

*C*ode of Practice

for Communication Support Workers with Deaf People



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1. The Role of the Communication Support Worker

A Communication Support Worker (CSW) is a professional who generally provides bilingual communication support working for individuals or groups of D/deaf learners enrolled in mainstream educational institutions. 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 institution. Many students 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 college environment 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.

The role of the CSW is:

- a. To enable equal access for D/deaf learners to information in the curriculum and college environment, according to the assessed needs of the Deaf learner.
- b. To encourage the development of the individual D/deaf learner within educational, social, linguistic and cultural contexts, providing support which is empowering through the development of a range of appropriate strategies.
- c. To consider the needs of the Deaf 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.
- d. To provide access to a range of learning materials using appropriate communication methods to match the needs of the individual Deaf learner.
- e. To respond to all communication requirements that may arise in the learning environment, and to implement, review and adapt strategies as necessary.
- f. To enable and empower learners to discuss their own learning requirements with teaching staff.
- g. To provide Deaf awareness, advice and guidance for teaching staff and/or peer group and to involve the Deaf learners whenever possible.

This may be ongoing.

- h. To facilitate access to wider college services, eg counselling, financial support, library and learning resources etc.
- i. To, wherever possible, work collaboratively in a team which assesses and delivers and reviews the Deaf learner's individual support needs.
- j. To enable Deaf learners to make independent choices and learn from their own experiences.
- k. 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

- a. Applying information about learner's needs
- b. Preparing for an assignment
- c. Developing and using a range of communication strategies
- d. Adapting the physical environment and using a range of resources
- e. Empowering deaf learners
- f. Reflecting on and evaluating one's own performance
- g. Working with a range of professionals
- h. Meeting professional requirements

2. The Need for a Code of Professional Practice for Communication Support Workers

The Code of Professional Practice for CSWs encapsulates and promotes high standards of conduct and practice within the profession. This Code of Practice has been developed in the context of an increase in emphasis on professional standards within the deaf field of education. A CSW is likely to be a member of a team where all members are guided by standards and codes and needs to understand these and how they relate to their own Code of Practice.

Introducing an effective Code of Practice will enable the following to take place:

- Set out the standards expected of CSWs, and bring Communication Support Work into line with other professions.
- Set and maintain high standards of professional practice for CSWs.
- Promote and represent the status of the CSW profession.
- Support the requirements and implications of the DDA.
- Offer professional guidance and support to CSWs and their employers.
- Assist in the effective handling of cases where conduct and performance are in doubt.
- Promote an entitlement and commitment to continuing professional development.

The Code of Practice deals with standards of conduct and good professional practice and sets out the following:

- The responsibilities of the individual CSW working in an educational setting.
- The responsibilities of the employer towards the CSW.

The Code of Practice should be used in conjunction with information about the following:

- Nationally agreed standards
- Training and qualification structure
- Rates of pay.
- Terms, conditions, contracts of employment and working practices.
- Sample job description and person specifications.

3. The Code of Professional Practice for the Communication Support Worker

This document considers the professional code of practice required by CSWs with D/deaf people towards both students and staff. Issues of confidentiality, integrity, ethics, competency and personal efficiency are examined. In all professional matters CSWs should establish and maintain the high standard of quality, competencies and skills outlined in these procedures.

A CSW with Deaf learners is responsible for the following:

i) Training and development

- a. Hold qualifications in educational and appropriate vocational and communication skills and be registered or listed as such where registers and lists are available.
- b. Seek informed feedback on their performance.
- c. Strive to develop and constantly update their professional skills in order to provide the highest level of support for Deaf learners.
- d. Keep up to date with new initiatives, ICT and any changes or developments within the profession.
- e. Be aware of fundamental changes within the educational sector which may impact on the learning and support environment. E.g changes to funding.
- f. Be aware of the basic principles of teaching and learning and individual learning styles.
- g. Be aware of the diversity of Deaf educational settings, i.e. oral, bilingual, BSL etc and the range of experiences of different D/deaf learners.

ii) Confidentiality and neutrality

- a. Respect confidentiality. All personal information about a student to which a CSW has access should be treated as confidential. Information about a student'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 attempt not to favour any gender, sexual orientation, age, language, religion or culture.
- d. Be aware of the legal implications of professional practice.
- e. Be aware of Health and Safety issues affecting the role.

iii) Equal opportunities

- a. Promote equality of access to education, training and employment opportunities for deaf people, and promote positive attitudes.
- b. Recognise and respect the individual support needs of Deaf learners. The CSW should not advocate one method of communication in preference to another, but should seek to meet the needs of all who are deaf or deafened.
- c. Employ support strategies that will empower Deaf learners.
- d. Display non-discriminatory behaviours at all times. E.g. in relation to culture, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality and age.
- e. To support a cultural awareness of the educational setting and enable students to understand the context in which they are learning.
- f. To encourage Deaf learners wishing to explore their identity and culture.
- g. To enable Deaf learners to work in a linguistic and cultural environment which 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 learners.
- i. Be responsive to the ever-changing needs of both Deaf learners and the learning environment.

iv) Professional relationships

- a. Establish a good professional relationship with colleagues. When necessary a CSW should be able to ask for clarification and support from other staff and in turn offer reasonable assistance and co-operation. A CSW should be in a position to advise and guide members of staff on Deaf issues.
- b. Develop respectful and professional working relationships with all

involved with the educational process. Liaise clearly with other CSWs to ensure continuity of support.

- c. Be able to explain the role of the CSW in a clear professional way.
- d. Understand the role of other professionals within the college, and support Deaf learners who may be referred to them, in a discrete way.
- e. Establish and maintain links with organisations working to improve access to education for D/deaf people.
- f. Take part in professional review (appraisals) and observations within your institution.
- g. Receive feedback from Deaf learners, tutors, colleagues and managers, in a professional manner and act on their comments accordingly.
- h. Contribute to reviews of support provision to enable Deaf learner support to be as effective as possible.

v) Resources

- a. Facilitate the use of assistive technology. E.g. Induction loop, Soundfield system etc

4. Guidelines for Employers of Communication Support Workers for Deaf Learners

The CSW should be employed as part of a team supporting deaf students, whether in schools, colleges, adult services or universities. Other personnel may include:

- Tutors with Deaf Students
- Teachers of the Deaf
- Deaf Educational Instructors
- Note-takers (including Electronic Note-takers)
- Speech to Text Reporters
- Lipspeakers
- BSL/English Interpreters

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 college 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:

Edexcel	Edexcel Professional Development Award in Communication Support Work with Deaf Students
CACDP	BSL/ ISL NVQ 3 or 4
	BSL/ ISL Level 3 or 4
	BSL/ ISL Stage 3 or 4
	Interpreting Skills Level 4
	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
OCN	Level 3 in Notetaking for Students with Disabilities
	BEd/ 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 those CSWs, who work with BSL users, undertake interpreter training and achieve a recognised qualification in BSL/English Interpreting. There are now national standards in interpreting (at Level 4). Those who provide interpreting support in educational settings are expected

to be working towards qualification and registration as BSL/English Interpreters as do those who work in other settings or domains.

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

Employers should:

- a. Place the job within the organisational structure.
- b. Compose a clear job description based on the agreed role.
- c. Define a person specification, which at a minimum considers qualifications, previous education or knowledge, skills and experience.
- d. Determine the desirable opportunities for professional training and set aside funding e.g. Edexcel CSW, NVQ Level 3 & 4 in a professional skill
- e. Arrange appropriate conditions of service e.g. APT and C with related entitlements to holiday, sick pay etc.
- f. 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 institution, and which reflect the specialist nature of the work.
- g. Decide whether the job is full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary (including fixed term) and what working pattern is required.
- h. 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.
- i. Decide on termination arrangements, and notification of contractual changes.
- j. Consult with and seek agreement from appropriate employee representatives.

ii) Recruiting

Communication Support Work is a specialist field. Employers are advised to advertise through routes, which may reach potential CSWs, including TV Ceefax (Read Hear), BATOD, Association of CSWs and Deaf UK Jobs.

iii) Interview

The interview assessment and selection procedure should include the following:

- a. Communicating with a Deaf BSL tutor 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 interpreting requirements of the job, focusing on the candidate's expressive and receptive skills, with a view to drawing up a training plan for the new Communication Support Worker.

- b. 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
- c. A possible further skills test, e.g. note-taking or modification of a written text

iv) Induction

CSWs need induction into the following:

- a. The balance of tasks, including time spent in contact with students, in preparation and in administration and other responsibilities e.g. video transcripts, modification of written texts
- b. Working practices and procedures and professional boundaries in their own department, e.g. maintenance of log sheets/records, what to do when a student is absent, who to contact if ill themselves etc
- c. Working Practices and procedures for working with lecturers. The role of the CSW e.g. lecturer not present in class, fire alarms, etc
- d. Lines of management and the roles of colleagues
- e. Expected levels of responsibility e.g. when to deal with a situation and when to report or refer
- f. Institution's professional expectations around confidentiality
- g. Procedures for claiming e.g. travel expenses, time off, including holiday and other entitlements.
- h. Opportunities for training and development offered by the institution and access to administration systems
- i. Health and Safety at work e.g. RSI, situational/environmental risks, lone or evening work.
- j. The role of Human Resources and their services e.g. pensions. Most institutions will have procedures in place for enhanced CRB and professional indemnity insurance. However, if employing freelance/agency staff these safeguards need to be checked.

v) 'On the job'

- Employers should seek advice from specialist staff for 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.

- Employers should be aware of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the implications for compliance relating to staff and students. The institution has a responsibility under the DDA 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. Colleges need to audit regularly to ensure that they have suitably representative specialist staff, and/or a service-in arrangement, e.g. with local authority or agency.
- The needs of the student, the qualifications and expertise of the staff and the demands of the curriculum must be considered. Employers should not assume that a deaf student who has poorly developed BSL skills may be supported by a CSW who also has poorly developed BSL.
- The CSW has to right to discuss issues with their manager, when they feel the 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. Also access to a staff room, a library card, and the IT network etc.
- f. Attention to the physical environment e.g. availability of office space, suitability of lighting
- g. 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.
- h. Support from fellow professionals.
- i. Realistic expectations as to responsibilities for control and discipline
- j. Procedures to cover sick colleagues and unexpected work requirements

vi) Training and Development

To provide a professional service for Deaf students, educational institutions

should endeavour to employ qualified CSWs.

- Edexcel Professional Development Award in Communication Support Work with Deaf Students, and
- CACDP qualifications in the required communication and language skills to the appropriate level at Level 3 or 4 and
- appropriate GCSEs, including English (also required as entry qualifications for the Edexcel PDA)

In the best interests of their client groups, institutions employing unqualified CSWs (i.e. those who do not yet hold the Edexcel 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 help with course and assessment fees, travel expenses, time allocated to development, time off from other duties etc.

vii) Registration

Qualified CSWs should be registered with an appropriate professional organisation, 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 or national or UK-wide basis and to encourage and facilitate their participation. Support and enrichment gained through these activities can enhance the quality of service to students. It is advisable to join a relevant professional organisation such as NATED and ACSW to keep up to date with new initiatives and for networking opportunities

ix) Career Progression

Promoted posts for experienced CSWs may include responsibilities such as:

- a. Co-ordinating the work of other CSWs
- b. Acting as a mentor and/or line manager
- c. Delivering CSW training
- d. Developing institutional systems with regard to the employment and supervision of CSWs and support for deaf students.

