Throughout this document ADEPT 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 one defines the role of the CSW and concentrates on how the Code of Practice relates to CSWs and section two is an employer’s guide to the Code of Practice.*
Section 1:

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: Teachers of the Deaf, audiologists, teachers, lecturers, other CSWs and team leaders. This support generally involves a two-way exchange of information, through 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, 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 by the CSW’s use of a range of appropriate strategies of support, encouraging the development of the individual learner within educational, social, linguistic and cultural contexts.

3. To consider the needs of the learner within the context of their peer group, and to provide appropriate communication strategies, from a range of skills, helping to facilitate successful integration of 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 that may arise in the learning environment and with Assistive Technologies, and to 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 group and to involve the learners whenever possible. Provide training to front of house staff also.
The following points may be ongoing:

8. To facilitate access to wider college services, e.g. 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, e.g. 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/SSE/SEE/English, 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 and 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:

a. Hold qualifications in educational and appropriate vocational and communication skills.

b. Be registered or listed where registers of appropriate vocational and communication skills are available.

c. Seek informed feedback from others, e.g. line managers, peers, on performance. Also feedback from learners during their Individual Learning Plans and Reviews.

d. Strive to develop and constantly update professional skills in order to provide the highest level of support for deaf learners.
e. Keep up to date with legislation, initiatives, ICT and any changes or developments within the profession.

f. Be aware of fundamental changes within the educational sector, which may impact on the learning and support environment, e.g. changes to funding.

g. Be aware of the basic principles of teaching and learning and individual learning styles and how these may affect performance.

h. Be aware of the diversity of deaf educational settings, i.e. oral, bilingual, BSL etc. and the range of experiences/backgrounds of different deaf learners.

ii) Confidentiality and neutrality: CSWs should:

a. 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 and computer security.

b. Remain impartial and neutral when providing communication support.

c. Remain objective and respect individual learners’ identity regardless of culture, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality and age.

d. Be aware of the legal implications of professional practice.

e. Be aware of Health and Safety issues.

iii) Equal opportunities: CSWs should:

a. Promote equality of access to education, training and employment opportunities for deaf and deafblind people, and promote positive attitudes.

b. 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.

c. Employ direct and indirect support strategies that will empower learners.

d. Display non-discriminatory behaviours at all times, e.g. in relation to culture, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality and age.

e. Support a cultural awareness of the educational setting and enable learners to understand the context in which they are learning.

f. Encourage learners wishing to explore their identity and culture.

g. Enable learners to work in a linguistic and cultural environment that may not reflect that of the minority group to which they belong.
h. Recognise the importance of inclusion by using appropriate means of communication at all
times in the presence of deaf people.

i. Be responsive to the ever-changing needs of both learners and the learning environment.

iv) Professional relationships: CSWs should:

a. Establish a good professional relationship with colleagues. When necessary a CSW should be
able to ask for clarification, support from other staff and in turn offer reasonable assistance and
cooperation. 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.

b. Develop respectful and professional working relationships with all involved with the
educational process. Be able to liaise clearly with other CSWs and those responsible for
booking CSWs, to ensure continuity of support.

c. Be able to explain the role of the CSW in a clear professional manner.

d. Understand the role of other professionals within the educational environment, and support
learners who may be referred to them, in a professional manner.

e. Establish and maintain links with organisations working to improve access to education for
deaf people.

f. Take part in professional reviews (appraisals) and observations within their educational
organisation.

g. Receive feedback from learners, tutors, colleagues and managers, in a professional manner
and act on their comments accordingly.

h. Contribute to reviews of support provision to enable learner support to be as effective as
possible.

v) Resources: CSWs should:

a. Facilitate the use of assistive technology. e.g., Induction loops, SoundField systems, etc.

b. 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:


2.1. 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 with Deaf Learners
- Teachers of the Deaf
- Deaf Educational Instructors
- Note-takers (including Electronic Note-takers)
- Speech to Text Reporters
- Lipspeakers
- BSL/English Interpreters
- Educational psychologists
- Audiologists

Each of these roles has different professional responsibilities, which should be recognised by employers. 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 Duties.

Appropriate qualifications for team members would be:

**Signature** Signature Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support Work for Deaf Learners, or equivalent

**Signature / IBSL** BSL/ISL NVQ or Level or Stage 3 or 6
Interpreting Skills Level 6
NVQ/Stage 2 or 3 in Lipspeaking
NVQ/Stage 2 or 3 in Notetaking/ Electronic Notetaking
Level 3 in Communication and Guiding Skills with Deafblind People
Level 3 Award in Modifying Written English texts for Deaf People

**OCN** Level 3 in Notetaking for Learners with Disabilities

**CIEA** OLM

**BEd/ PGDip SEN (HI)/ MEd /Qualified Teacher of the Deaf**

**BSc in Speech Therapy**

**C&G** Adult Education Teaching certificate e.g. 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 note-takers 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 e.g. Signature CSW (or equivalent), NVQ Level 3 & 6 in a professional skill.
5. Arrange appropriate conditions of service e.g. APT and C with related entitlements to holiday, sick pay etc. Arrange appropriate sessional contracts with holiday entitlement.
6. Determine pay scales and grading which match the level of responsibility in the job and 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 level and CSW qualifications.
7. Decide whether the job is full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary (including fixed term) and what working pattern is required.
8. If part-time, consider the most appropriate form of contract e.g. fractional, sessional, annual hours, etc. and the effects of the related pay systems on recruiting and retaining quality employees.
9. Decide on termination arrangements, and notification of contractual changes.
10. Consult with and seek agreement from appropriate employee representatives.

### ii) Recruiting

Communication Support Work is a specialist field. Employers are recommended to advertise through routes which may reach potential CSWs, including ADEPT, BATOD and Deaf UK Jobs (Yahoo Group).
iii) Interview

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 requirements of the job, focusing on the candidate’s expressive and receptive skills and ability to work between two languages, with a view to drawing up a training plan for the new communication support worker.

2. A formal interview by a panel including an appropriately qualified and experienced person such as a Senior CSW or Teacher of the Deaf, as well as the prospective line manager.

3. A possible further skills test, e.g. note-taking, 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 to match the requirements of the deaf learners whom they will support.

iv) Induction

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 e.g. video transcripts and modification of written texts.

2. The working practices and procedures and professional boundaries in their own department, e.g. 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 e.g. 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 e.g. 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 e.g. 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 e.g. repetitive strain injury (RSI), situational/environmental risks, and lone or evening work.

12. The role of Human Resources and their services e.g. pensions. Most educational institutions will have procedures in place for DBS checks (Disclosure and Barring Service, formerly known as CRB) and professional indemnity insurance. However, if employing freelance/agency staff these safeguards need to be checked.

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 has a responsibility 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, e.g. with local authority or agency.

3. The needs of the learner, the qualifications and expertise of the staff and the demands of the curriculum must be considered. Employers should not assume that a learner who has poorly developed BSL skills might be supported by a CSW, who also has poorly developed BSL. Learners require support from staff with skills and knowledge which 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, e.g. staff and team meetings

f. Access to a staff room, a library card, the IT network, etc.

g. Attention to the physical environment e.g. availability of office space, suitability of lighting
h. Health and safety information specific to CSWs such as that relating to Repetitive Strain Injury 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 Work for Deaf Learners (or equivalent), and
• Signature/Institute of British Sign Language (IBSL) qualifications in the required communication and language skills to the appropriate level, recommended at Level 3 or 6 and
• Appropriate GCSEs, including English (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 (i.e. those who do not yet hold the Edexcel or Signature qualification) 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 a member of an appropriate professional organisation, for example ADEPT or 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 ADEPT 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 the Deaf
BEd Bachelor of Education
BSc Bachelor of Science
BSL British Sign Language
C&G City and Guilds
CRB Criminal Records Bureau
CSW Communication Support Worker
CTLLS Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector
DTLLS Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector
DBS Disclosure and Barring Service
HI Hearing Impairment/ Impaired
IBSL Institute of British Sign Language
ICT Information and Communication Technology
ISL Irish Sign Language
IT Information Technology
NATED National Association for Tertiary Education for Deaf People
NVQ National Vocational Qualification
PGDip Post Graduate Diploma
SEE Signed Exact English
SEN Special Educational Needs
SSE Sign Supported English
ToD Teacher of the Deaf

www.adaptuk.co.uk

Updated 2014