



adept Scotland training day March 2015

Starting at college: what are deaf students' needs?

50 delegates from across Scotland gathered in the lovely, highly accessible facilities of Forth Valley College in Stirling, to look in-depth at approaches to meeting the varied needs of deaf students.

Featuring expert practitioners offering a range of services, we considered how staff could be trained to identify students' needs, and how to access a network of specialists who can bring their expertise into colleges. The day was sponsored by [ihear](#), providers of quality listening technology.

Introductions

Andrew Lawson, Associate Principal of Forth Valley College, welcomed the group and outlined his own college's commitment to inclusive practice and to support for deaf students.

Andrew stated that a key aspect of an inclusive approach is acknowledging when there is need for specialist support – it's not a case of one size fits all, all support strategies must be adapted to support the individual needs.

Welcoming the opportunities offered by adept to develop staff skills, Andrew noted that new strategies are emerging all the time and we must be aware of this in order to offer a good support service to both learners and staff.

This was followed by an interactive deaf awareness session led by Nicola Mitchell, a BSL tutor. Nicola led the delegates through a brief tour of Deaf Culture, BSL, and best use of communication strategies.

Working with deaf students to discuss access

Rachel O'Neill from the University of Edinburgh considered the entire learner journey including how deaf students get into college, and the discussions we need to have with them.

She looked at the messages a college's website might send out to prospective deaf students, plus issues around application and enrolment. She went on to discuss how to make an agreement with students about access arrangements and how to ensure best practice when reviewing the plan.

Rachel asked the group to consider students who may be 'invisible' to college staff. Some examples included students who are hard of hearing and have good speech, and students on part time or evening courses.

An important point was who should be having discussions with a student and recognising when one's own BSL skills may not be adequate. Rachel suggested that an assessor should have at least a level 3 BSL qualification to carry out an assessment, otherwise an interpreter would be needed. To illustrate this, she asked the group how many had a Scottish Higher in a foreign language (and had not studied that language further) then asked whether those people with such a Higher felt confident that they could teach a subject in that language.

rachel.oneill@ed.ac.uk

<http://www.blendedlearning.me/DASS/site/>



[Liaising with the Cochlear Implant centre](#)

Susan Johnston introduced everyone to the work carried out by the multidisciplinary team at the Scottish Cochlear Implant Centre. Beginning with an explanation of how cochlear implants work, Susan went on to look at the whole package of care offered and how this changes over the lifespan. An important part of the clinic's work is to encourage young people to become independent and empowered in the use of their technology. Different programmes and accessories are available to help improve the performance of the cochlear implant in different settings. The clinic is able to help with setting up additional technology required for college, e.g. FM systems. Susan pointed delegates to a range of support materials and useful websites.

cochlear.implant@aaaht.scot.nhs.uk

www.sciponline.org.uk

[Assessing signing skills of deaf students](#)

Nicola Mitchell, BSL tutor, looked in detail at assessing the level of signing skills in students transitioning to college. Through informal interviews with students, Nicola assesses factors like fluency, the requirements of the course, and potential support strategies. She aims to find a good match between these factors and revisits videos of the interviews to ensure an accurate assessment. Delegates were able to watch video clips of 2 separate assessments, after which, Nicola explained her findings and recommendations. Nicola is available to visit colleges to help with these kinds of assessments. Contact her for fee information.

info@academyofbsl.co.uk

<http://www.academyofbsl.com/>.

[Hearing and FM technology at college](#)

Joe O'Donnell, Educational Audiologist, explained different types of hearing aids and how they work – emphasising their limitations in noisy situations, like classrooms. He looked at how we can create environments that provide a student with the conditions to learn - considering attitudes, acoustics, communication, how to deal with technical problems. Joe emphasised the importance of consulting the student and asking for their suggestions as to what might help.

ed.audiology@gmail.com

[Drawing on specialist support teams and skilling up your staff](#)

During the final part of the day, delegates got into groups to address a number of questions about how they assess and support students, and reflect on these in light of what they have learned. There followed a number of lively discussions and some outcomes shared with the group as a whole included plans to invite students to actively participate in creating a profile of what they need, and improved pre-application information.

[adept and how we would like to work with you](#)

The day was summed up with a look to the future. Benefits of adept membership were outlined, plus forthcoming training opportunities, including a training day for CSWs in Inverness in June, the annual **adept** UK conference and requests for notes of interest in a new [online training course for electronic note-takers](#), currently being considered for delivery by the University of Edinburgh.