

# COMMUNICATING WITH A DEAF PERSON

WHO HAS EXPERIENCED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) IN THE UK

10 TIPS FOR POLICE OFFICERS & SUPPORT SERVICE PROVIDERS

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- ➔ **First Time Communicating:** A deaf person needs to see you in order for any communication to occur. You can wave to the person or tap them on the shoulder gently to get their attention. Ensure that you have eye-contact. Be mindful that if they are reporting an incident of GBV that they might be sensitive to touch.
- ➔ **Lighting and Contrast:** Too dark and too bright spaces, and/or poor contrast interferes with communication. Deaf people need to be able to see clearly in order to understand what is being communicated to them so try and avoid light shining behind you that might put your face in a shadow or light shining too brightly into a deaf person's face that might cause them to squint.
- ➔ **A Deaf Person's Preferred Language:** Any information and material presented in written form may be difficult for a deaf person who prefers to use British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate. This may be because English may not be their first or preferred language. So do not assume they can understand English.
- ➔ **3-WAY Communication with an Interpreter:** When working with an interpreter, look at and speak directly to the deaf person, not the interpreter. Only one person should speak or sign at a time. Take responsibility for explaining as required.
- ➔ **Sign Languages are not international:** Sign languages are independent languages. They differ from English and each other. For example, British Sign Language differs from Irish Sign Language just as German is different from French.
- ➔ **Lipreading:** Lipreading requires skilled guesswork and knowledge of the spoken language. Do not assume that a deaf person can lipread you well.
- ➔ **The Interpreter's Role:** An interpreter's job is to facilitate communication between you and the deaf person. Interpreters are impartial and will not offer advice nor opinions. Always use professionally trained interpreters. Family members should not interpret.
- ➔ **Consider the gender of the interpreter** in a GBV context and ask the deaf person what they would prefer. When employing an interpreter to work with a deaf victim, the same interpreter should not interpret for the alleged perpetrator. This is the only way to ensure that impartiality is maintained.
- ➔ **Deaf Community Networks:** The British deaf community is small and people from all over the country may know each other due to attending the same school or deaf events. Be mindful that interpreters are also part of the deaf community network, so an interpreter may be familiar with an alleged perpetrator which could make it uncomfortable for the victim. Ensure that the victim is comfortable with who the interpreter is.
- ➔ **Understanding Deaf Culture and Language:** Every deaf person will have their own preferred method of communicating. Understand the linguistic and cultural background of a deaf person as this will improve communication for all parties concerned. Of course - learning British Sign Language will also help.



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