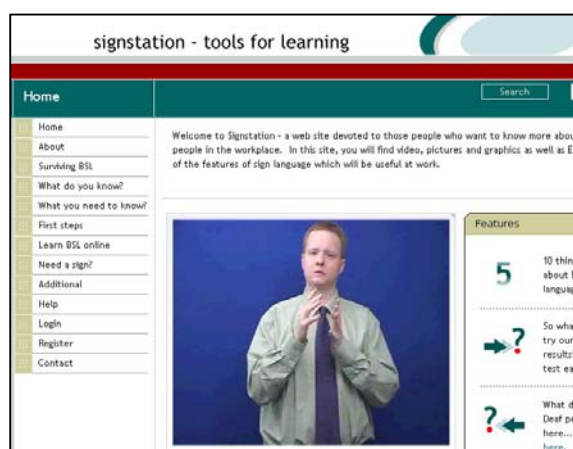


# Sign Aware

a project in the workplace to develop sign language awareness for users anywhere and at anytime – [www.signstation.org](http://www.signstation.org)

This project is a collaboration between researchers, the Trade Unions and Employers in order to provide solutions in the workplace for Deaf and hearing interaction. The programme which is being created will be useful to employers, to colleagues and to Deaf people themselves – wherever they come into contact at work. The materials offered will be a significant contribution to Deaf awareness training as required by the Disability Discrimination Act (2004).

The employment profile of Deaf people is changing significantly. Deaf young people are now better qualified are more likely to be in offices (than factories) and are more likely to use sign language in the workplace. However despite the high level contact with hearing colleagues and



despite the prominence of BSL, they still report misunderstanding and discrimination in the workplace. Sign Aware is a programme supported by the Dept of Work and Pensions and the Trades Union Congress which is designed to promote BSL and to deliver solutions at point of need.

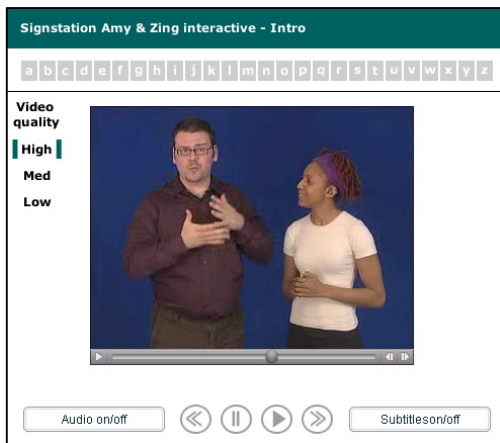
The Sign Aware team has developed a range of applications on *signstation* – a web site where users can make use of the quizzes, information and direct sign language teaching as well as to search for specific signs in the unique BSL dictionary. There are also off-line DVD

versions of some of the materials to use when the Internet is not accessible.

The key points of SignAware:

1. *signed information at point of need* – signstation is available to employers and employees, on-line through the Internet; the BSL dictionary will also be accessible by mobile phone.
2. *Simple instructional materials* – which users can read, interact with and learn from:
  - \* 10 important things you need to know for the workplace;
  - \* a video guide with signing to see some basic interaction on a Deaf person's first day at work;
  - \* a Q&A section to work through to give details about Deafness and sign language;
  - \* a simple interactive quiz on topics in the site, in order to let you measure how far you have progressed.
3. *Sign Aware* - a 50 minute video programme (on-line and on DVD) presented by Deaf actors and explaining all about sign language. This is an ideal tool for developing sign awareness.





4. *The Company* - a full course of 17 sessions to learn British Sign Language arranged on two levels of difficulty – based on the theme of Deaf people running a business. The materials include dialogues, vocabulary, grammar explanations and interactive exercises – all in sign language. It is accompanied by text explanations and subtitles. This will also be available on DVD.

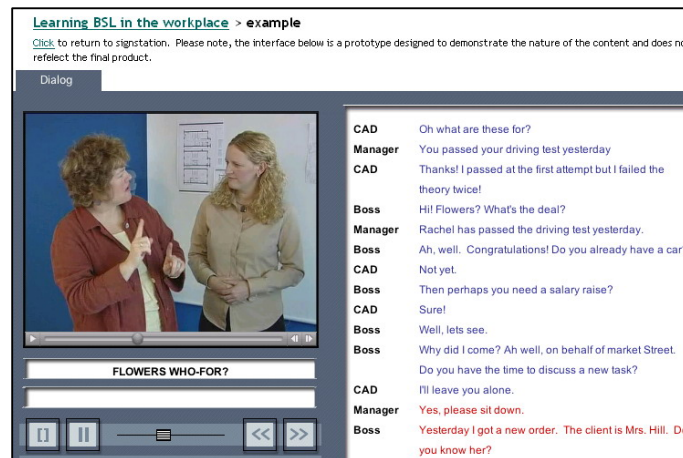
5. A general BSL dictionary plus Work-specific picture dictionaries – for categories such as Information Technology and for

office work; for specific trades/occupations – eg motor engineering, counselling – these video dictionaries will be also accessible from mobile phones.

6. *New Issues* for employers and employees – the Disability Discrimination Act and the Access to Work Scheme explained;

7. *Trade Union* derived BSL content. This will range from employee rights to Trade Union rules. It will highlight the significance of Trade Union membership.

8. Materials from *employers* relating to practices relevant to Deaf and Hearing users



The project is also actively researching user needs and collecting feedback.

A primary goal of the project is the creation of a Deaf-led *Sign Aware* programme, to work in the medium term (from July 2005 onwards) on a regional basis to develop and market materials suitable for the employment community at large.

### **Partnership**

Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol,  
in conjunction with

Independent Media Signing (IMS) Newcastle,  
Deaf Studies Trust Bristol, SLIC Ltd Edinburgh,

Institut für Deutsche Gebärdensprache und Kommunikation Gehörloser (IDGS – Hamburg) with  
video production by Remark! London

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### **For further information**

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