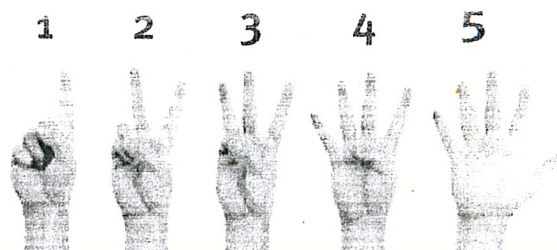


# British Sign Language fingerspelling alphabet



Student resource H

From Cablink:

# Deaf Advice Team – Sheffield Citizens Advice

Sheffield Citizens Advice Deaf Advice Team was originally named the Deaf Advice Service Sheffield (DASS) and was established in 1987 by a group of Deaf people who were frustrated at not having access to generalist advice services in the city because of their D/deafness and communication needs. The Deaf trustees worked alongside staff and volunteers to build a good quality advice service for BSL users, prioritising roles in the organisation to members of the Deaf community.

In October 2013 DASS merged with other local organisations to become part of Sheffield Citizens Advice with the Deaf service being an integral part of the new organisation. This has many positive benefits for the Deaf community in terms of development and sustainability but it is also an excellent opportunity to work alongside our colleagues in other bureaux across the country to increase access to advice for Deaf/BSL users.

97% of our clients are born Deaf and can't read or write as BSL is an entirely different language to English. Many clients do not have any understanding of the English language, including in the written form, because they have never acquired it as a child. This is an often insurmountable barrier to accessing information and there is a wide spread misconception by hearing people that written communication is an appropriate replacement for BSL provision.

At the Deaf Advice Team all workers are fluent British Sign Language users. Advice is given directly by the Advisor to the client, no third party interpreters are necessary. This model is costs effective as well as being the preferred service delivery method of the Deaf community. We implement a fully inclusive Communication Policy where BSL is used at all times, including in the office. We are centrally based, at The Circle on Rockingham Lane in the city centre so accessible to members of the Deaf community across the city. We provide advice to Deaf people on the full range of issues including; debt, housing, employment, welfare benefits, discrimination and access to health care. We also raise awareness about the difficulties and barriers that Deaf people experience on a daily basis which can seriously impact on their quality of life. We are widely used by other organisations and agencies to consult with about how to improve access. This feeds into Social Policy issues and Sheffield



Citizens Advice have poor access to BSL interpreters' as one of our 4 Social Policy priority issues.

We hold drop-in sessions 2 days per week and 2 days for appointments. We also undertake home-visits, telephone/ textphone, fax and email advice.

On average we see 20 clients per week as the majority of our clients are vulnerable and require ongoing advice and case support, for example one client attended our advice session 42 times in one year. We advised and supported him on various ongoing issues including; immigration, homelessness, debt and welfare benefits.

The aim of our work is to ensure Deaf people can access advice and information thus empowering them to actively participate in society by increasing awareness of their rights. We ensure advice and information takes account of the cultural and linguistic diversity of D/deafness.