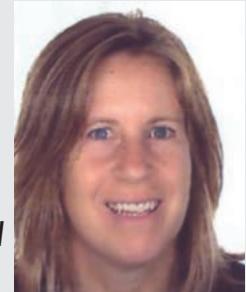
Typically £10 to £30 per hour.

## Volunteer Communicators

Typically free, but do consider the payment of reasonable travel and other expenses. You may already have your own volunteers or staff members who have completed BSL level 1 which will be beneficial to any deaf person who joins your group. However, it is important to assess whether this is sufficient to meet the person's needs. The best way to do this is to ask the person and, if a child, their parents what communication method they use and the level of signing they will need for support. The key point is to do what is reasonably practicable and a reasonable adjustment to ensure a deaf person can access your activities. There are alternatives to paying for a BSL interpreter on a long-term basis that you can and should consider, including; taking the advice of this guide and being deaf-friendly, using volunteers and only using communication support for a short period, such as an introductory session.

### **Rebecca Foster is an athletics coach and team manager for the Deaflympics athletics squad**

*"As a hearing person I did not know what to expect coaching deaf athletes! I did not know how to get their attention if they weren't looking at me, making sure they understood what I was asking regarding technique. I did not want to upset anyone by signing when I should be using my voice, getting my signs all muddled and not being understood by the athletes.*



*I went on a BSL course and developed basic sign. Most of the athletes can lip read or have hearing aids so I tended to use sign support to make my communications clearer. I developed a rapport with the athletes and began to recognise which way they preferred to receive and give information. By talking with the athletes and creating a friendly environment worked well because we could laugh at each other, so we never felt silly about 'getting things wrong'. The athletes themselves offer support because they recognise how difficult it can be to communicate so they are often extremely patient when I tried to get a specific point across.*

*The main barrier for me was confidence. I wanted to communicate but felt very conscious and nervous because I was worried I would not be understood. However, of all the athletes I have come into contact with (and most other Deaf sports players) they are so delighted that you even try. So, I was the barrier. As my confidence grew and I felt more at ease, those athletes around me also felt more at ease. Other barriers were giving instructions when the weather was bad (rain/windy). I had to maintain eye contact and ask open ended questions to insure they understood what I had said as the surrounding noise often cancelled out my voice.*

*I think the main impact for me is because Deaf athletes are a minority group any sort of help or recognition is greatly appreciated. The athletes I work with want to be heard and be pushed the same as any athlete. By being aware of communication issues means you get more information to the athletes and help them improve further.*

*Creating a friendship or rapport with the athlete is crucial. Without this bond I really don't think I could have helped the athletes as much as I did. It is important that the athlete feels safe and that they can be themselves in your care.*

*The advice I would give to other coaches and clubs wanting to work with deaf athletes is do it! I got involved in 2004 and have never looked back. You get great satisfaction when athletes do well and its nice knowing you played a small part.*

# Deaf-Friendly Athletics and Running

## Health and safety

As a leader or coach, safety considerations are an essential aspect of all activity sessions, regardless of whether there are deaf participants involved. Leaders and coaches must also be aware of the specific individual needs of all members of their group. These might be associated with deafness or other issues. Leaders should factor in these considerations when organising and delivering their activity sessions.

- ◆ Time should be built in for leaders and coaches to consult with parents, teaching assistants and deaf participants themselves as to the best way to communicate. Risk assessments should reflect the needs of deaf participants and should stipulate what controls are being put in place to ensure their safety.
- ◆ Leaders and coaches should find out in advance if a deaf person is participating in the session. This can be through membership forms or PARQs. This will alert them to pay extra attention to the person and to make them aware that they may not hear auditory cues such as the coaches' whistle or the instruction to stop at the road.
- ◆ Safety signals should be agreed with the group beforehand as it is particularly important to include stop, wait etc.
- ◆ Group size/ratios – deaf people may benefit from being in a smaller group or for there to be additional coaches or helpers to help meet their communication needs.

## Fire safety

Knowing the fire evacuation procedure is important for all groups and organisations, and for all participants. It is extra important that you are aware of the needs of deaf people who are taking part in your activities. Technology can assist with this, for example through flashing fire alarms or deaf alerter (pager systems).

Make sure that everybody knows the procedure – where the exits are and where the fire meeting point is. Organise a practice drill regularly – it is good practice for everyone!

- ◆ If you do need to evacuate it is extremely important that you physically check all of the rooms, particularly toilet cubicles, changing rooms etc, as a deaf person may not hear the fire alarm.
- ◆ Alert the facility or venue to the fact that there are deaf people in your group. It is the venue's responsibility as well as the group leader's to ensure that everybody is safely out of the building should there be an alarm.
- ◆ Have a buddy system. Ensure that hearing group members inform deaf members that there is a fire alarm, particularly when you are using a large building.
- ◆ Use visual signs or signals to alert deaf members that there is a fire. Learn the sign for 'Fire Alarm!'
- ◆ Encourage your club or facility to purchase flashing fire alarms in the future. Suggest that they contact the local authority Access Officer for further information on where to purchase them and financial support for this.

## Road safety

Guidance linked to road safety is applicable for everyone, not just deaf group members. However, it is important that you are aware of traffic and that deaf group members may not be able to hear cars coming up behind them, somebody using their car horn or a cyclist shouting a warning (depending on the person's degree of deafness).

- ◆ It is useful to make drivers aware of groups of runners through the use of high visibility vests.
- ◆ Avoid running on roads such as country lanes. If there is no suitable alternative, make sure that you run towards oncoming traffic. This is especially important with deaf people as they may not hear the traffic coming up behind them.
- ◆ Other techniques that you already might use include having a member lead the group from the front with another member at the back of the group.
- ◆ Make appropriate use of pedestrian crossings.
- ◆ Remember it is hard to run while carrying on conversations through signing and lipreading.

## Safety briefings

It is essential that you have safety briefings before any activities start. It is impossible for people to lipread what you are saying or watch a communicator once they are halfway round the track or up a hill!

Plan to have plenty of time at the beginning to explain the activity, allowing time for questions and additional clarification. If a communicator is signing to the group, make sure they have time to chat to you beforehand so that they are aware of any safety signs that they will need to pass on to the group. Acceptable strategies include:

- ◆ waving and using visual cues, such as flags
- ◆ positioning adults around the activity area who can gain the person's attention on your behalf (making use of leaders, assistant coaches, other adult helpers and group members themselves)
- ◆ asking other group members to get the person's attention (or to run after them if appropriate)
- ◆ using a buddy system for all the athletes or runners to encourage them to work together

Deafness is not a health and safety issue and should never be a reason to exclude deaf people from athletics or running sessions.

# Pathways for Deaf Athletes

**Participation**



\*Deaf Athletes compete alongside hearing athletes

The athlete pathway for a deaf person is different than it is for a hearing person. Deaf people have many different options available to them throughout their sporting lives.

Deaf athletes can compete in mainstream athletics activities and competition as well as in specific deaf competitions. Deaf athletes (who meet the relevant criteria) can compete in either, or a combination of both.

Deaf athletes can participate in mainstream activities and competition. However, this can sometimes be difficult due to communication barriers and a lack of deaf awareness.

Deaf-specific activity breaks down the communication barrier for deaf people; however, opportunities within deaf-specific activity are often limited, with excessive travel often required.

Deaf people could also participate in pan-disability activity and competition. However, varying physical and sensory disabilities can lead to a limited experience and an unbalanced competitive environment.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this pathway. All deaf people are different, as are their communication methods. There is nothing to stop a deaf person from playing a combination of mainstream and deaf sport. For example, Rebecca Zelic competes for Herne Hill Athletics Club, and also represented UK Deaf Athletics at the 2013 Deaflympics.

Athletes may choose to compete in specific deaf competition as this provides an opportunity to socialise and meet other deaf people. Other athletes may choose to compete in mainstream competition as this is likely to provide a higher level of competition and a wider variety of opponents.

For international and national level deaf competitions, the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD) state athletes must have a hearing loss of at least 55 decibels (db) in the better ear.

Hearing aids and cochlear implants must be removed to compete in international and national level deaf competitions.

Athletes may want to train without hearing aids, to get used to the environment during a deaf competition. Alternatively athletes may wish to train with their hearing aids as this may support them to understand instructions, technical detail and feedback.

Eligible athletes can compete in the Deaflympics, which is held every four years, and other major international deaf competitions. For further information contact [www.ukdeafsport.org.uk](http://www.ukdeafsport.org.uk).

## Competition

It is important to notify organisers of competitions that an athlete or runner is deaf. When completing the competition entry form it is important to highlight:

- i) that the person is deaf
- ii) what adaptations may be required for them to participate i.e. strobe start, changes to timetable/race course provided in written format and handed out on arrival.

In the field, officials should show a deaf athlete the competition order and show the athlete who they follow. A hand signal (thumbs up) is given when the trial may take place.

## Starting races

If a deaf athlete is competing in a race the starter or their assistant may use a flag or other visual device as well as a pistol to signal the start or an official might touch an athlete to signal the start. As well as ensuring the competition organisers have been notified in advance it may be worth checking with the starter/marksman before the race that they are aware a deaf athlete is competing and what starting method will be used.

Technology on starting lights/systems is currently being developed which uses LED lights.

## Promoting your club or group to deaf people

There is no simple one-stop solution to promoting your club to deaf people. Often, creating links with people in the community is the best way to successfully promote your activity. It's worth noting that most deaf people do not consider themselves to be disabled so specific deaf-friendly activity is likely to be more successful than trying to attract deaf participants to disability events.

Suggested organisations you may wish to contact

- ◆ **National Deaf Children's Society** – The UK's leading charity for deaf children and young people, they have a membership of over 18,000 deaf young people. They also have a factsheet aimed specifically at how to promote your club to deaf young people. View [www.ndcs.org.uk/promote](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/promote) or contact [me2@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:me2@ndcs.org.uk)
- ◆ **Your local County Sports Partnership (CSP)** – CSPs often already have links with some of the organisations listed below.
- ◆ **Activity Alliance** – Activity Alliance enable organisations to support disabled people to be and stay active for life. They can help promote events to disabled people. Please visit [www.activityalliance.org.uk/get-active/events](http://www.activityalliance.org.uk/get-active/events)
- ◆ **UK Deaf Sport** – UK Deaf Sport aims to encourage Deaf people to participate, to enjoy and to excel at sport. They have links with other groups and organisations and can help promote deaf-friendly activity with the deaf community. Please visit [www.ukdeafsport.org.uk](http://www.ukdeafsport.org.uk)
- ◆ **Local Deaf Children's Societies (DCS)** – There are approximately 80 local DCS across the country. They are parent-led voluntary groups. Some are small in size, whereas others have 100+ young members. Please visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups) to find out your local DCS.
- ◆ **Deaf schools** – There are approximately 20 deaf schools in the UK. Many of these are boarding schools and often children will travel long distances to attend a deaf school. Even if a deaf school is based in a different county they may well have deaf children and young people who live locally to your athletics club. Please contact [helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk) for a full list of deaf schools in the UK.
- ◆ **Sensory Support Services** – These are often located within councils. Contact your local authority or local education authority for more information.
- ◆ **Hearing Impaired Units** – These are generally based within mainstream schools. Contact [helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk) or your local Sensory Support Service to find where these units are.
- ◆ **Teacher of the Deaf (ToD)** – ToDs are specialised teachers who support deaf children and young people directly. View [www.batod.org.uk](http://www.batod.org.uk) or contact your local Sensory Support Service to find your local ToDs.
- ◆ **Deaf youth groups and organisations** – an internet search will usually bring up details of these groups.
- ◆ **Deaf clubs** – These are generally adult focused but often have links with deaf youth groups and other networks. Again, try doing an internet search for more information.
- ◆ **Deaf social media groups** – These are often linked to deaf clubs.

# Training & Resources

## Training

### UK Coaching

#### **Effective Communication: Coaching Deaf People in Sport Workshop**

This 3 hour workshop has been developed in partnership with UK Deaf Sport and the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) and is an interactive and practical workshop that will help develop a leader or coach's skills, so they can fully include deaf people of all ages.

[www.ukcoaching.org/courses/workshops/effective-communication-coaching-deaf-people-in-sp](http://www.ukcoaching.org/courses/workshops/effective-communication-coaching-deaf-people-in-sport)

## Useful Resources

### **UK Coaching Impairment Specific Factsheet:**

#### **Coaching People with Hearing Impairments**

This factsheet gives advice for working with people with a hearing impairment

[www.ukcoaching.org/resources/topics/tips/coaching-people-with-hearing-impairments](http://www.ukcoaching.org/resources/topics/tips/coaching-people-with-hearing-impairments)

### **BSL for Athletics Illustrations**

BSL for coaches and leaders of common athletics events and phrases. See page 29 for illustrations of some of these useful signs.

### **BSL for Athletics**

BSL videos for coaches and leaders of general phrases used for athletics and sport.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-TduUOc8m0&list=PLmUSUOO1Mlu2L6q9mFWW523BK3jQbrzL1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-TduUOc8m0&list=PLmUSUOO1Mlu2L6q9mFWW523BK3jQbrzL1)

# Useful Contacts

## England Athletics

England Athletics is the National Governing Body for athletics in England. Our mission is to work in partnership with the wider athletics family to create a vibrant, safe and progressive sport – embracing athletes of all abilities and from all communities – to grow the next generation of athletics champions. We develop grass roots athletics, supporting affiliated clubs to prosper, developing more and better coaches, recruiting and supporting volunteers and officials. England Athletics provides competition opportunities at an international, national and area level. Our local Club Support Managers can provide support to make your club or group deaf friendly. For contact details visit [www.englandathletics.org/clubs-and-facilities/club-support-services/contact-club-support](http://www.englandathletics.org/clubs-and-facilities/club-support-services/contact-club-support)

## The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

NDCS is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. The initiative breaks down the barriers deaf children and young people face when accessing sports, arts and leisure opportunities by supporting deaf and mainstream organisations. The NDCS supports sports clubs, coaches, officials and volunteers to be deaf-friendly, ensuring their activities are inclusive of all deaf people

NDCS Freephone Helpline: **0808 800 8880** (voice and text)

[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)

## UK Deaf Sport

UK Deaf Sport aims to encourage deaf people to participate, to enjoy and to excel at sport. UK Deaf Sport was established in 2003 and has been a member of the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD) since 2006.

[www.ukdeafsport.org.uk](http://www.ukdeafsport.org.uk)

## Action on Hearing Loss

(formerly known as RNID)

A national charity for deaf people that aims to achieve a better quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing people by campaigning, lobbying, raising awareness of deafness, providing services and through social, medical and technical research.

RNID Freephone information line: **0808 808 0123**

Email: [informationline@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:informationline@hearingloss.org.uk)

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

Action on Hearing Loss – Text Relay

A telephone relay service providing vital communication links for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Tel: **0800 7311 888**      Textphone: **0800 500 888**

Email: [helpline@textrelay.org](mailto:helpline@textrelay.org)

[www.textrelay.org](http://www.textrelay.org)

### **British Deaf Association (BDA)**

The BDA is the largest Deaf organisation in the UK that is run by Deaf people. They represent the sign language community and are active campaigners in improving standards and rights for Deaf and hearing sign language users. They also have an online information database of organisations, groups and services for Deaf people throughout the UK.

Tel: 020 7405 0090      Textphone: 020 7588 3529

Email: [bda@bda.org.uk](mailto:bda@bda.org.uk)

[www.bda.org.uk](http://www.bda.org.uk)

### **Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI)**

ASLI is the professional association and support network for sign language interpreters in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its members include those who work as interpreters, and deaf and hearing people who support their aims. It also has an extensive database of qualified sign language interpreters from across the country.

Tel: 0871 474 0522      Textphone: 18001 0871 474 0522

Email: [office@asli.org.uk](mailto:office@asli.org.uk)

[www.asli.org.uk](http://www.asli.org.uk)

### **UK Deaf Athletics (UKDA)**

[www.ukdeafathletics.org.uk](http://www.ukdeafathletics.org.uk)

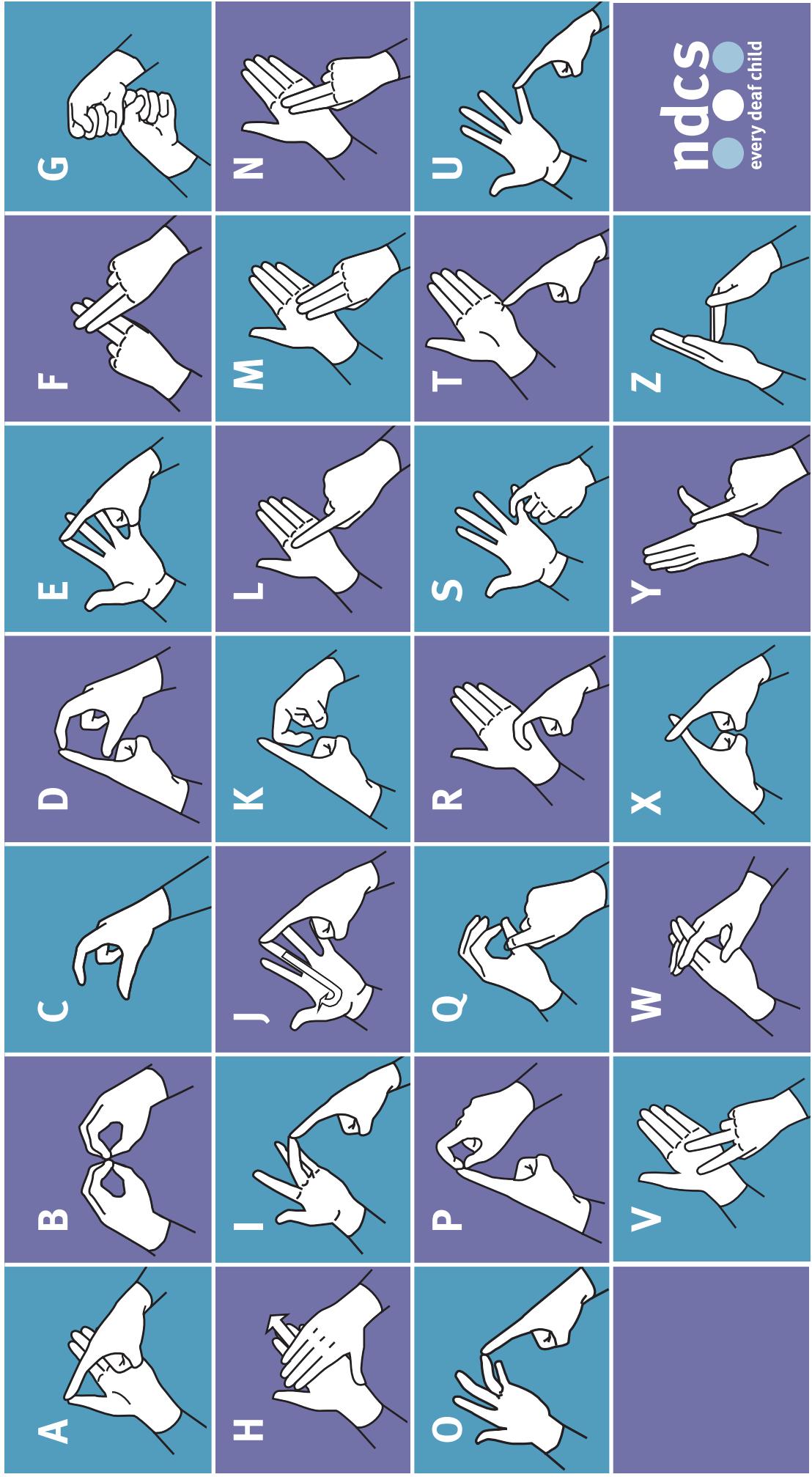
## **Acknowledgments**

England Athletics would like to thank the National Deaf Children's Society for providing most of the content for this resource and also UK Deaf Sport and UK Deaf Athletics for their valuable contributions.

## **Resources**

Please print the following three pages to take with you to your sessions and also to put in a visible place (clubhouse etc) so others can see

# The British Fingerspelling Alphabet



# Top Tips for Deaf-Friendly Athletics and Running

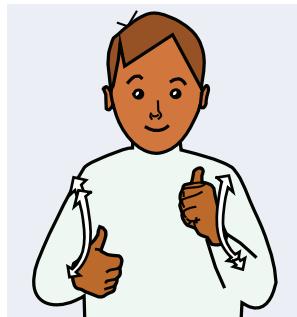
## Do

- ◆ Ask the athlete or runner how you should communicate with them.
- ◆ Make sure you have everyone's attention before speaking – try waving or stopping to get everyone's attention.
- ◆ Limit distractions! Move to a quieter place to explain things
- ◆ Speak clearly and naturally.
- ◆ Ensure the area is well lit and any light is shining on your face (not behind you).
- ◆ Stand in one place and keep eye contact while talking.
- ◆ Use visual aids to help understanding – including photos, pictures, or video.
- ◆ Use gestures and demonstrations.
- ◆ Make the topic really clear and stick to the point.
- ◆ Ask the athlete or runner to repeat what you have said to check they have understood.
- ◆ Allow time for questions and clarification.

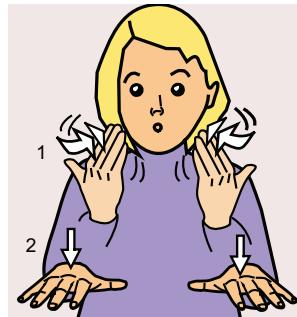
## Don't

- ◆ Speak too slowly or shout! This will distort your lip patterns.
- ◆ Move around when you are talking – it will be very difficult to lipread.
- ◆ Cover up your mouth or talk with your whistle in your mouth.
- ◆ Give up. If stuck, try explaining in a different way, write it down or use pictures. Alternatively, get a competent athlete or runner to demonstrate for you.

# BSL for Athletics and Running



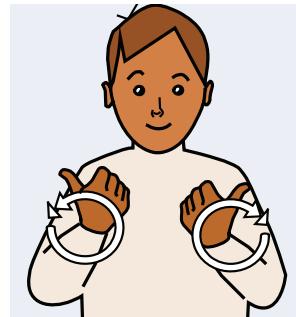
Athletics



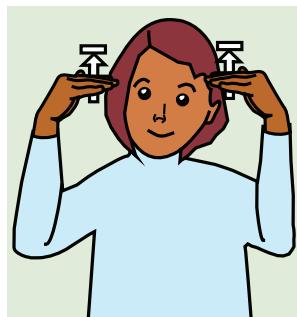
Cool Down



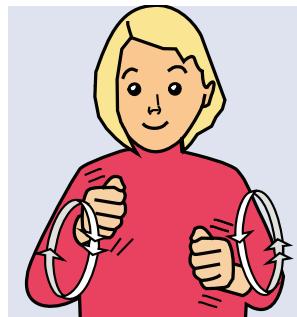
Discus



Finish



Higher



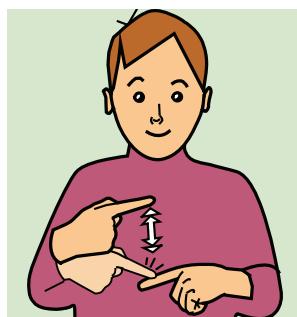
Jog



Laps



Long Jump



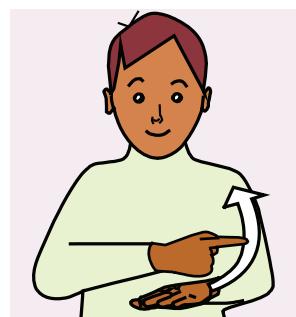
Faster



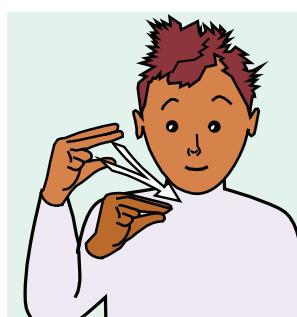
Race



Run



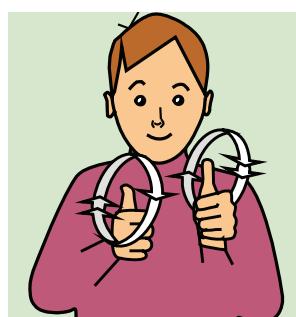
Slower



Sprint



Warm-up



Well-done

To see these signs, and more, in BSL videos please visit National Deaf Children's Society 'BSL for Athletics' and 'BSL for Sport' at:

[www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmUSUOO1Mlu2L6q9mFWW523BK3jQbrzL1](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmUSUOO1Mlu2L6q9mFWW523BK3jQbrzL1)

For further BSL information and resources see [www.DeafBooks.co.uk](http://www.DeafBooks.co.uk)