

Request

1. Is sign language offered as part of the Early Years local offer provided by the council to deaf children and their families?
2. Are all families informed about the sign language aspect of Early Years support for deaf children?
3. What criteria does the council use to determine which families of deaf children are exposed to sign language as part of the Early Years local offer?
4. How is sign language delivered to families of Early Years deaf children?
5. What is the duration of the sign language support offered?
6. Who delivers the sign language input to families of Early Years deaf children?
7. Where are families of Early Years deaf children signposted to access more information about sign language?

Response

1. Yes – NDCS family sign offered routinely. All newly identified deaf babies receive a baby sign wallet / bag for early communication even before any family sign starts.
2. Yes.
3. We don't have a criterion, as we routinely offer this to all deaf babies and their families who come through NHSP or for those deaf children who are identified later.
4. The NDCS family sign is offered for 10 weeks divided into 2 blocks of 5. This is offered at a time convenient to the family – early evening is preferred by many as this encourages as many family members as possible to attend (we have had as many as 12-15 at each session). We also devise a deaf identity book with photos and sign pictures relevant to the individual child to be used with all family members and settings.
5. 1 hour a week x10 weeks.
6. We have 2 Specialist Sign Language Communicators who deliver the NDCS family sign. This is a bespoke offer that is family centred around the language they need. We also have an Early Years group (Little Stars) that meets every week. Communication and language are key targets and sign is used throughout the session to support all activities including story time and singing.
7. Families are signposted to any new courses that come up locally (there is a Deaf club that offers Signature BSL level 1 and 2, delivered by Deaf tutors). We advise about charities to fund sign language classes such as The Birkdale Trust and the Wigan and Leigh Deaf Childrens Society. We also signpost to online NDCS and BDA family sign as well as the St Helens Deafness resource centre and Manchester Deaf Centre.